



PRESS RELEASE

Goethe-Institut Marks 25th Anniversary of the Fall of the Wall

Exhibition Highlight "The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall"

October 20 – December 15, 2014

Goethe-Institut Washington
812 7th St. NW
Washington, DC 20001

Download images from Dropbox [here](#).

www.goethe.de/washington

(Washington, October 8, 2014)– November 9, 2014 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. An exhibition of American artists' reflections on the Berlin Wall and an outdoor installation of photos by German artist Kai Wiedenhöfer form the visual framework for more than a dozen events at the Goethe-Institut around the commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall and critical observation about the many new walls that have been put up since then. Taking place October 20 – December 15, 2014, the arts serve as a medium to reflect upon what separates us and the role the arts and culture can play in building bridges for dialogue and cooperation.

The fall of the Wall heralded the end of the Cold War in Europe, the inception of a new European House, and a vision of a globalized Liberal Order. The path to this freedom was paved by changing global politics and a continuous strengthening of civic movements throughout Eastern Europe. However, the hope that a One World utopia would prevail and be the harbinger and securer of peace and stability has met new cultural and political boundaries. Today, new walls and regional segregations remind us of past confrontations we wish could be a thing of the past.

The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall Exhibition

The starting point and center of this reflection is an exhibition on the legacy of the Berlin Wall in American culture, before and after its fall in 1989. The exhibition has been curated by Paul M. Farber, PhD, a scholar of American and urban studies at Haverford College.

During the Cold War, the Berlin Wall was the world's most notorious line of division. The fortified city border not only separated East and West (Germany), but also surrounded the allied sectors of West Berlin, including its American sector. Even in the shadows of its stark border, the divided city of Berlin was maintained as a major focal point of transnational cultural connection. During the years of the Berlin Wall, hundreds of American artists were attracted by Berlin and the Wall.

The Wall had become a central motif in the legitimation of US security and foreign policy with the involvement in many other countries after the end of World War II. It was deeply intertwined with the international role the United States' "Cold Warriors" played as guardians of Western freedom. The division of Germany also beckoned some artists with solidarity to spend time in the socialist East. Artists visiting Berlin

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experienced the boundaries and limits of the Western world while raising question about social realities “back home.”

While in Berlin, American artists such as **Leonard Freed, Shinkichi Tajiri, Allan Kaprow, Lawrence Weiner, Nan Goldin, Jonathan Borofsky, Keith Haring, and Ollie Harrington** initially sought to consider post-Holocaust trauma and Cold War division. They explored historical landscapes and landmarks on both sides of the city. They used their experiences to pivot and produce art that invoked the Wall in representations of American racial segregation, gender identity, transgressive sexual politics, and self-conscious national political critique. Their works range wildly in tone, alternately treating the border as a space of potential violence as well as creative experimentation. They produced works through a variety of visual media, including on, but not limited to, the Western side of the Wall. Berlin became a point of return for such artists over many years, a space of identification and estrangement, in which they incubated important artistic visions of the United States.

When such Berlin Wall works are viewed collectively, this strange but powerful creative tradition demonstrates how the Wall is a site and symbol for American culture. Off the wall, artists pondered Cold War borders abroad and forms of social division back home and elsewhere in the world.

Since 1989, as pieces of the dismantled Wall are given mixed treatment as relics and highly-priced art objects themselves, other artists continue to weigh the afterlife of the wall with a resilient critical and creative eye. This includes projects that consider the monumental nature of the Wall’s ruins and the “new walls” around the world. Artists such as **Adrian Piper, Chuck D, Stephanie Syjuco, Bill Van Parys, Ron English,** and **Frank Hallam Day** continue producing works in this critical American tradition.

The exhibition ***The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall*** builds a transatlantic cultural space to reflect on the topic of the wall and the arts. The exhibition will include such artworks, from before 1989 and after, to lay bare layers of cultural memory and promote transnational creative exchange between the United States and Germany. This exhibition eschews a victors’ triumphalist history of the Cold War to instead shed light on critical artistic perspectives of the Wall.

