

THE WALL IN OUR HEADS



American Artists and the Berlin Wall

Goethe-Institut Washington

October 25–December 15, 2014

Lindy Annis | Alexandra Avakian | 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
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During the Cold War, the Berlin Wall was the world's most notorious line of demarcation. From 1961–1989, the fortified border not only separated East and West Berlin, but it also surrounded the allied zones, including the American sector. Divided Berlin became a global epicenter of ideological conflict, military occupation, and artistic experimentation. Hundreds of American artists felt compelled to visit Berlin and produce work on both sides of the Wall. Even in the shadows of its stark border, the city served as a focal point of cultural exchange between Germans and Americans.

While many Americans traveled to post-World War II Paris for their own imposed exile in Europe, or formulated perspectives on the complexities of domestic culture while driving interstate on the American open road, the divided city of Berlin was another popular option for Americans seeking critical distance. Identifying sometimes as visiting artists, sometimes as expatriate Berliners, American cultural producers have time and again returned to the Berlin Wall to ponder political borders worldwide and social boundaries back in the United States, especially those connected to matters of race, gender, sexuality, class, and national belonging. In addition to exploring the Wall, they also pursued projects in Berlin with German colleagues that led them to engage with post-Holocaust Jewish trauma, radical political communities, diasporic identity, queer culture, and other historical manifestations of division. When viewed collectively, a creative tradition emerges: artists from the United States look to the Berlin Wall as an evolving site and symbol for American culture.

This practice continues to generate layered perspectives on freedom and repression, despite the demise of the Berlin Wall as a formidable border in 1989. Select contemporary artists weigh the afterlife of the Wall with a resilient critical and creative eye, producing projects that consider its monumental ruins and the "new walls" around the world. Whether based in reunified Berlin or elsewhere, such works complicate the routine treatment of former Wall pieces as self-evident relics and highly priced art objects. Placing these stories, sites, and projects in a shared frame helps us to understand artistic representations of the Berlin Wall as a significant form of American cultural reckoning. The artists in this exhibition demonstrate a practice of civic engagement by moving in and out of U.S. borders, and critically exploring the space between democratic ideals and deeds.

The Wall in Our Heads: American Artists and the Berlin Wall commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and reflects on this legacy of division in American culture. The exhibition sheds light on critical American artistic perspectives on the Wall from 1961 through the present, foregrounding artworks that confront social boundaries in the United States as well as the complex historical crossroads of Berlin.

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Lindy Annis

(American, 1960-)

Lindy Annis has lived in Berlin since 1985, where she uses performance art to explore the city's social and geopolitical landscapes. "I arrived in West Berlin as a matter of chance on September 1, 1985," she recalls, "an experience I compared with happening into Peter Pan's Never-Neverland." She lived amongst a group of immigrants, many of whom were American, including Bill Van Parys. She adds, "We moved through the city from squatted house to cafe to bar and gallery, bleaching our hair and cutting it with 1980's pizzaz." In 1990-1992, the years immediately following reunification, she staged her *Paternoster Trilogy*. The venue was a continuously running elevator (*Paternoster*), an architectural oddity for a modern city but a common feature in several older East German buildings. Performing in and through the architecture of a bygone era of German history, Annis linked such structures to a trifecta of mythical figures and maps: Alice in Wonderland, Dante's Inferno, and Christopher Columbus's so-called New World. Audience members were invited to move between floors to approach the work's totality, but the many scenes remained elusive to a fixed perspective. Annis's performances continue to draw on the evolution of Berlin and its American expatriate culture, as she explores themes of linear progress and historic time. In October 2004, she invited ten artists to theatrically interpret Theodor Dreiser's 1925 novel *An American Tragedy* at the Hebbel Theater in Berlin, to coincide with the U.S. Presidential election.

Alexandra Avakian

(American, 1960-)

Photojournalist Alexandra Avakian has photographed prominent events of international struggle and social change for noted publications such as *National Geographic*, *New York Times Magazine*, *TIME*, and *LIFE*. Days before the November 9, 1989, Avakian was sitting on a friend's couch in Paris monitoring hourly news on a shortwave radio about the possibility of change occurring at the Berlin Wall. On Monday, November 6 at dawn, she flew to West Berlin, where she began shooting on assignment for *LIFE*. A day later, on November 7, she awoke before sunrise and walked close to the center of the city near the Brandenburg Gate. She recollects, "There was no confirmed information about whether the Wall would fall or not yet, but there were demonstrations in East Germany... I found a group of young West German men slamming the Wall with a hammer. They had been at it for hours." As East German border guards arrived, Avakian documented the chaotic scene. She adds of that morning, "Suddenly a water cannon started blasting through the crack the young men had made in the Wall. East German border guards were trying to push us away with the hard freezing blasts of water. Wet and cold, I made lots of pictures and had no idea at the time that one frame would become the most famous picture of the fall of the Berlin Wall." Days later, as the peaceful revolution crystallized, Avakian stayed in Berlin, documenting powerful scenes of public revelry, melancholy, and amazement as families mostly from East Berlin explored the Western half. Afterward, Avakian went immediately to photograph the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, and continued her coverage of the Soviet Union through the end of state communism. She also covered the conflict and peace process between Israel and the Palestine, among other countries undergoing challenges, uprisings, and revolutions. She is currently at work on three longterm projects.

