5-2016

Berlin: Border Control

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Following the conclusion of World War II, according to the Potsdam agreement, Germany was divided into four occupation zones. Berlin, capital, was divided in a similar way. France, Britain, and the United States met to combine non-Soviet zones into a single zone for reconstruction according to the Marshall Plan. In Germany, development of the capitalist economy began to rebuild. However, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) followed in Soviet form with a communist economy heavily owned by the state. With a standard of living gap that continued to widen, huge numbers of citizens from the GDR emigrated to West Germany. Thus, Stalin called for a border: "The demarcation line between East and West Germany should be considered a border—and not just any border, but a dangerous one ... The Germans will guard the line of defence with their lives." The inner German border was closed in 1952, with the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

"Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, every man is a German, separated from his fellow men by a wall of concrete. "The Berlin Wall, the symbol of state violence, took millions of people to the limits of what is tolerable, and all too many beyond it. It broke them."

"The fall of the wall has shown us that dreams can come true. "Nothing has to stay the way it is, however big the hurdles are."

"After these four decades, then, there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor."

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall! -Ronald Reagan, 1987

"Peace + Freedom"

"The Berlin Wall, made of barbed wire and concrete, rife with ideological struggle at the end of the Cold War."

"The fall of the wall was the dream of generations come true for "Nothing has to stay the way it is, however big the hurdle is."

Angela Merkel, German Chancellor, 2014

"TEAR DOWN THIS WALL!"

"We hear too often the words: 'Victory has been achieved.' What is victory? Only a victor, only a loser. But there is no victory, only a victor, only a loser."

"The Berlin Wall, not a wall, but a symbol of division."

"Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

"Peace + Freedom!"

President Ronald Reagan, Western Germany, 1987

"The Berlin Wall is a symbol of a system that is about to be overthrown."

"Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, every man is a German, separated from his fellow men by a wall of concrete."

"The fall of the wall was the dream of generations come true for "Nothing has to stay the way it is, however big the hurdle is."
The death strip and the ultimate realized instrument of order. During raid and after death within was a race of control. The fragmentalization of personal liberty and the construction of SS and Soviet garrisons. From 1961 to 1989 the wall became the Berlin death strip and the wall which separated East from West. It was divided by various checkpoints and barriers, leaving a lasting impression on the cityscape of Berlin.

Architecture of the Wall
Stützwandelement 08.12.11

The final iteration of the Berlin Wall, retaining wall element 12.11. It has a distinct architectural language of division. It is a blank slate, inviting artistic expression while forbidding passage. Modular, sturdy, insurmountable, heavy. This wall implies permanent separation more so than early barbwire fences. And the wall creates two unique conditions on each side.
Friedrichstraße Bahnhof began construction in 1878 as part of the Berlin Stadtbahn project. The two platforms sat within a large curved train shed resting on a masonry base. The main entrance was on the northern side of the station. The ornate masonry detailing did not survive multiple renovations during and after the World Wars.

Between 1919 and 1925, the renovation took an expressionist style and the entire northern side was covered with dark brick that can be seen today. The station was expanded for the increase in rail traffic by the addition of a second shed.

Along with the erection of the Berlin Wall, Friedrichstraße Bahnhof was separated in a similar manner. Division occurred between the two sheds with the construction of a physical metal wall. The two separate nationalities could simultaneously use the station without ever seeing one another. Being a border crossing, the station also was associated with several daring crossing attempts. The station existed as a terminus point for East German trains and a transfer point for West German U-bahn and S-bahn lines.

Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, the station reopened for free transit. The wall was removed and the entire station was re-opened. The instruments of control, including border checkpoints and interrogation rooms, were replaced with a retail experience at the ground level. Maze-like navigation in this "mall" carries a remnant of the border control from the past.

This project proposes a new future for the station, one that celebrates freedom of movement. I seek to reinhabit the wall by clearly loading the circulation of the station among the spine of the station where the division once occurred. By cutting into the station, I can increase the natural light that can reach the entire section while also allowing greater visual connections between the multiple levels and platforms. The trench that marks the location of division is now bridged and moved across freely.
During the Cold War, it was very difficult to cross the wall, and it was impossible to inhabit the physical zone of the wall. The renovation of Friedrichstrasse Bahnhof allows one to move freely across the wall on multiple levels and engage with a program that is embedded in the wall. Apart from observing the station, the screens augment the way that you look at other people. Sometimes, the screen is punctured to allow greater transparency and sometimes pieces of program such as bars and exhibits nestle themselves within the edges.

[RE]CROSSING THE WALL

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