

Origins Development Future

by Rainer Hildebrandt



The first exhibition opened on the 19 October 1962 in an apartment with only two and a half rooms in famous Bernauer Straße. The street was divided along its whole length; the buildings in the east had been vacated and their windows were bricked up. We suggested that tourists be thankful to those border guards who do not shoot to kill: "See through the uniform!" Some guards saw that we understood, and after their own escapes came to work with us.

The large number of visitors encouraged us to look for new premises: on 14 June 1963 the "Haus am Checkpoint Charlie" was opened and became an island of freedom right next to the border. From here, through a small window, escape helpers could observe all movements at the border crossing; escapees were always welcome and supported, escape plans were worked out, and injustice in the GDR was always fought against.

The aim was to document the "best border security system in the world" (GDR armed forces general Karl-Heinz Hoffmann) and the support of the protecting powers — until the tank confrontation between the USA/USSR. Further exhibitions followed: 1973 "Artists interpret THE WALL", 1976: "Berlin - from a front-line city to Europe's

bridge", 1984: "FROM GANDHI TO WALESIA - non-violent struggle for human rights".

Because of our friendly contacts with escape helpers we got hot-air balloons, escape cars, chairlifts, and a small submarine. We are grateful to resistance activists for a spring gun for the dismantling of which they had risked their lives and a piece of the wall's tubular top-cladding, knocked off by "wall runner" John Runnings.

We can also call ourselves the first museum of international non-violent protest. Our exhibits include: The Charta 77 typewriter, the hectograph of the illegal periodical "Umweltblätter" ("Environmental Pages"), Mahatma Gandhi's diary and sandals and from Elena Bonner the death mask of her partner Andrei Sacharov.

There are over a hundred military museums in the world. But in an epoch of growing responsibility for our planet we can be sure that more museums of international non-violent protest will be established. "The world is so well built that against every injustice there are stronger, vanquishing forces. ...From every injustice arises justice, from every untruth truth, from darkness light." — Words of Mahatma Gandhi.



13 August 1961: all around West Berlin, armed military units of the GDR hermetically seal off the city. The erection of the wall begins...

9 November 1989: politburo member Günter Schabowski announces the decision of the GDR government that "travel abroad for private reasons may be unconditionally applied for." A few hours later border controls can no longer deal with the crowds and let the people through...

These two historic dates mark the corner-stones of our exhibition about the Berlin Wall, the history of which is presented by means of photographs and texts. Numerous original objects from successful escapes demonstrate the courage and creativity of the escapees. Photos and objects

THE WALL from 13 August 1961 to its fall

Friedrichstr. 43-45
D-10969 Berlin-Kreuzberg

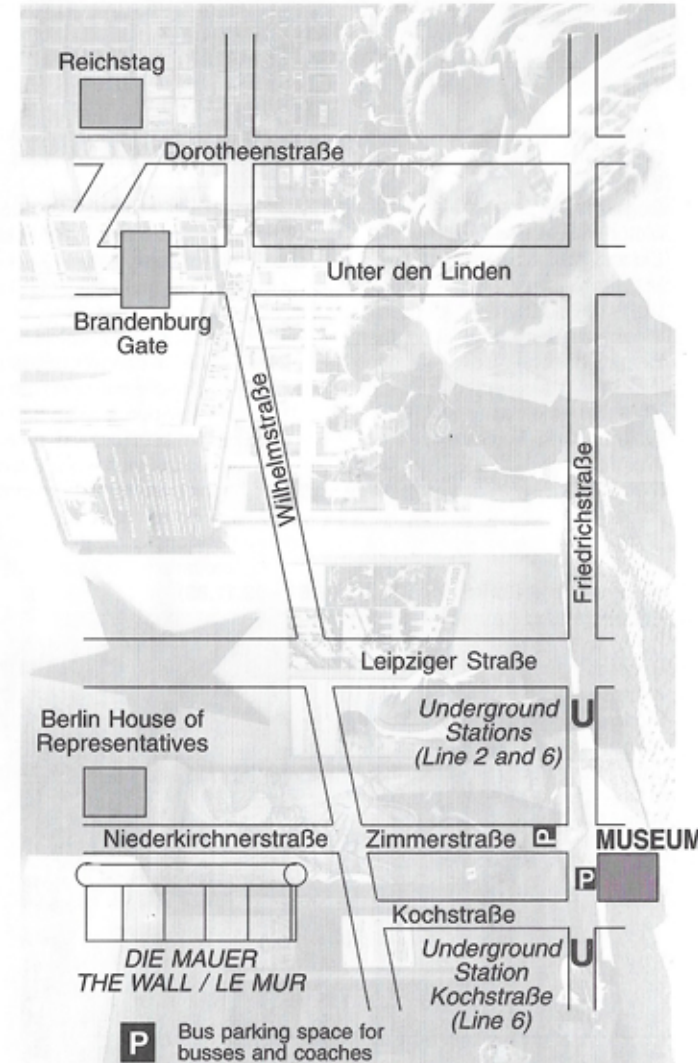
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MAUERMUSEUM
MUSEUM HAUS AM
CHECKPOINT CHARLIE