Confirmed Artists Include:

Lindy Annis, Jonathan Borofsky, Chuck D., Frank Hallam Day, Electronic Disturbance Theater/b.a.n.g. lab 2.0, Ron English, Allen Frame, Leonard Freed, Nan Goldin, Keith Haring, Oliver Harrington, Carol Highsmith, James Huckenpahler, Allan Kaprow, Farrah Karapetian, Nilay Lawson, Oliver Miller, Adrian Piper, Stephanie Syjuco, Shinkichi Tajiri, Bill Van Parys and Reyes Melendez, and Lawrence Weiner.

Supporting Institutions include:

Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation, Getty Research Institute, Haverford College Center for Peace and Global Citizenship, Keith Haring Foundation, Library of Congress, Magnum Photos, National Gallery of Art, Provisions Library, The Wende Museum Los Angeles



Featuring a “Berlin Wall Mixtape” soundtrack and a special presentation of poetry by Sarah Browning, Gowri K., and Carlos Parada Ayala, members of Split the Rock.

Opening reception: The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall
Saturday, October 25, 7 – 9 pm

RSVP [here](#).

Wall On Wall – an outdoor installation of photos by Kai Wiedenhöfer

Paired with “The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall” will be a selection of images from German photographer **Kai Wiedenhöfer**. For the last eight years, Wiedenhöfer has been photographing walls that separate people around the world. He published a book and staged a large public photographic exhibition, *Wall on Wall* on the longest remaining part of the Berlin Wall at Mühlenstraße. He glued 364 meters of the wall with 36 huge panoramics. His choice included images of the borderlands between U.S./Mexico, Spain/Morocco, Cyprus, Iraq, and Korea, among others.

After witnessing the demise of the Berlin Wall firsthand, Wiedenhöfer reports, “I believed that this would be the end of walls as a political instrument and put them on the garbage heap of history as an anachronistic tool. Twenty years later, I have been proven wrong.”

A selection of these photographs is on display on the façade of the Goethe-Institut through December 2014. Wiedenhöfer will come to Washington, DC for the opening of the exhibition on October 25 and for a talk on October 31.

Wall on Wall: Symposia and Discussions about Walls, Arts & Civil Society

The Berlin Wall loomed large in the collective imagination of several generations. It was built to brutally separate. It became a locus of resistance and the strong desire to overcome. It was a place of suffering and the demand for its demise. Today, there are many new walls – some still less emblematic and others less well known, but all built with the same mix of hatred, fear and lack of imagination.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the public will be invited to explore the topic through films, performances, presentations and dialogue. **Artists’ talks** with Frank Hallam Day, Stefanie Syjuco, Bill Van Parys, and Kai Wiedenhöfer will focus on the “Western” view on borders and walls. They will share stories about their life experiences living in Berlin, whether in the 1960s, 1980s, or post-wall 1990s. Frank Hallam Day is a recent winner of the prestigious Leica Prize in Photography. Bill Van Parys is a former editor of *Details* and writer for *Rolling Stone*. Stephanie Syjuco is a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow and professor of sculpture at UC-Berkeley. Kai Wiedenhöfer is an internationally-renowned photojournalist whose *Wall on Wall* project was recently shown on the remnants of the Berlin Wall.

Introduced by Wilfried Eckstein, Director of the Goethe-Institut Washington; Hope M. Harrison, author of *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations* and Associate Professor of History and International Affairs at The George Washington University; and Paul M. Farber, curator of *The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall* and Postdoctoral Writing Fellow at Haverford College.

Symposium 1:



The Wall in our Heads: Arts & Civil Society & Walls. Artists' Perspectives

Saturday, October 25, 2 - 5 pm

RSVP [here](#).

