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Form and Meaning: How Media's Representation Tells the Story of the Berlin Wall

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The 'Iron Curtain'

On 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall, which the longtime leader of East Germany Erich Honecker, predicted would stand for 50 or 100 more years—met its fall in front the world. For the next two years, Germany, especially Berlin, was euphoric the reunification and the fall of the monstrous barrier that not only divided the country in half, but also took hundreds of innocent lives. The Wall stood as a witness to the Cold War Era and the darker times of Germany, and its fall came to symbolize humanity's victory over violence, and to represent peace and hope.

For nearly three decades, this concrete barrier firmly divided the city of Berlin in half. The Wall was then expanded with constant additions of fortification such as barbed wires, watchtowers, and hounds guarding day and night. Especially for East Berliners, the Wall was a threat, and an indicator of the authoritative Stasi regime. However, it took less than a year for this 155km stretch of barrier to be torn apart by ‘wall-peckers’ and Berliners. At that time, not much interest was focused on preserving the barrier. To get past the tragedies, most Berliners simply wanted to see the Wall come down and disappear.

Remembering the Past

When the Wall fell, the first reaction of the citizens of Berlin was to destroy the loathed barrier altogether. As early as 1991, the city of Berlin condemned the idea of attributing monument status to the Wall was firmly rejected and questioned. Why should they have to preserve the border fortifications, which marked on the city with a sad universal notoriety? Why preserve the impassable border that already had been reduced after the collapse of the GDR to only a few remaining rudiments?

Only in the late 1990s, did German historians draw attention to an immediate urgency to protect what remains of the Wall. As Dr. Volker Hassemer said, “It is our duty to retain proof of this madness to guard against any possibility of its return.” The preservation and mediation of an uncomfortable monument began – the remnants of this horrifying edifice as enduring witnesses of the past.

Today the Wall is approached and interpreted from a wider perspective, that includes, a border landscape, and a sociopolitical landscape. The Wall serves as a visual object that is able to “illustrate both the relevance and the many layers of pictorial phenomena in the context of political communication.” After all, the Berlin Wall’s construction would not have been possible

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1 Dr. Volker Hassemer, during the German National Committee for Conservation, Berlin, Germany, 1995.
2 Benjamin Dreschsel, “The Berlin Wall from a visual perspective: comments on the construction of a political
without the background of struggles between the superpowers. Although the 'Iron Curtain' is nothing but a concrete barrier, its impact upon not only Berliners' lives, but also essentially upon the world's politics, inevitably prevents the monument from ever turning into an inconsequential barricade. The Wall stands as 'lieux de memorie,' or 'icon objects of collective memory,' – memory crystallizes at a particular historical moment that embodies a sense of continuity.\(^3\)

Although the Wall should be perceived as a single monument, it expresses itself in an infinite number of contexts. As Michael Baxandall states, “there is no exhibition without construction – in an extended sense – appropriation\(^4\).” This multimodal historical monument has so many variable connotations that it becomes the reconstruction of history as a part of the present and the historical representation of a culture together\(^5\).

Where is the Wall?

Many people visiting the city of Berlin ask 'So, where is the Wall?' Many pieces of the Wall reside all around the globe –, on a mantle in a household, in the lobby of Reagan library in Simi Valley, California, decorating urinals in a Las Vegas Casino. Ironically, the city of Berlin, the original manifestation site of the barrier, retains a bare minimum of the monument. Only the double line of cobblestones on the streets of Berlin and a few sections of crumbling concrete barrier preserve memories of the tragedies during the Cold War era. Placed in multiple contexts, this historical artifact retains various meanings and narratives through different methods of interpretation. A multitude of ways of preserving and remembering the Berlin Wall begs the question, 'What is the correct, perhaps most proper, method of commemorating the monument which bears physical witness to decades of political turbulence and changed lives of individuals?'

Starting in the 1990s, the citizens of Berlin took a greater interest in creating memorial sites for the Wall throughout the city. In addition to the two rows of cobblestones, four-sided metal posts, with a brief description and pictures about the Wall's history, now stand in various locations throughout the city. Each of them stands not only as a reminder, but also as homage to the victims. Furthermore, museums and galleries took a step toward memorializing and retelling different aspects of the Wall within varying contextual relationships.

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Global Perspective vs. Berliners' Perspective of the Wall

No other site condenses the history of the twentieth century as the Berlin Wall does. A product of the transformations during twenty-eight years following World War II, the Wall was the one spot on the globe where the two superpowers were in daily contact and often conflict; the focus of the Cold War which might well have flared up into a hot one at times.\(^6\)

What must be taken into consideration is the discrepancy between the global perspective of the Wall and Berliners' interpretation of the Wall. The fact that this barrier could disappear so easily and so suddenly projects an impressive message upon the Wall. Conventionally, the barrier stands as a site that overcame conflicts and turbulence in the past, which later took a peaceful, but unexpected course of events. Individuals around the globe see the monument as a symbol of hope and liberation.

Nevertheless, for Germans, and especially for Berliners, the monument hardly imbues positive values. To them, the barrier stands as a reminder of grief of separation and the innocent victims. The emotional consequences of national division are still felt by many people. Moreover, the negative economic effects brought after the German Reunification, which to some extreme extant produced the desire to re-erect the Wall and return to the simpler conditions in the earlier times of the Iron Curtain, marked the definition of the Berlin Wall for Germans.