Jonathan Borofsky

(American, 1942-)

In 1982, Jonathan Borofsky debuted his *Zeitgeist* exhibition in West Berlin's Martin Gropius Bau, a renovated museum located only a few steps from the Berlin Wall. Borofsky's installation confronted the legacies of conflict surrounding the gallery, which was adjacent to the former S.S. and Gestapo headquarters, a site years later excavated as the Topography of Terror. In addition to previously conceived works, Borofsky painted a monumental figure on the Wall outside of the gallery. Working directly on the Berlin Wall, he became one of the first well-known artists from outside of Germany to treat the border as a canvas. With "Running Man," Borofsky compels viewers to imagine his signature figure in motion, even though the runner's posture indicates no clear direction other than stalking the border. Borofsky's roving figure resembles theorist Walter Benjamin's notion of the angel of history, epitomized by a gaze fixated backward and a body primed for forward movement who perceives the duality of destruction and progress in either direction. While in Berlin, Borofsky also documented his dreams and created additional artworks about them which, like his art, dealt with images of the Nazi period and the Cold War. He explains his piece, titled "*Berlin Dream, 2978899*," in an accompanying statement: "I had a dream when I was living and working in West Berlin - near the Berlin Wall. I dreamed a dog found its way into a garden of birds because the fence was broken. It picked up one of the birds in its mouth. Later, when I was awake, the memory of this dream fragment led me to thoughts about freedom and aggression, fear of 'the enemy' and the need for personal space." Years later, Borofsky was invited back to Berlin for a post-reunification commission: the iconic "Molecule Man," a large 30-meter tall sculpture situated on the Spree River, a former dividing line of the city. Borofsky adds, "In all of my work, I seek to convey the feeling that we are all connected."

Frank Hallam Day

(American, 1948-)

As a teenager, Frank Hallam Day lived in West Berlin. He and his family arrived in July 1962, eleven months after the Wall's construction. In Berlin, Day's father Arthur had served as the Director of the Berlin Task Force in the State Department and subsequently as a Deputy Chief of Mission in West Berlin. His family lived there from 1962-1966. Day was fascinated by the conditions of the occupation, collecting surplus military photographs and documents. Later in his life, Day also worked for the State Department, before turning to full time work as a fine art photographer. He returned to Berlin starting in 1995 to photograph the erasure of social (as well as personal) memory involved in the city's reunification. His work, alternately titled "Berlin Mitte" or "Lost Images," demonstrates historical change through poetic juxtapositions. He views the city's construction sites, especially near the former Checkpoint Charlie, Potsdamer Platz, and on Unter den Linden, as haunted terrains of a layered history. In 2012, Day was awarded the prestigious Leica Oskar Barnack photography prize.

Chuck D

(American, 1960-)

In 2010, when Arizona lawmakers passed SB2010, granting law enforcement officials the broad power to stop and demand the

papers of anyone suspected of being an undocumented resident, rapper Chuck D released a musical protest and a visual art piece in response to this legislation. As a member of the esteemed hip hop group Public Enemy, Chuck D had released a protest song a generation earlier, 1991's "By the Time I Get to Arizona," in objection to the state's noncompliance with honoring the federal Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. commemorative holiday. Chuck D's 2010 follow up, "Tear Down That Wall," sampled several historical sounds: his own "Arizona" track and President Ronald Reagan's 1987 Brandenburg Gate speech. The remix included a rearrangement of President Reagan's own words into a collaged sonic challenge of the law. As Chuck D drew from and scrambled the speech's word-bank, President Reagan was remixed to declare: "But in the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of failure, unprecedented in all human history." He paired this song with an artwork that he deemed a "visual mashup," titled "By The Time I Got to Arizona." Made in collaboration with L.A.-based SceneFour, Chuck D contends, "You have people who think they have the audacity to own the land, mountains, rivers and keep people out of the place that's supposed to be the pillar of democracy. It's just hypocritical to the highest degree. So we have to make art to make a statement." Among the images in his digital collage he includes a ruined segment of the Berlin Wall with revealed inner-support steel bars that stands next to a fence meant to symbolize the U.S.-Mexico border. The Berlin Wall serves as a litmus test for U.S. policy in an age of aggressive immigration reform.

