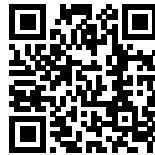




WALL OF OPINIONS: UNBUILDING WALLS

Posted on September 27, 2018 by martabuges



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For 28 years, Germany has been united – exactly as long as the Berlin Wall existed. On the occasion of this parallel, GRAFT and Marianne Birthler are curating the exhibition “UNBUILDING WALLS” at the German Pavilion at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice. The exhibition’s special focus is on the unparalleled void of the Wall strip and the projects that have redefined this former death space into a new living space with the help of various strategies. 28 projects show how the heterogeneity of different approaches, typologies, actors and results creates a broad spectrum of architectural debates and solutions.

Taking the experience of the inner-German Wall as a starting point, the exhibition also examines current barriers, fences and walls beyond Germany’s specific national perspective. In the course of the preparations for “UNBUILDING WALLS” a journalist team travelled to border walls around the world. This work with the title “Wall of Opinions” is shown at the German Pavilion. The video installation documents the voices of people who live in the shadow of walls in Cyprus, Northern Ireland, between Israel and Palestine, the USA and Mexico, North and South Korea and at the European external border in Ceuta. As walls exist for many different reasons, the “Wall of Opinions” does not aim to make an overriding statement to the viewer of the exhibition, but to acknowledge different voices. Walls always have two sides and a one-sided approach does not do justice to the personal fates of those affected.

Even though the world grows ever more connected, new walls are being discussed and built in the current climate of renewed debate on nations and nationalism, protectionism and segregation. In a world in which trade is global, in which personal communications function on a global scale and in which the threat of rapid climate change can only be tackled together, populist calls for exclusion and restriction seem absurd. Nevertheless, they find a broad echo: the more we are connected, the more it breeds desire on the one hand and a fear of loss on the other with regard to possessions, standing and identity. The new walls that are appearing are above all an expression of socio-political changes and an unwillingness, or an incapacity, to enter into dialog. New dividing lines are arising in people’s minds: walls of opinions that signal an end to communications, an unwillingness to listen and hardened fronts of opinion. Such tendencies are a threat to free societies founded on pluralism, tolerance of diversity and mutual respect in interactions.

Perhaps it is not possible to prevent walls entirely. Wherever they appear, however, they are a sign of crisis—of a breakdown in communications, of the inability to meet hate and injustice with civil means. This is where every one of us can play a role in breaking down the walls in our minds.

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From the experience of the wall built in Germany and of overcoming it after 28 years, we can draw an important message: walls cast long shadows—even when walls are torn down, the invisible divisions they create remain tangible for a long time.

<https://vimeo.com/270615925>

<https://vimeo.com/270400099>

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