Introduction

The aim of this research entailed investigating eleven different sites/exhibitions of the Wall in Berlin: the East Side Gallery, Checkpoint Charlie square, Potsdamer Platz, Topographie des Terrores, the Stasi Museum, the Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse, the Allied Museum, Mauer Museum, Wall Park, Freedom Park Berlin, and the U.S. Embassy. The process of the research was executed by visiting these sites, analyzing the spectrum of each commemoration of the monument, and speaking to curators/art historians for professional opinions and insights for selected exhibitions. Through an extensive study of each site, this paper hopes to bring a better understanding of the Wall, and show how these institutions strengthen the monument’s momentous cultural, political, and historical significance. If it wasn’t for The Richter Research Center which allowed me to experience the Wall, and if I wasn’t given the opportunity to examine and analyze the phenomena of the monument, this research would not have come to its fruition.

Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse

Bernauer Strasse witnessed the most tragic scenes when the city was divided in 1961: East Berliners jumped from apartment windows, vaulted over barbed wire, tunneled beneath the streets in an attempt to reach freedom. The Berlin Wall Memorial – which includes the city’s only unadorned stretch of border fortifications and a museum – marks the iniquity, compliance and heroism of East and West Berliners during those tragic years. At least 139 people were killed at the Berlin Wall or died under circumstances directly linked to the East German border regime between 1961 and 1989. And during the first days following 13 August 1961, before additional border fortifications took place, numerous dramatic escapes occurred in Bernauer Strasse in front of the cameras of the Western press. People escaped from the upper floors with the help of ropes, jumped into safety nets, while some lost their lives.

The eastern part of Bernauer Strasse is distinguished by the emptiness of the land, the former death strip, and visible remains of the former border fortifications including the hinterland Wall and the patrol track. Before the initial plan of reviving the Wall on Bernauer Strasse took place during the late 2000s, this vast land was nothing but an abandoned space with tall weeds. Two rows of cobblestones remained hidden and forgotten for almost a decade. But since its opening in 2007, the Berlin Wall Memorial is one of the most visited mauer sites within the city. Yet ironically, this site doesn't present any part of the original Wall. Instead, over a hundred 30 foot metal rods, positioned side by side, remain indications of the Wall's original location. During the initial planning of the site, a number of artists and historians teamed up to create a commemoration that does not forcibly imitate the Wall, but rather constructs a space which manifests symbolic significance of a now-forgotten part of history. Dr. Sarah Bornhorst, who was a member of the team responsible for the erection of the memorial, states that “there is

7 Leo Schmidt, interview by In Young Lee, Berlin, Germany, 31 July 2012.
no point in building a new wall. Everyone wanted it to come down and disappear. So we wanted to portray a now-disappeared Wall that will remind us of what had been there in the past."

Outside in the open space, visitors are encouraged to walk along the trail and visit multiple audio/visual stations, titled 'Splitting of the Bernauer Strasse,' 'Escaping to the West, Victims,' 'Families: Situation of Berlin,' etc. And the photographs, taken by Allied photographers, aid in reflecting the view from the outside. From, documentations on the construction of the Wall to heartbreaking anecdotal recollections of families who were split up by this monstrosity, audiences can grasp a wide spectrum about the history of the Wall all at once.

The Berlin Wall Memorial is a site specifically dedicated to individuals whose lives were affected by the wall. Bernauer Strasse is imbued with memories and recollections of horrific tragedies in the past. With excellent explanations and indications of past occurrences, such as the mass escapes through tunnels dug underneath the border fortification and the detonation of the Reconstruction Church in 1985, the site not only narrates the history of the barrier but also presents the accumulation of highly emotionally charged events in the context of the Wall.

The memorial site now has become a central place to remember the Wall. The wounds inflicted here were so deep that it became a symbol of the division of Berlin. These extensive and accurate representations of the barrier provide the audiences with horrifying experiences that swept the street in the past, even without the actual pieces of the barrier. Although the Wall itself may not have been preserved, the past documentation and emotional burden of families at that time are understood and perceived. Familitary accounts of families and news reports regarding successful escapees provide a particular side of the story that remain mostly undocumented. The site reminds visitors that the barrier was not just a symbol, but a daily threat to Berliners who were forced to stay inside, and outside, for 28 years.

8 Sarah Bornhorst, interview by In Young Lee, Berlin, Germany, 6 August 2012.
Potsdamer Platz Plaza/ Checkpoint Charlie

Thousands of tourists visit Potsdamer Platz Plaza and Checkpoint Charlie square everyday. Fascinated visitors touch pieces of the Wall, peck them, stand against them, and take pictures with them while most audiences remain ignorant to the cultural, political, and historical significance of the Wall.

Potsdamer Platz used to be the most popular and the busiest location in Western Europe in the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, when the Berlin Wall bisected its former location, the land was totally laid waste and left desolate during the Cold War. Since the German Reunification, the site was redeveloped. Retaining its history as a former border between east and west, a “linking element,” the plaza preserves five relocated blocks of hinterland Wall. In the middle of heavy traffic and bustling tourists, a man dressed as a East German border patrol agent welcomes visitors as a tourist attraction next to the Wall.

Although the pieces are accompanied by a brief historical background and the description of future projects regarding the preservation within the city of Berlin, the blocks of Wall are treated more as attractions rather than monuments. The site serves as an exhibition, but a showcase. This peculiar presentation of the Wall raises questions: 'Is it okay for these significant monuments to be treated as extravaganza placed to lure tourists? Does this treatment of the barrier degrade its meaning and cultural magnitude?'