Ron English

(American, 1959-)

Noted street artist Ron English creates evocative images and site-specific installations about contemporary commercial and political culture. He coined the term "POPaganda" to account for his landmark mashups and hybrid creations that work across realms of mass culture. In late 1986, English painted over the same stretch of the Berlin Wall as Keith Haring, next to Checkpoint Charlie. After painting in Berlin, and later guerrilla postering on the Israeli separation walls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, English turned his sights toward the U.S.-Mexico border. On April 1, 2011, English and several collaborators created a constellation of works on both sides of the border. The day's final activity involved affixing a two-headed donkey, painted with the colors of each country's flag, to a concrete section of the barrier. This installation attempts to call into question the increased fortifications of this division. As one commentator notes, "the United States and Mexico are linked by historical destiny, but mulish policies on both sides had created the current madness." English's daring action encroached upon the unruly landscape at the manufactured border. English recalls, "The parts that are concrete - they built these slopes up to them... They zig zag back and forth. So we had maybe 30 to 60 seconds to actually pull the thing off. And we had to drive down to this ravine to get to the wall. Nobody had ever graffitied it yet... pure canvas."

Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab

The "artist" collective Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab consists of Ricardo Dominguez, Amy Sara Carroll, Brett Stalbaum, Micha Cárdenas, and Elle Mehrmand, among others. While operating in the realms of experimental theater, concrete poetry, new media, and hacktivism, they produce projects that enact "electronic civil disobedience" and "virtual sit-ins." Among their influences are

German-Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin, the American civil rights movement, and Mexican Zapatista revolutionary communities. With the "Transborder Immigrant Tool," the artists respond to the militarization and industrialization of the U.S.-Mexico border from the mid-1990s onward. They also intervene into the humanitarian crisis of mass migrant deaths largely ignored by U.S. officials. They acknowledged perspectives on the Cold War at the onset of their project: "When the Berlin Wall fell, official reports claimed that [over] ninety-eight people in total died trying to cross from East to West Berlin. In contrast, local and international nongovernmental organizations estimate that 10,000 people to date have perished attempting to cross the Mexico-U.S. border." In theory, the "Transborder Immigrant Tool" features multi-lingual poetry and GPS-tags on disposable cellular phones to identify water stations for migrants on GSM mobile networks. Before the project could be fully deployed, right wing media outlets publicized the tool by widely decrying it. The result was an investigation of the project and its participants, some of whom were University of California, San Diego professors targeted at the request of three Republican U.S. Congressional representatives. The artists were never charged with any wrongdoing. For this exhibition, the "Transborder Immigrant Tool" exists as a series of semi-functional phones, embedded within a meeting room, emitting sounds throughout the office spaces of the Goethe-Institut Washington.

Allen Frame

(American, 1951-)

Born in Mississippi and educated at Harvard University, Allen Frame came of age as a photographer in the downtown New York art scene. While directing and performing an adaptation of David Wojnarowicz's *Sounds in the Distance* in New York and later West Berlin, he collaborated with figures such as Steve Buscemi, Nan Goldin, John Edward Heys, and Bill Rice. In 1984, during the city's film festival, he directed a performance in a West Berlin loft. Frame notes, "After that experience directing, my compositions became more stylized. They look really controlled, although they're not... My photographic 'capture' was like street photography brought inside with fast reflexes, shooting fast to get something that feels natural but is very composed looking at the same time." Frame draws on the charged physical environment of Berlin to render evocative, intimate scenes with cinematic allure. His subjects, co-stars Butch and Frank, share a smoke break during rehearsals at the performance loft in the Kreuzberg neighborhood, with an open window inviting speculation on the Berlin Wall that sits just outside. Frame adds of the scene, "Kreuzberg, with its Turkish restaurants and trendy bars so close to the Wall, seemed exotic to us, but the whole divided city, with its edgy style, dense atmosphere, and historical importance, struck me as a hugely heightened, mysterious place." Frame included this image in his 2001 book, *Detour*.

Leonard Freed

(American, 1929-2006)

Leonard Freed documented social landscapes and historical sites in Germany for over fifty years, from the onset of the Berlin Crisis through the end of the Cold War. In August 1961, while working on his book about Jews who returned to Germany after the Holocaust (*Deutsche Juden Heute*), Freed traveled from his apartment in Amsterdam to Berlin upon hearing the news that East German

forces were building a wall through the middle of the city. He photographed along the newly fortified border, and fixed his camera on American GIs assigned to inspect the Wall's construction. On this trip, Freed viewed the Wall peripherally with one significant exception. Freed captures an image of an unnamed African American soldier standing near the intersection of Charlottenstrasse and Zimmerstrasse with the new Wall blocking the horizon. This encounter haunted Freed and inspired him to return to America to photograph the civil rights movement. Freed opens his landmark 1968 photobook *Black in White America* with the resulting photograph and adds the caption: "We, he and I, two Americans. We meet silently and part silently. Between us, impregnable and as deadly as the wall behind him, is another wall. It is there on the trolley tracks, it crawls along the cobble stones, across the frontiers and oceans, reaching back home, back into our lives and deep into our hearts: dividing us, wherever we meet. I am White and he is Black." Freed's photographs and observations on the Berlin Wall were also included in several of his other books, including *Made in Germany* (1970), *TIME-LIFE: Berlin* (1977), and the posthumous *Re-Made: Reading Leonard Freed* (2013), the latter including previously unpublished images from Freed's documentation of the dismantling of the border system in November 1989 and German reunification in 1990.