Open every day
of the year
from 9.00 until 22.00

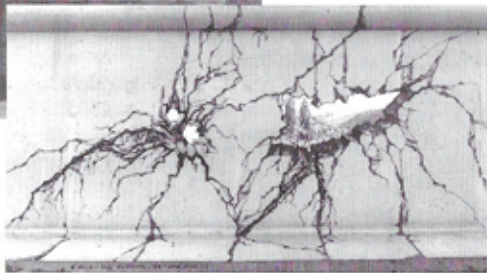
Public transport:
Underground line 6, Kochstraße
Underground line 2, Stadtmitte
Bus 129



show the development of the GDR's border security system, from the first hollow blocks to the Wall of the fourth-generation, the L-shaped segments of which became the longest concrete canvas in the world. A spring gun for the dismantling of which they had risked their lives, and other elements of the former "border security system" surrounding a city and a country illustrate the Wall's historic uniqueness.

THE WALL becomes a challenge: from GDR citizens, who call for freedom of movement by simply writing "§ 13" (paragraph 13 of the UN Charter) on their chests, to US citizen John Runnings, who - sitting astride the wall - is hammering off a piece.

**Artists
interpret
THE WALL**



"It is only because artists and poets have borne witness that we can understand past hopes and recognise their perspectives for the future."

These words by the philosopher Ernst Bloch are the introductory motto to our art exhibition. It not only presents the at first rarely occurring portrayals of the Berlin Wall in visual art (Horst Stempel, Roger Loewig, Gisela Breitling), but also, among others, works by Johannes Grützke, Matthias Koeppel and Karl Oppermann appearing later on.

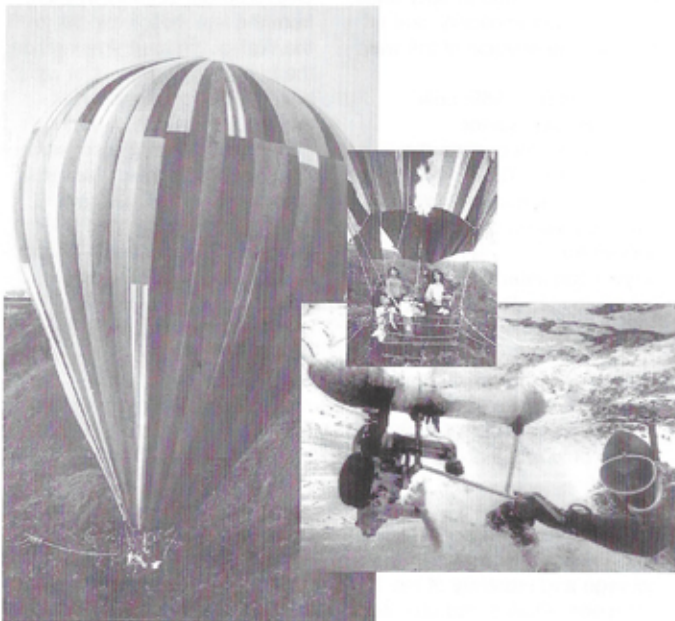
The exhibition, which we are continually able to extend thanks to the kind support of the foundation "Stiftung Deutsche Klassenlotterie Berlin", is not only a comprehensive overview of artistic portrayals of the Wall, it also covers a wide range of

artistic commitment to human rights as a whole.

Works can be seen by numerous internationally renowned artists such as Bill Brussilowski, Bulatow, Roseline Granet, Hajek, Heiliger, Hannah Höch, Kolar, Kyncl, Makarov, Masson, Penck, Reuter, Rischar and Tapies. In the end, photographs and objects can only inform, but artists can exemplify how a particular time was experienced.



Between 1961 and 1989 more than 5,000 people were able to escape across the Berlin Wall. In the course of time the aids they used to overcome the increasingly perfected GDR border security system became more and more inventive, and many of them have found their way into the museum's collection: several reconstructed cars, a mini submarine with which an escapee dragged himself along in the Baltic Sea, hot-air balloons and home-made motor-powered kites equipped with a Trabant engine or



**Inventive
Escapes**

the tank of a Java motorbike. People also escaped hidden in loudspeakers, or in a radiogram.

Full documentation is available on numerous escape tunnels. The most successful of them enabled 57 people to reach West-Berlin on two evenings in October 1964. In addition to many photographs of the tunnel, the car in which the earth masses were transported is also on view. For this donation we are grateful to one of the escape helpers, Reinhard Furrer, who later on became one of the first Germans in space and who died in 1995 in a plane crash.

**MAUERMUSEUM
MUSEUM HAUS AM
CHECKPOINT CHARLIE**



40 years' dedication to peace in freedom, founded in 1962 beside the legendary Checkpoint Charlie border crossing, the geographical focal point of the Cold War, where two worlds split apart and joined again.



The Wall - history and incidents
Original objects from successful escapes under, over and above ground
World-wide non-violent struggle for human rights

The exhibition text is in German, English, French, and Russian.

Open every day of the year from 9.00 until 22.00