Also, Checkpoint Charlie is one of the most significant site in Berlin and a central places that designates the Cold War era. Although the area looks nothing close to how it looked before 1989, the space retains its historical importance and attracts thousands of visitors every year.

Today in Checkpoint Charlie square, the entire section of the Berlin Wall, that used to stand right in front of the guardhouse, no longer exists. The only evidence of fortification is the scattered blocks of the border that are now situated amongst numerous restaurants and food stand.

There is difficulty in deciphering whether these blocks are real pieces of the Wall or just concrete blocks that are made to look like the monument. If it weren’t for the magnitude of the site, the blocks would not have been acknowledged as the real Wall. They are highly ornamented, decorated, and
embellished. From a replication of Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe* to a neon-colored American pop art painting, various paintings that are completely unrelated to the context of the Berlin Wall cover the pieces.

After acknowledging that there may not be an 'accurate' commemoration of the Wall, would this particular re-appropriation even be considered ‘suitable’ to the monument's historical and cultural momentousness? Who decides it is okay for the monument's appearance to be altered in a way that seems to reduce its original meaning? Isn't the Wall's significance too substantial to be stripped of any historical contextual relationship by being used as an empty canvas?

These two sites offer one of many functions the monument serves in today’s society. When the Wall fell, and was imbued with symbolism of peace and liberation, the monument had gained not only worldwide fame, but also commercial values. Possessing a piece of the Wall, however small, was a part of the euphoria that swept over the nation. The Wall’s commercial value is also a part of the monument’s significance—and utilizing its monetary value must be understood. The Wall’s adjusted role, which contributes to the popularity of Berlin, contradicts greatly from its initial purpose that brought German nothings but pain and anguish.

On the other hand, many art historians and curators were not fond of the representation of the Wall in both sites. As Sarah Bornhorst, a curator at the Berlin Wall Memorial at Bernauer Strasse, states that “although the Berlin Wall has been and still is considered a major tourist attraction in Germany, for the monument to be so blatantly displayed as a spectacle seems bizarre⁹."
**Stasi Museum**

The former official building for the Stasi regime was preserved and turned into Stasi Museum, also known in German as the Forschungs- und Gedenkstätte Normannenstrasse, since the German Reunification. This historically significant building is comprised of documentations of the office and working quarters of the former Minister of State Security, Eric Mielke. Exhibitions range from the rise of the Stasi in the former East Germany to the fall of the regime in the year 1990. Interestingly, the museum does not own any original pieces of the Wall, yet successfully presents stories and perspectives on the Wall that are not featured in any other mauer sites in the city of Berlin.

First of all, the absence of the original piece of the Wall was due to a specific decision by the director of the museum who believed that “there is no point in exhibiting a piece of a concrete that cannot properly present the past experiences, and therefore loses its significance when removed from its original site.” Instead, there are two simple, but nonetheless significant, documentations of the Wall in the museum. One is an oil painting by a German painter Frankenstein who was commissioned to create a celebration of the party for the official conference room in the headquarters. And the other exhibition presents newspaper articles published within the East Germany regarding the Wall’s erection.

Within the sites such as Topographie des Terrores or the Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse, the Wall is represented with much negativity, and the border's existence is condemned as the Stasi’s evil crime. Perhaps, that is the universal perception of the Wall and the reason why the people of Berlin longed to witness it gone. Nevertheless, Stasi museum presents a peculiar reading of the monument.

From a strictly political perspective of the Stasi regime, the construction of the Wall was a necessary decision to keep East Berliners from escaping to the West. The Wall was initially a threat, rather than a military action, aimed to intimidate citizens and keep the political regime intact. In the beginning, even for the Stasi, the barrier was never meant to become a monstrosity, but rather an inevitable decision to prevent East Germany from falling apart. It was a political act, meant to keep their republic intact, that unfortunately later turned into a morally unjust and horrific tragedy as the relationship between the superpowers deteriorated over the next twenty-eight years.
Firstly, the oil painting, hung in the center of the conference room, describes a celebration of the Stasi with fireworks illuminating the construction of the barrier. Citizens commemorate the completion of the Wall. In this particular context, the Wall represents one of the most significant incidents that led to the success of East Germany's political party for decades. The documentation of victims is omitted and purposely ignored. The party offers a very limited account of the Wall, and a rationalization for their decision. This painting is propaganda that masks the ugly truth.

Secondly, the museum presents the GDR's coverage of the Wall in the press. Journals and newspaper articles specifically targeted East Berliners in the early 1960s, and reported the construction as a warning for their citizens about fleeing to the West. As a sharp contrast from the conventional perception of the Wall that entails extreme condemnation and negativity, the Stasi Museum portrays a skewed, but definitely indispensable, viewpoint of the Wall, whether accepted or not, by successfully providing a missing part of the full spectrum of the history.

Interestingly, the subway station leading to the Stasi Museum, Magdalenen Strasse through which many East Berliners had to come through when heading to the Stasi headquarters, retains large-scaled paintings also done by Frankenstein. The paintings feature various portrayals of hard working individuals who are building a better, firmer environment for East Berlin, i.e. the Berlin Wall. These propagandistic illustrations successfully advertised the Stasi regime's
grandiose importance to its citizens.