Nan Goldin

(American, 1953–)

Nan Goldin's photographs are celebrated artifacts of late-20th century bohemian counterculture. They record deeply personal moments for Goldin, and convey themes of love and identity in ways that are despondent, defiant, yet hopeful. Goldin became acquainted with Berlin as she shaped the debut of her classic narrative slideshow and photobook, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986). In 1984, she premiered the work in West Berlin's Arsenal Cinema, before touring it throughout the world. Along with New York and Paris, Goldin views Berlin as a pivotal point of return: "The best years of my life were here in Berlin... I don't say that lightly. I've been looking for a home all my life. The only place I feel myself and comfortable and feel real love for my friends is Berlin." In her photographs, Goldin extends a vision of 1980s Berlin that echoes the city's lost past, particularly its Weimar-era reputation as an epicenter of cultural expression and sexual freedom. Though she regularly presented her work publicly, Goldin favored shooting domestic interiors and private intimacies. Her vantage almost entirely ignored the obvious shadows of the city's division. However, her photograph taken in the bathroom of East Berlin's Pergamon Museum in 1984, rendered the divided city as a space of interpersonal isolation and refuge. In 1991, Goldin returned to Berlin on a DAAD grant. Her collection of Berlin photographs from before and after the time of the Berlin Wall was featured in the 2010 exhibition, *Nan Goldin: Berlin Work* at the Berlinische Galerie.

Keith Haring

(American, 1958–1990)

Celebrated international artist Keith Haring painted numerous murals around the world, including several at sites of conflict and contestation. In 1986, at the invitation of the Haus am Checkpoint Charlie, Haring painted a 300-foot-long section of the Berlin Wall, featuring interlinked human figures rendered in black, red, and yellow, the colors of the traditional German flag. Haring painted continuously, covering the surface in one day. His monumental artwork presaged the reunion of the two Germanys, even as he coded a variety of subtle physical symbols of difference within

the interlocked figures. That day, Haring told members of the press, "It's a humanistic gesture, more than anything else... a political and subversive act - an attempt to psychologically destroy the wall by painting it." During the press conference, Haring drew attention to another region and crucible of political conflict. He wore a self-designed "Free South Africa" t-shirt, symbolically linking his mural on the Berlin Wall to his global anti-apartheid advocacy. Within days of its creation, Haring's mural was painted over by other artists, and audiences lost the opportunity to make connections between the Berlin Wall and contemporary global conflicts. To date no known remnants of Haring's Berlin Wall mural exist. However, a few years later, in 1989, in the spirit of reunification, Haring created a design for a poster and T-shirt, hybridizing the initials of the previously divided German regimes. "BRDDR" represents the bridging of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland and the Deutsche Demokratische Republik, and refers to the newly opened border with the timely exclamation, "Open 24 Hours!" printed in both English and German.

Oliver Harrington

(American, 1912–1995)

Oliver "Ollie" Harrington, born in the United States to an African American father and Jewish immigrant mother, grew up in the South Bronx. He became a well-regarded political cartoonist who in 1943 was sent by the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African American newspaper, to Europe to cover World War II. Years later, he settled in Paris as a member of an expatriate community of African American artists and writers that included Richard Wright and James Baldwin, all of whom experienced frustration over America's postwar regressive racial politics. In August 1961, while on a contract assignment for Aufbau Publishers in East Berlin, he happened to view the Berlin Wall's construction near his hotel. "I was a virtual prisoner," recalls Harrington. The same year, however, Harrington requested political asylum in East Germany and resettled there for the duration of that country's existence. Harrington adds of his time as a resident in East Berlin, "There were great temptations to leave there, but I liked the work." He regularly cartooned for publications such as *People's Daily World*, *Eulenspiegel*, and *Das Magazin*, through which he critiqued U.S. imperialism and racial repression. In 1989, Harrington viewed the end of the East German state with caution. After reunification in 1991, he returned to the U.S. and published a book of essays, *Why I Left America*.