A second symposium will take a different view and ask how artists in a divided Germany related to the wall. Which “holes in the Wall” did hip-hop culture find to make its way into East Germany? How did East German teenagers appropriate it in their everyday lives? How did German artists reflect the existence of the wall in their works? For Western artists it was more a mainstream agenda to oppose - for the brothers and sisters in the East it was a deadly taboo to paint or cite the wall. DJ Mesia, filmmaker Nico Raschick and famous art historian Eckhart Gillen, all from Berlin, will participate in the discussion.

Symposium 2: German Perspectives: Before and After the Wall: Music & Art in East & West Germany

Saturday, November 8, 2 - 5 pm

RSVP [here](#).

This tale, adapted from the 1998 off-Broadway musical which is currently enjoying an award-winning revival, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* is about an East Berlin rock singer with an ambiguous gender identity who dreams of becoming an American sensation.

Film: Hedwig and the Angry Inch

Monday, October 20, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

A Second Quarter is decidedly European; the “place” (Berlin) is the catalyst for the “action” (the work). The scenes are set in Berlin with the Wall in the background. Introduced by *The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall* curator Paul Farber.

Film: A Second Quarter

Monday, October 27, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

Not even the Berlin Wall could keep the youth of East Germany from discovering the western hip-hop movement. This documentary contains footage from the movement’s roots to its appearance on some of East Germany’s largest stages, and interviews with some of East Germany’s B-Boys. It also portrays the changes in East German hip-hop after the Wall came down.

Film: Here We Come

Monday, November 3, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

The most comprehensive documentation of events surrounding the 1989 Monday demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany in which hundreds of thousands of citizens peacefully demonstrated. Discussion follows with filmmaker Andreas Voigt.

Film: Leipzig in the Fall (Leipzig im Herbst)

Tuesday, November 4, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

Wolf Vostell (1932-1998) was one of the early adopters of video art and a pioneer of the Fluxus art movement. Lutz Dammbeck (b. Leipzig 1948) was one of the key representatives of independent film and media art in the former GDR and a



fascinating phenomenon within modern contemporary art. Introduced and followed by a discussion with art historian and curator Eckhart Gillen.

Film: Works by Artists Wolf Vostell and Lutz Dammbeck

Monday, November 10, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

The Berlin Wall is gone, but the Korean division has remained unchanged. Two artworks by Korean artist Eunsook Lee will form a bond between the former Berlin Wall and the existing separation along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. Artistic director Sunjung Kim from the Real DMZ Project, a contemporary art project based on research conducted in the demilitarized zone, will present her art festival, which is devoted to building bridges and opening gates along the border between South and North Korea, and recent award-winning media art from this festival.

Film: Real DMZ Project

Monday, November 17, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the European Union has grown rapidly, adding new member states at its eastern and southeastern borders. At the same time, the EU fortifies its borders and guards its waters to block off migrants from Africa. What some call "fortress Europe" seems a widely-spread paradigm of our time: new walls mark state boundaries and are meant to fend off the migration of the poor and traumatized people from their territories into countries with better promises of security and well-being. Short films by 13 filmmakers are presented in this evening which considers the process of the enlargement of the European Union and the opening of the free world towards Eastern Europe.

Film: Faces of Eastern Europe

Monday, November 24, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

The finality of Cold War history is in conflict with the persistent afterlife of the period. In Ukraine, the metaphor of the Berlin Wall was recently enlivened after the Kyiv barricades at the Maidan defended the association of the Ukraine with the European Union. Activities around "Euro Maidan Art" were fueled by the perception of "widespread government corruption", "abuse of power", and "violation of human rights in Ukraine", and supported liberal notions of Europe.

Film: Ukraine Program

Monday, December 1, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)

A selection of films dealing with the topic of the Berlin Wall, curated by Annegret Richter, head of animation at DOK Leipzig.

Film: Animation Films about the Berlin Wall

Monday, December 8, 6:30 pm

Buy tickets [here](#)



About the Goethe-Institut Washington:

On behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany, cultural institutes around the world provide cultural programs, language courses, support to educators, and up-to-date information on Germany in the context of Europe. Founded in 1990, Goethe-Institut Washington, DC is a center for German culture and language in the midst of the revitalized Downtown.

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