There is more than one side to every story. The Berlin Wall certainly retains a multifaceted narrative. In contrast to its common label as ‘the border fortification responsible for decades of pain and innocent lives,’ the Wall also served as propaganda to promote the Stasi's authoritative power. As Steffen, a research assistant at the museum, has stated, “(the Wall was) in fact a crime, because no one has the right to forcibly divide the country in half solely based on a couple people's decisions. But from the Stasi’s standpoint, it was a necessary action that had been taken in order to keep their territory and the citizens unbroken. Whether morally correct or not, that was Stasi's goal, and our museum aim to present their standpoints that go ignored in most documentations of the Wall.”

**The Allied Museum**

Fully funded by governmental foundations and retaining the legal status of a non-profit organization, the Allied Museum is supported by the Federal Republic of Germany, the state of Berlin, France, the UK, and the United States. There are two different displays of the wall inside and outside the museum: the one painted by a renowned French wall painter Thierry Noire, and another one located near the museum called *The Day The Wall Came Down*.

The museum's official exhibit of the Wall lies outside next to a watchtower. Out in an open space, surrounded by aircrafts used by the Allied forces during the WWII, the Wall blends into the space by engaging with various physical remnants that represent the military commitments and the political history and roles of the Western Allies between 1945 and 1994. The Wall originally stood in Potsdamer Platz, as part of hinterland Wall. But in 1990, the Wall was officially donated to the museum after concluding that the monument was absolutely necessary as it represents a giant part of the Allied forces' contribution to liberty in Berlin. Thierry Noire, who has gained an international acclaim with his paintings on the original Wall and the East Side Gallery, was invited to paint the Western side of the Wall.

A conventional perspective of the Wall is usually limited to a general concept of the Cold War. The Allied Museum, on the other hand, aims to provide a bigger picture of the Wall that represents the border fortification as the international political struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1961. The director of the museum, Dr. Gundula Bavendamm, explains that “our Wall is not so much about the victims of the Wall, that part of the Wall is successfully

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10 Steffen Leide, Research Assistant at the Stasi Museum, interview by In Young Lee, 24th July 2012.
explained at the Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse. Our goal is to let visitors know of this unsettled relationships between many countries that continued for several decades.” In contrast to some memorial sites where the Wall functions as the foremost figure of the location, this particular display of the Wall serves as one of many historical artifacts that represent great political importance in the past. There is no negative or positive meaning of the Wall. The museum simply presents an objective narration of political history.

These relocated blocks of the Wall stand outside, as they did for the last fifty years. There are no boundaries, or fencing, that prohibit visitors from touching the monument. Only a small plaque on the ground informs visitors of the history. A decision to keep the Wall outside was made in order to “provide the most realistic context of the wall, which would immediately disappear as soon as the artifact remains in a protected environment. The more foreign methods of display strategies become, the more plain the object gets.”

Although painted over the original face of the wall, the museum's decision to invite Thierry Noire to paint the Wall to make it look like its original appearance before 1989. In a way, the museum has specifically aimed to create the original conditions of the monument as much as possible. Although the Wall may not be standing where it originally stood, the institution ultimately presents a successful preservation of the Wall, which prompts spectators to actively participate and experience the monument for themselves in the context of Allied forces.

On the other hand, outside the museum's territory, a piece of great magnitude attracts individuals walking by. The Day The Wall Came Down is an official tribute, donated by George W. Bush, a former president of the United States, to the people of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1998. Created by an American artist Veryl Goodnight, the piece features five bronze horses galloping over broken fragments of the original pieces of the Wall. This piece creates a contrasting effect from the Wall inside the museum, as the artwork provides a glorified view of the fall of the Wall. According to Svetlana Alpers, museums and certain exhibitions have the ability to transform an object into an element of visual interest. This 'museum effect' is fundamentally embedded within this particular tribute/exhibition it isolates something form its world, and offers it up for attentive viewing and thus transform it into art. The Day the Wall Came Down ultimately has put

11 Dr. Gundula Bavendamm, Director of the Allied Museum, interview by In Young Lee, Berlin, Germany, 2nd August 2012.
the monument under pressure of a way of seeing as the exhibition has turned the cultural material into art artifact – an apparatus of power. Symbolizing the victory of humanity over violence, this gift from the United States seems to be an exaggerated portrayal of the Wall that ultimately praises the role the U.S. played in ending the Cold War.

The Allied Museum provides a global point-of-view that usually remains unexplained by many other sites of the Berlin Wall. The institution successfully provides background history and political significance of the border fortification in the context of Allied forces. Within the museum space, the Wall is not commemorated for the sake of its existence, but is presented more as a platform and a physical witness that reminds individuals of political turbulence in the past that fundamentally sparked the erection of the Wall in the first place.

American Embassy

The newly relocated American Embassy on Pariser Platz is situated right next to the Brandenburg Gate that was commissioned by Frederich Wilhelm II to represent peace. A segment of the Berlin Wall stands in the courtyard of Pariser Platz, which is one of the most heavily secured buildings in Berlin. Built in the year 2008, the embassy stands very closely to the death strip between the Eastern and Western Berlin Wall. Inside the open area located in the center of the building, the Wall stands amongst many other historical artifacts that represent the relationship between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany.

In contrast to the Allied Museum's intentional acquisition of the Wall fragments which portrays the Allied Powers' contribution to the fall of the Cold War, the piece in the embassy was donated by a former employee of the German Ministry of Defense right after the new building’s construction. The Wall originally stood in Potsdamer Platz but was removed and relocated to its present location. The monument retains its original exterior, exactly as it looked in 1987, but was repainted in 2008 by Thierry Noirre who named the piece Homage to the Eternal Youth. A silver plaque on the ground explicitly explains the history of the piece and how the Wall was prominently featured in a film The Wings of Desire.