Carol Highsmith

(American, 1946–)

Carol Highsmith, a photographer and author, documents prominent sites around the United States with high-resolution digital images. She collectively builds them into a large, open access archive for the Library of Congress. Her images of the Wende Museum's L.A.-based *Wall Project* highlights one of the most prominent U.S. Cold War sites of memory. In this undertaking, the Wende Museum worked with city officials to curate a sequenced public display of segments of the Berlin Wall along Wilshire Boulevard, one of L.A.'s busiest thoroughfares. The *Wall Project* is located between Ogden and Spaulding Avenues, across from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in a privately controlled, publicly utilized space. The Wende Museum offers newfound perspectives through creative programing and a coordinated repainting of the Wall pieces on both sides. The Museum treats the pieces of the Wall not as static monuments or memorials but as points of reflection and action. Recently,

a panel was repainted to include an honorific display to late-South African leader Nelson Mandela. Highsmith's work signals to viewers the fact that numerous segments of the Berlin Wall, including these pieces along Wilshire Boulevard, have been notably incorporated into the monumental landscape of American public spaces.

James Huckenpahler

(American, 1969–)

James Huckenpahler creates work at the intersection of urban spaces, archival traces, and fodder from dream journals that register his subconscious connections. One of his primary subjects is his native D.C., where he works, teaches, and has spent many years in pursuit of an epic civic work about his hometown. In 2011, as a creative research resident of Provisions Library, he traveled to Berlin to consider D.C.'s parallels with the German capital, with special attention to the ways that formerly fallow industrial spaces might be transformed into vital cultural sites. Exploring Berlin on foot, he discovered, among the many sites of interest, a former amusement park with roots connected to Germany's division. Located in the former East Berlin, Kulturpark Plänterwald was a socialist fair grounds regarded as a place of collectivity, leisure, and indulgence. After reunification, private owners augmented and renamed the area "Spreepark," adding new rides and dinosaur sculptures to create a "Western World." Many of the ruins of both eras of the park remain in-situ to this day. Recalling his own memories of Uncle Beazley, a fiberglass triceratops, formerly situated on Washington's National Mall during his childhood, Huckenpahler views such relics in Berlin as uncanny reminders of an outmoded historical wonder and as metaphors of political distortion. "Already for my students, the bureaucratic behemoths of the Cold War are as colossal and distant as the post-apocalyptic Pompeii," Huckenpahler states. In the aftermath of his residency, Huckenpahler produced large prints built from digital 3D models, as well as the book *Metamonument*, as part of a multi-disciplinary virtual tour of both cities. Huckenpahler continues to listen to the echoes at such crossing points of geopolitical culture, drawing on Paul Beatty's satirical novel, *Slumberland*, set in Berlin in the late 80s and early 90s, for an additional print. Huckenpahler stokes historical consciousness with an imagined musical score by book protagonists DJ Darcy and the Schwa that also refers to Kulturpark through his title "Communist Disneyland Mixtape."

Allan Kaprow

(American, 1927–2006)

Performance artist Allan Kaprow visited West Berlin in November 1970 on a DAAD grant. In cooperation with Rene Block Galerie, he carried out a performance on Köthener Strasse in Kreuzberg, titled "Sweet Wall." Known for his "Happenings" in which banal activities with minimalist staging become platforms for performance art, Kaprow and a small group of collaborators fashioned a proxy wall in an empty lot near the actual border. They used cinder blocks held together with bread and jam as mortar. Soon after, they toppled their own creation. "Sweet Wall" was a work that aimed to playfully commandeer the physicality of the Wall, as well as offer an examination through a deliberately rudimentary imitation. In doing so, he was able to approach the Wall's symbolic power by scaling it to a workable size for critique. Kaprow reflects on his project by stating, "It enclosed nothing, separated no one. It was built in a desolated area close to the real Berlin Wall. The real Wall divided a city against itself... As parody, 'Sweet Wall' was about an idea of a wall. The Berlin Wall was an idea, too."

Farrah Karapetian

(American, 1978–)

Farrah Karapetian addresses and refracts the notion of the historical collectible in a series of works titled "Souvenir." In her broader body of work, she is "driven by minor personal narratives that question, inform, and destabilize hegemonic patterns of history." In conjunction with the Wende Museum's commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, Karapetian seeks to expand the archives and collectible nature of the Wall. Karapetian traces actual remnants of the Wall on acetate and plexiglass to make chromogenic prints of the pieces. She imbues her prints with colors that match hues found on the original graffitied concrete pieces, and she hand-cuts the prints to provoke dimensionality. When displayed as artworks, the souvenirs float between a glass frame and a plain background. Whether these prints function as indexical etchings of a historical surface or simply as fabricated objects, Karapetian puts forth an ambivalent form of monumentality to recall the evolving, subjective legacy of the Berlin Wall.

Nilay Lawson

(American, 1980–)

Born in Würzburg, West Germany to an American serviceman and Turkish mother, Nilay Lawson was raised on and around U.S. Army bases throughout her childhood. Working across a range of media, including paint, sound, and video installation, she draws on her personal history of Cold War transnational crossings. She aims to render intimate exchanges and critical musings on matters of public expression and identity. Here, Lawson sets out to mark the moment in her third grade classroom when she encountered a piece of the Berlin Wall during a session of "Show and Tell." This would be her final encounter with the Wall she recognized as a consequential artifact. It was also her first experience with it as a souvenir. Lawson recalls, "He stood directly in front of me with that chunk while talking about how he acquired it from his father. I was aware of the great impact of the Wall coming down through the intense reactions of all the adults around me and the inherent feeling of fear of living in Europe through the Cold War." Lawson recreates the moment of her classmate's reveal in a painted reformulation of her memory. Further, Lawson searched through her family's VHS tape archive from before and after 1989, a mode of retrieval that she imagines as central to her creative process. She selected highlights out of this trove of home video footage, including a family performance with her sisters in which they all wear American military garb, and several other intrusions of geopolitics into her home space. She offers these edited clips as a projection onto her painting, with interspersed glimpses of walls that she encounters on daily walks near her studio in Los Angeles. She contends, "This combination of video and painting recreates the magic of cinematic projection. That magic seals the weight of what it was like to be present and alive as a child during that unsteady time in global history."

Oliver Miller

(American, 1972–)

Trained as an architect and artist, Oliver Miller builds functional environments of social collectivity and historical reflection in post-Wall Berlin. He first visited the city in 1993 while crisscrossing Europe by train. Amidst the swirling currents of historical change, Berlin's sites of mundane transformation and its subtle pockmarks particularly

intrigued him. Miller later studied architecture at Princeton University, influenced by Professor Alejandro Zaera-Polo. As a Masters student, Miller pursued a final project called *Recreating Recreation*, an interplay between cultural exchange and social practice aesthetics, a leitmotif for many of his future undertakings. His work hinges on the interplay Returning to Berlin in the early 2000s, Miller began holding unsanctioned ping pong parties in abandoned spaces in the former East Berlin, a common practice amidst other cultural activations in forlorn ruins and unoccupied structures. Under the moniker "Dr. Pong," Miller fused theory and his architectural training with an intervention into the evolving landscape of the city. He set up shop in an abandoned grocery store near the former Wall on Eberswalderstrasse in Prenzlauer Berg. He marked the entrance for those in the know with a makeshift sign on the door, using vinyl letters from an American hardware store. After gaining a sizable following, Miller decided to remain in Berlin full-time as an expatriate. He eventually applied for a business license and gained the lease to the Dr. Pong property. Miller views his negotiation of German bureaucracy in the *Wende* period as part of his creative process. He notes, "Speaking German is for me a game and an experiment, a game that I want to win at, but an experiment I expect to learn the truth through a process of trial and error." Miller continues to live in Berlin, where Dr. Pong sustains as a cultural mainstay, currently located within footsteps of the popular Mauerpark flea market. In 2010, Miller extended his own work on post-Wall Berlin in a special issue of the architectural journal *Disko*, co-edited with Daniel Schwaag and Ian Warner. The trio focuses on the area of the "new death strip" in a series of critical essays on the infamous and now redeveloped middle fault line of the city. Miller and his colleagues weigh the overlay of historical haunting and newly sprouted architecture (some spectacular, some banal) in the former death strip of the Berlin Wall.

Adrian Piper (American, 1948-)

Adrian Piper, acclaimed conceptual artist and philosopher, has long compelled audiences to productively engage the cultural status quo. In particular, Piper invites viewers to confront their own limitations surrounding race, gender, and historical experience. While Piper has exhibited her artworks and installations in prestigious museums throughout the world, her bridged American-German identity remains a prominent aspect of her work. Piper's first trip to Germany occurred in 1977, when she took intensive German language courses at the Goethe-Institut in Berlin as a PhD student in Philosophy at Harvard University. As she toured art exhibits and explored the divided city, the Berlin Wall provided a pivotal backdrop for her trip. In 1978, she writes, "In West Berlin... everything is displayed, advertised, renovated, rebuilt, lined with neon and rock music. In East Berlin, all of that is absent. The people are subdued, react to me as to a stranger, and eye my Levi blue jeans." After six months in Berlin, she moved to the University of Heidelberg to study for a year; this extended sojourn in Germany left an imprint that would profoundly shape her career path. Decades later, in 2005, she moved back to Berlin, where she currently resides. In Berlin, Piper edits the *Berlin Journal of Philosophy* and oversees the Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation. In an ongoing series, titled *Everything* (2003-), she places the phrase "Everything Will Be Taken Away" on a range of shifting sites, platforms, and on engaged participants' bodies'. Piper connects the project to her sense of alienation around American politics and culture: "[The] Everything series evolved from my need to cope with the loss of my illusions about the United States...

Since I've been living in Berlin, the meaning of the work changed... I perceive a population characterized by the removal of barriers and how it has constituted itself anew: the fall of the Berlin Wall; the slow dissolution of a facade of normality." Piper has chosen not to return to the United States until her name is removed as a Suspicious Traveler from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration's Watch List. Installed in the gallery at the Goethe-Institut Washington, *Everything #5* blurs the boundary between artwork and art venue as the piece is embedded within the building's architectural frame. This process requires cutting into and removing part of the gallery wall, revealing a plexiglass window in order to both expose the unseen elements of the building's inner spaces and reflect back at the viewer their own image. In calling for perception through absence, Piper summons the ghosts of the historical present.