Asked whether the Wall represents the Allied Powers’ victory, Peter Claussen, a Public Affairs Counselor at the embassy, replied that ‘the Wall stands simply to remind people that such barrier had existed, and now has been gone for more than two decades. There is no official statement of the embassy regarding the Wall as it was a donation, not a planned construction, and

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we house the Wall as a remnant of the past for the sole purpose of remembering what has happened.”

Interestingly, Claussen noted that “despite many embellished representation of the Berlin Wall, which are featured in documents and history journals, the truth is that the Wall already has been, and will be, forgotten. Especially for Americans, the Wall no longer serves a prominent role that it did in the past. No one actually recollects the entire history behind its erection and disintegration anymore.” The past becomes history, and history can only recollect a fraction of what has actually happened. What we hold on to is a small portion of the past that will eventually fade away in everyone's memories.

Originally, the U.S. Embassy was hesitant about keeping the donation, as they feared that the monument would imply American patriotism and pride like *The Day The Wall Came Down*. Nevertheless, the embassy agreed to keep the Wall to stop the past from eroding completely. No matter how hard we try to preserve the Wall, no matter how many ways we try to commemorate the Wall, the truth is that “it is just simply impossible to preserve the past exactly the way it was before. The Wall is never going to be the same. Even if it stands where it stood, there is no Wall without the political struggle that prompted the erection of the barrier in the first place.”

The original Wall, which was constructed to divide the country, no longer exists since the German Reunification. It may be a far reach to recreate the past experiences, and expect audiences to imagine what it had been like without the original context. Perhaps what we must simply do is stop seeking for the most 'proper' way to preserve the Wall, because there simply isn't one. We cannot preserve the past. What we can do is to document its history, and keep reminding our society of the past so that we do not make the same mistake again in the future.

14 Peter Claussen, the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Spokesperson, interview by In Young Lee, Berlin, Germany, 9th August 2012.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
East Side Gallery

The East Side Gallery may be one of the most popular sites in the city of Berlin. Off the street called Mühlenstraße, this almost 1.3 kilometer long open air gallery exhibits grand and vibrantly painted murals. Painted by artists all over the world, a vast number of paintings, totaling up to 105, decorates the monument. Begun in 1990, all artworks, despite the differences between each artist's style and auteur, have a commonality: they represent hopes for a more peaceful future. Hundreds of people, mostly consisting of tourists who have come to visit the site for the first time, walk along the trail to adorn the paintings and pay tribute this beautiful commemoration of the border.

One of many interesting aspects of the site is that this representation of the Wall does not feature the original appearance of the Wall. The universal view of the Berlin Wall is largely identical to the view from the West, colorfully painted and adorned. Nevertheless, the Eastern side of the Wall was never painted during the time it served as a border fortification. In contrast to the Western side, East Berlin had more than a single concrete Wall. East Berliners faced a system of barricades that consisted of not just a wall, but also watchdogs, patrol track, barbed fencing, and watch towers. The border was simply unapproachable. Yet, to individuals in West Berlin, the Wall was easily accessible. Because the Berlin Wall stood as an emblem for unjust violence and wrongful political authority that had to be demolished, the act of painting it became a symbol for the battle against the authoritarian regime that kept Berliners apart for almost three decades.

Therefore, the project to paint the East Side Wall, which had never been painted before, came to symbolize the end of struggle and the beginning of a new era that signaled peace and hope for humanity. It may not be proper preservation, but it is a celebratory peace for a global audience.
Ranging from a symbolic German flag, a dove flapping its wings hoping for world peace, to a globally hallmarked image called The Kiss of Death which depicts Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev kissing his East German counterpart Erich Honecker, the East Side Gallery displays a range of themes and messages. Some satirical, some comical, and some strongly symbolic, each painting exhibits its unique message. Visitors share mixed feelings of gratitude, inspiration, and sorrow while observing each work of art.

Although the re-appropriation gave a new symbolic meaning and a facade to this historical barrier, does the repainting of the monument imbue an additional meaning of the Wall? Or does this act rather take away the monument’s original significance, which was communicated through its empty face that represented the Stasi Regime’s untouchable authority? Furthermore, what does it mean to change the appearance of the monument? Would that hinder audiences from experiencing the original state of the Wall?

There are varying opinions regarding re-appropriations of the Wall. The most popular argument claims that there is absolutely no reason to alter the monument's appearance even if it is meant to portray a symbolic and universal message. In any case, modifying the monument will only reduce its original meaning and significance. On the other hand, some state that the act of painting the Berlin Wall has been and remains to be a symbolic act that makes the mercurial nature of the border so momentous.

There is no original form of the Wall. In contrast to how most individuals perceive the Wall, the monument never was a single concrete wall but a series of border fortifications that were added as the relationship between the superpowers worsened over the years. Initially, on 13 August 1961, the border encircling West Berlin was cut off overnight by barbed wire fencing. Then the original border was consolidated and perfected. A complex and multifaceted system of fortification and obstacles were steadily modified and developed. There were a total of four generations of the change of appearance in the Berlin Wall. During its fourth generation, known as the ‘Border Wall 75,’ the barrier consisted of six different obstacles that ranged from a concrete wall, watchtowers, a patrol track, to metal spikes, making the system impossible to penetrate.

Starting in the early 1980s, West Berliners began to use the Wall as a canvas and a platform to express opinions/send messages. The western side of the barrier began to represent...
freedom. Thus, the painting of the East Side gallery could be interpreted as the fifth generation of the Wall: a rebirth. By painting over its empty face, the artists gave new life to the monument. With its special nature that connects the past and the present, the East Side Gallery represents a constantly changing nature of history.

In spite of the gallery's emblematic significance, it was very poorly kept and destroyed by visitors. Eroded by uncontrollable weather condition, but more importantly gravely vandalized by people who fail to respect the murals' authenticity, the East Side Gallery no longer maintains the vibrancy it had in 1990. Other than bronze plaques that stand every 50-meters indicating the importance of the gallery, the exhibit is treated more like an ordinary concrete wall painted with graffiti.

The gallery approaches its audience more informally compared to most memorial sites in Berlin, and invites spectators to engage with the paintings and experience the Wall. Many people lean on the divider to take pictures, and try to scrape off the barrier with their fingernails. Perhaps, this informality of the exhibit is the reason why the thought of preserving the murals doesn't cross people's minds.

One thing to keep in mind is that even through the gallery is a tourist attraction and welcomes the citizens of Berlin, it testifies to the history of the last few years: a sad handling of our past. The site becomes more and more forgotten and may disappear in the air. Furthermore, the gallery's vandalized condition today brings the need for a better preservation of history into attention.
Topographie des Terrors

Located near Potsdamer Platz, Topographie des Terrors is a semi-open air exhibition of the Berlin Wall that provides an overview of Germany's history, from the beginning of the Nazi regime up to the fall of the Wall until the end of the Cold War in 1990. The museum is located on the site of the former headquarters of the Gestapo and the SS during the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945. This outdoor museum stands on the exact boundaries between the American and Soviet zones with the street Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse, which later renamed Niederkirchnerstrasse, as a fortified boundary. The most remarkable feature of this particular exhibit is that the Wall here was never demolished, nor relocated, and as it remains the longest extant segment of the 'outer' wall. The preserved section of the Berlin Wall, a permanent exhibition of the museum, has been designated a historic monument.

The wall stands on its original site in its original state. Like Märkisches museum of Stadtmuseum Berlin Foundation, Topographie des Terrors also protects the wall with metal fencing that keeps visitors at least one foot away from the artifact. The metal/glass plaques that are situated every twenty feet provide accurate documentation of the Cold War era, including the significance of the site itself.

This particular exhibition provides a somewhat shocking display of the Wall. In contrast to conventionally exhibited pieces of the Wall, which are usually elaborately painted, this particular piece of the Wall remains starkly empty and destroyed. Metal rods protrude from the monument and giant holes decorate its appearance. If there weren't any additional plaques indicating its importance, the barrier could easily be understood as an 'average' concrete wall. When compared side by side with the East Side Gallery, which is the longest extant segment of the 'inner' wall, Topographie des Terrores displays strikingly opposite representations of the barrier. This 'pre-renovated' Wall represents the barest facade of the border. Its inhibited and natural appearance enables visitors to get a glimpse of the Wall’s ugly nature and monstrous past.

Through a particular lens, the museum presents the Wall within the context of German history. The institution focuses on remembrance of the nation's darkest years, which consisted of the country's political uproar, violence, and ceaseless struggles since the rise of Nazi Germany. The Wall stands as a physical monument to represent many ugly tragedies in the past. Its stark facade represents pain. This representation of the Wall does not provide a hopeful future of democracy like it did at the East Side Gallery, but rather remains as a 'scar' that should not be
forgotten nor erased in history.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall as an ending, the museum provides a chronology of wrongdoings that took place in Germany. Through this exhibition, we can get a glimpse of Germany’s respectable way of archiving the past. Usually, most individuals want to mask misconduct of the past if possible. Especially in a global sense, nations rarely want to admit any faults, and refuse to acknowledge responsibilities for certain actions they have taken. But Germany is different.

Topographie des Terrores offers a very accurate documentation of German history. Moreover, the museum specifically deals with horrors and violence. From the rise of the Nazi Regime, WWII and the Holocaust, and leading up to the 28 years of separation, the museum narrates these tragedies with much regret and shame.

Topographie des Terrores offers an unique understanding of the Wall which explains the nation's responsibilities for letting misfortunes and adversities take place. Whereas the memorial merely narrates tragic and unfortunate deaths of individuals, Topographie des Terrores reminds its audience of the reasons why these tragedies took place, and that we must face and understand them in order for the country to move on and never return to its disastrous past.
Wall Park

The Wall Park is situated just six hundred meter east of the Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse, given its name for its eccentric handling of the monument. With an overview of the surrounding area, a strip of the Berlin Wall, about 20 meters long, stands on the hillside. Not too long, nevertheless dominant. Whereas the East Side gallery was painted with grandiose murals, the monument in the Wall Park is covered with various graffiti and street art. Looking closely, you can see inches of dried paint on the surface of the Wall as it has been painted over and over for several years since 1989.

This strip of the Wall within the Wall Park was regarded as abandoned for the first several years after its fall. As it wasn't particularly designated as a monument site, the Wall slowly became part of the city landscape and blended into Berliners' lives. Whereas other sites commemorating the border fortification attributed historical and cultural significance to the monument with additional plaques, fencing, and institutions built around them, the Wall Park's monument remains quite simple and natural.