Stephanie Syjuco (American, 1974-)

Stephanie Syjuco, a UC-Berkeley art professor, creates experimental sculptures and site-specific installations reflecting the contradictions and upheavals of global capitalism. Her 2008 exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, *The Berlin Wall*, highlighted a culture of collection and valuable historical debris associated with the end of the Cold War. Syjuco populated the museum with found, quotidian concrete chunks, raised and illuminated in a formal display. She included engraved brass plaques to note the exact location and year she found the material, but intentionally named each as "Berlin Wall." Her remnants closely resemble so-called "pieces of history," Wall fragments regularly sold in souvenir shops and online. Through disjuncture and the temptation of cognitive dissonance, Syjuco contends her "fictional collection... attempts to manifest the hopes and promises that the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall temporarily ushered in." Syjuco engages the specious triumphalism that followed the end of the Cold War and bestows her fabricated historical remains with an auratic value also placed on many displaced Wall pieces. In 2014, Syjuco was awarded a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship, and has begun updating this project to explore disruptive forces of urban redevelopment in an age of economic upheaval. She has created a new set of staged Wall pieces forged from demolished Soviet-era buildings in Poland, hand-painted and packaged to resemble actual Berlin Wall collectables, in cooperation with the Kronika Center of Contemporary Art, Bytom. In Fall 2014, together with Haverford College and Bryn Mawr College, Syjuco will pilot a long-term collection of historical remnants measuring the effects of contemporary gentrification in a project, titled *American Rubble: Micromonuments*.

Shinkichi Tajiri (American and Dutch, 1923-2009)

Shinkichi Tajiri first encountered the Berlin Wall in 1969, en route to an interview for a guest professorship at West Berlin's Hochschule der Künste. Tajiri, a Japanese American sculptor and multimedia artist whose large scale works appeared in public squares and museums, traveled to Berlin from Baarlo, Netherlands, where he lived in a "self-imposed exile" from the United States. While in Berlin, he viewed the Wall with immediate intrigue. Tajiri accepted the position, and also decided to set out to render the entirety of the Berlin Wall in a photographic survey. He recalls, "During my bi-monthly trips to Berlin, I explored the Wall. It was the most fascinating piece of architecture in Berlin, and it drew me in like a magnet." Like his close

friend Leonard Freed, Tajiri connected his work in Berlin to broader conceptual American themes. He started in West Berlin's allied American sector, then moved his way through the city's other occupied zones. The Wall was undergoing its first major systematic renovation, and the border appeared uncannily to Tajiri: in the 1940s, he was detained with his family in an American internment camp and served in a segregated American "Nisei" unit in World War II to gain his freedom. Tajiri's work on the Berlin Wall conveys the variation and social interactions occurring on the border during a period of détente, as the two Germans moved toward full diplomatic relations and a calmed acceptance of their division. Tajiri self-published his photographs in the 1971 keepsake book *The Wall Die Mauer Le Mur*. He continued visiting the Wall, including a filmed flyby over the city in a helicopter in 1972 to capture it as a continuous sculpture snaking through the city and later, in 1981, for a series of grounded 360-degree panoramas. Tajiri taught in West Berlin as a professor through early 1989, and maintained close connections with his students after his retirement. He was slated to return to West Berlin in November 1989 for an exhibition of his paper knots at the Galerie Horst Dietrich. However, when attendance was reportedly low, he suspected the other opening in town, the newly breached Wall, might have overshadowed his exhibition. This unexpected turn of events did not deter Tajiri, as he returned soon after to observe the dismantling of the Wall in January 1990. He was fascinated by the Wall's materiality, again, but now in its state imposed decomposition. He notes, "Immediately a new industry was born. Enterprising individuals and then whole families hacked away at the surface and sold fragments to tourists. An unequipped visitor could rent a hammer and a chisel for 5 marks an hour and carry off his own mementos." Tajiri continued to photograph the Wall even as it disappeared. In one image, he posed with the Brandenburg Gate behind him and several large chunks of the Wall at his feet. He brought pieces of the Wall back with him to Baarlo, and placed them along the windowsills of his studio. In 2005, Tajiri published the prints from his original survey as a brick-shaped book titled *The Berlin Wall*. In 2011, President Barack Obama posthumously awarded Tajiri and his fellow surviving Nisei soldiers with a Congressional Medal of Freedom.