In Berlin, the city of arts and visual expression, graffiti and street arts are highly prominent. These visual culture elements decorate the city's facade and attribute unique characteristics. Therefore, the integration of these painted blocks of the Wall in the park can be understood as the most natural, and uninhibited process of the monument turning into a commonplace for Berliners.
For individuals outside Berlin, or even Germany, most audiences may not understand how it is possible for the monument to be handled in a certain way that seems more of a vandalism rather than a commemoration. Nevertheless, the monument in Wall Park differs greatly from the monuments in Postadmer Platz and Checkpoint Charlie square. Whereas the latter two remain as sightseeing locations that use the Wall for commercial purposes of attracting visitors, Wall Park is a site where the monument is integrated into a communal space that is representative of the city's essential quality as a mecca for art. Wall Park preserves the barrier in the most natural way possible by deviating from artificial commemorative, appropriative, and preservative elements. The Wall is an essential part of the city's history and is in the process of slowly blending into the city's life again; not as a monstrosity that has caused decades of pain and grief, but this time as a site where Berliners can express themselves and spend their leisure time.
Freedom Park

Next to the Spree River that cuts through the heart of Berlin, and not too far from the East Side Gallery, Freedom Park Berlin is situated along the riverside in the ground of the Nhow Hotel. This open air Berlin Wall art exhibition is fairly new and expanding. “To commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the beginning of the Berlin Wall (13 August, 1961), the Dudes Factory, a privatized clothing factory situated in Berlin, created the first German ‘Freedom Park – an exhibition of segments of the Berlin Wall that originally stood at the famous Brandenburg Gate’.”

The Freedom Park opened on the 13th August 2011 with a “Live-Paint” event where 13 internationally renowned artists painted a total of 17 wall pieces. The goal of the park is to continue its extension until the 25th Anniversary of the Wall's erection in 2014, with a total of 50 artists invited to participate in the project. At the end, a charity auction is planned to be held during the closing ceremony, with half of the proceeds planned to be donated to human rights organizations.

The intention of the project was to not only commemorate the victims, but also report injustices in the world. The artists don’t just convey the tragedies caused by the Wall, but moreover critically examine the causes and consequences of the German division. Lastly, the pieces stand as reminders of everything the fall of the Wall has brought upon the citizens of Berlin – freedom. The Freedom Park acknowledges that although the Wall may have fallen, the
memories do not disappear.

The Dudes Factory originally wanted to revive 'Berlin's most famous legacy,” the Wall, and collaborated to create a space that not only stands as a space for art, but more importantly as a cultural dialogue of German history\textsuperscript{21}.

It is interesting that this space represents privatization of a public monument. The Berlin Wall, after its fall in 1989, has been pecked and torn down into thousands of pieces which then were taken, shipped, and sold to various places all around the world. From a giant block to tiny pieces, the Wall remains privatized by a global audience. During its erection in the past, the Wall served as a border fortification that did not possess any commercial value. Nevertheless, when it fell and was imbued with serious cultural and historical significance, this concrete barrier had gained a considerable amount of monetary value. During its last disintegration stage, even the German government held an auction in Monte Carlo and garnered a huge success.

The Freedom Park is owned by a privatized apparel company, which advertises itself through a public project. Yet, the project was not initiated for only the benefits of the company, but was executed from a humanitarian, anthropological approach to revive a cultural dialogue. In most contexts, the Wall remains a historical monument. But in this particular circumstance, the Wall is more than a reminder: the monument becomes a participant that actively aids in making a better community for the citizens of Berlin. The Berlin Wall, a segment of the past, becomes an active contributor for its city today.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
Haus am Checkpoint Charlie

If one wishes to find out every single detail and story related to the Berlin Wall, then Mauermuseum located in Checkpoint Charlie square is the right place to go. Although the acknowledgement of the Berlin Wall as a monument came into attention very recently, historian Rainer Hildebrandt began an exhibition on 19 October 1962, just outside the Berlin Wall, “in an apartment with two and a half rooms in Bernauer Strasse”22.” Later on 13 June 1963, the Haus am Checkpoint Charlie was opened and became an island of freedom right next to the border. Hildebrandt aimed to document the best border security in the world and the support of the protecting powers: “Artists interpret THE WALL” in 1973, “Berlin – from a front-line city to Europe's bridge” in 1976, to “FROM GANDHI TO WALES – non-violent struggle for human rights” in 1984. Through decades, the museum served an imminent role in representing a museum of international non-violent protest.23

As one of the most frequently visited museums in Berlin, Mauermuseum strives to bring the past back to life. Inside the museum is an extensive coverage of incidents related to the Wall and overarching documentations of the Cold War era with text, photos, and audio documents. From newspaper articles to children’s paintings, the exhibition covers a large amount of history that usually goes unnoticed in most documentations of the Wall.

23 Ibid.
The most notable aspect of Mauermuseum, apart from its grandiose collection of documentation, is its integration of the Wall with contemporary politics and culture. There is a separate exhibition that is reserved to inform its audience of present-day news regarding unjust violence and struggles in countries, such as the war in Iraq, Vietnam War, Kosovo conflict, etc. The museum also displays artworks such as sculptures or a replica of Picasso's Guernica, that visually depict horror and tragedy of violence. Powerful messages regarding the need to achieve world peace, resolve political battles between countries, and save humanity from deteriorating into a malicious battle between one another are successfully presented. Universal peace and global ethics, along with the importance of freedom, are central messages embedded within the museum.

Most importantly, as one walks out of the exhibition, he/she comes across the last section of the exhibition that centralizes on the fall of the Berlin Wall. A quote 'Freedom cannot be permanently walled in,' grabs viewers' attention. The museum, although named ‘Wall Museum,’ is not just about the Wall; rather it is about non-violent struggle for human rights, and constantly reminds its audience that this fight against violence is a battle that we must conquer. The museum serves as a true representation of the Cold War era in the context of our continuous fight against violence. Mauermuseum provides its audience with not only the facts, but also messages and lessons that guide them to look back, remember what the past offers to provide a better, brighter future.
Conclusion

The universal perspective on the Berlin Wall is fairly simple: the concrete barrier that separated Berlin during the Cold War era, which fell on 19 August 1989. Nevertheless, the Berlin wall was never just a wall. It was a demarcation of political struggle, a symbol of violence, a separation of a nation, a reminder of pain and grief over innocent lives, and ultimately a trope for peace and hope. Moreover, the Wall never took one particular form. What started as a barbed fencing to intimidate East Berliners from fleeing to the West in 1961 became a system of barricades that included six different obstacles. The Berlin Wall developed and expanded over twenty-eight years. As political struggles between the superpowers worsened, the Wall became a permanent aspect of the nation - and forever changed people's lives.

History is indispensable for a healthier future of our society. By documenting and remembering the past, our global community strives to move forward and learn from our mistakes. The Berlin Wall represents one of the most notable tragedies that took place. This physical separation of Germany which began overnight, caused by political and power struggles, unexpectedly transformed into decades of pain and agony for countless families. But just like its inception, the barrier's fall happened overnight.

The Berlin Wall instantaneously became disintegrated into millions of pieces - largely due to Berliners' wish to get rid of the Wall that constantly reminded them of deaths and sufferings they had to endure for all those years. This instant disappearance of the barrier that kept the nation in euphoria for the next few years became troublesome, as art historians realized a desperate need to bring back this political instrument that is essential in understanding the global politics in the Cold War era.

Generally, many believe the monument should have been preserved the way it was, in order for us to be able to experience the past in the most accurate method possible. Some may argue that it is essential for us to keep the monument as safe as possible, for example in a vitrine inside a museum, if we want to be able to look at it decades, if not centuries, later. But neither was the case for most appropriations and preservations of the Wall within the city of Berlin. Although some may have been relocated from original positions, blocks of the monument were left freely uninhibited – confronted with all kinds of weather conditions. Moreover, with a couple of exceptions, the Wall stood in an open space – completely bare and naked to its audiences.

Dealing with the monument in Berlin focuses on one thing: preserving the history as the way it naturally should be without artificial protection or embellishment. History is the past. We cannot reenact the past, but only remember it as best we can. Trying to create the exact experience from the past is simply impossible and has no purpose. The Berlin Wall, even if it had been preserved perfectly without a single trace of tainting or vandalism, the monument would not be the same as it no longer serves its original purpose. Without the political struggle and the existence of the Stasi Regime, the border fortification today is nothing but a concrete barrier stripped of its original purpose. Artificially preserving the monument, as if no time had passed, does nothing to protect its original meaning - but only contaminates its natural process of becoming a part of history. The citizens of Berlin manifest this particular principle in their own remembrance of the Wall.

The Berlin Wall should never be approached the same way as a regular memorial. This
particular monument’s volatile nature exhibits not only the documented occurrences of the past, but also political and cultural aspects that we are able to infer. Curators and art historians are in full charge of “a forum that becomes a medium of and setting for representation that acts as a vehicle for the display of objects or space for telling a story.”

There are various practices in which the Berlin Wall tells different stories about its history. As Sturcken and Cartwright stated in Practices of Looking, “a single image can serve a multitude of purposes, appear in a range of settings, and mean different things to different people.” As extensively covered in the research, many art historians/curators utilized distinct approaches to provide varying aspects of the monument. What must be taken into consideration is that the Wall during its erection and the Wall after its fall manifest differing significance. When the Wall came down in 1989, and was broken into a myriad of pieces by wall-peckers and citizens, the monument gave birth to a thousand different methods of interpreting its history.

Today, the monument resides throughout the city - sometimes in bigger blocks and other times in smaller pieces that are barely decipherable. Some are used to attract visitors for commercial reasons, some are left to remind individuals of what horror and tragedies it caused in the past, and some turned into city landscapes that serve as indispensable elements in everyday lives of Berliners. None of these circumstances is wrong, and there is no accurate way of ideally preserving the Wall. The Wall may go through rainstorms, dirty hands of tourists, and spray paints of graffiti artists. And in the future, the Wall may have disappeared - at least the ones that stood in its original place.

But Berliners say that the possibility of physically losing the Wall is not a problem. The bigger problem is individuals forgetting the significance of the Wall. The erection of the Wall fifty years ago cemented the rift in Germany and Europe for many decades. Nowhere was the drama of German division as visible as Berlin, the central theater of the confrontation between East and West.

Many memorial sites and museum spaces commemorate the border fortification. In different contexts, each explains different narratives of the Wall: from victims, global power relations during the Cold War, to hope and world peace for which the monument now stands. The Berlin Wall was not Berlin's problem alone, nor was its significance simply that of an especially dramatic chapter in the history of German division. These sites serve to recall the past and prevent the Wall's significance from being eroded. Together, all these institutions strengthen the memory of division and thereby an awareness of the value of freedom and democracy, especially among the younger generation.

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