Bill Van Parys

(American, 1960-)

Reyes Melendez

(American, 1962-)

Before moving to West Berlin in 1983, Bill Van Parys was a self-described "Mr. Corn-fed Kansan Economics Major." But he experienced a metamorphosis soon after arriving in Europe. Van Parys notes, "I was drawn by its subcultural calling cards: squatted housing, kinky sex, anarchic punk scene, lax police force, perpetual gloom. I dyed my hair and clothes black, changed my name repeatedly, and prided myself on doing nothing... It was heaven." Van Parys lived in West Berlin until 1988, and his experiences attest to the radical subcultures embedded in the city's cultural fabric. In 2009, after a successful career as a journalist, serving as an editor for *Details* and *Rolling Stone*, he penned a prototype for a memoir titled *Under the Berlin Wall: From Kansas to Kreuzberg and Off Into the Universe*, which documents with precision and panache a queer history of 1980s Berlin. With artist and collaborator Reyes Melendez, Van Parys constructs an annotated map of his most storied Berlin haunts and hotspots. Printed to a monumental scale, the map installed at the Goethe-Institut Washington conveys a sense of the divided city's

most fundamental contradictions, provocative areas, and unresolved tensions. Van Parys is currently adapting his unpublished memoir into a television series described in production notes as "*Valley of the Dolls* performed by the Baader Meinhof gang."

Lawrence Weiner

(American, 1942-)

Lawrence Weiner is a noted figure in conceptual art who helped redefine the role of the artist as both a material practitioner and intellectual provocateur. He once claimed "walls were built for things to be put upon them," and in Germany and throughout Europe, one can find numerous artworks by Weiner, including monumental installations of text-based mantras in public squares and museum galleries. However, when he began working on themes related to Germany's division in the 1970s, he did so without any direct interventions onto the Berlin Wall itself, favoring instead other modes of border engagement and entanglement. In 1971, he adapted his *Broken Off* project to include a series of postcards that he sent out from East Berlin. In 1975, Weiner was awarded a DAAD grant and directed the Avant Garde film, *A Second Quarter*. Actors in this experimental film include Coosjie Kapetyn, Tony Long, Beatrice Conrad-Eyebesfeld, and Weiner himself, all of whom read statements on camera from Weiner's catalogues and other utterances in repetition. The film was shot on location in West Berlin and aimed to treat the city as a theoretical laboratory of liberation, free expression, and aggression through language games. The scenes take place in a number of dramatized domestic spaces and within sight of one iconic vista of the divided city - looking down along the Wall from an observation deck near the bombed-out ruins of Anhalter Bahnhof. Production stills by Weiner alternately offer a glimpse of the Wall as a strange cultural meeting place and a zone for charged recollection. In one instance, he stages an inscription on a building's exterior wall of the insidious historic phrase from Nazi concentration camps: *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work makes you free).



Special Thanks:

Wilfried Eckstein, Sylvia Blume, Norma Broadwater, Craig Childers, Amira Abujbara, Bill Adair, Zach Alden, Laurie Allen, Judith Brodie, Catharine Clark Gallery, Scott Cummings, Verna Curtis, Cory Danziger and SceneFour, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, Caleb Eckert, Dr. Walter O. Evans, Brigitte and Elke Susannah Freed, Aimee Fullman, Gemini GEL, Gitterman Gallery, Nan Goldin Studio, Julia Gruen, Evan Hamilton, James Huckenpahler, Julie Joseph, Allan Kaprow Estate, James Krippner, André Robert Lee, Katherine Lennard, Kristin Lindgren, Janice Lion, Rosie Lou, Patrick Mansfield, Matthew Marks Gallery, David Morris, Moved Pictures Archive, Annelise Ream, Amanda Robiolio, Donna Ruane, José Ruiz, Michael Rushmore, Jeremy Rutkiewicz, Leonard Schmieding, Debora Sherman, Parker Snowe, Square Form, Jacob Sweeney, Stephanie Syjuco, Giotta and Ryu Tajiri, Francis Michael Terzano, Lawrence Weiner Studio, Kai Wiedenhöfer, Joseph Wills, Elen Woods, and Tarssa Yazdani.

Postscript

November 9, 2014 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. This historical event beckoned the end of the Cold War, the inception of a new European House, and a vision of a globalized liberal order. The path to the new freedom had been prepared by changing global politics and a continuous strengthening of civic movements throughout Eastern Europe. Today, however, new walls challenge us. They remind us of past confrontations we wish we could overcome.

This exhibition of American artists and their perspectives on the Berlin Wall, in coordination with a paired outdoor installation of photographs by German artist Kai Wiedenhöfer, form the visual framework for an extensive program around the commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The arts are our medium to reflect upon both what separates us and what fosters bridges of cooperation.

The Goethe-Institut's mission is to build relations through the arts, and to spur a dialogue between civil societies. The dismantling of the Wall generated a glimpse of the utopian One World. Twenty-five years later, we are commemorating that event to engage and maintain the promise of that vision.

-Wilfried Eckstein, Director of the Goethe-Institut Washington

With generous support from the following institutions:
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

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Production: Nilay Lawson
Prints: Furthermore
Web Design: Caleb Eckert