

T+T**VIRTUELLE
MAUER
RE-CON
STRUCTING
THE WALL**

Interactive 3D Installation Virtuelle Mauer/ReConstructing the Wall

This interactive 3D artwork is a project of the artist team T+T. Produced primarily with funding from the Berlin Capital City Cultural Fund (Hauptstadtkultur-fonds), it is part of the Berlin Wall Memorial Concept of the Berlin Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs.

In this project, the artist team T+T has digitally reconstructed a section of the Berlin Wall and its surrounding neighborhoods. Set primarily in the 1980s, the artwork is projected life-sized to immerse users visually and kinesthetically in the virtual world. Exploring the space via a simple joystick, users' actions and movements trigger a web of scenes depicting everyday stories and historical events. Users are in effect the main characters, average Berliners who have to live day in and day out "in the shadow of the Wall."

The drama of the interactive VR artwork thrives on the suspense that is created between the users and the virtual space itself. Open doors and staircases offer different perspectives on the world. Characters reveal their stories when approached, sometimes taking users on a journey back into the events of the 1960s, when the Wall was newly built, or into the present, when all traces of the Wall have vanished.

In our project area, at the time of the Wall not even West Berliners could cross between East and West – the border crossing here was not open to Berlin residents. In this virtual world, however, dream sequences aligned with the axis of the Engelbecken Park transport users into the present, when the Wall is no more and anyone can freely wander between East and West Berlin.

Artist Team T+T

The principles of T+T are: Tamiko Thiel, an American VR (virtual reality) artist, internationally known for her use of VR technology to create socially critical artworks; and Teresa Reuter, a Berlin architect and 3D artist with metroGap – Association for Urban Theory and Practice – whose work is strongly influenced by years of experience dealing with the urban development of Berlin.

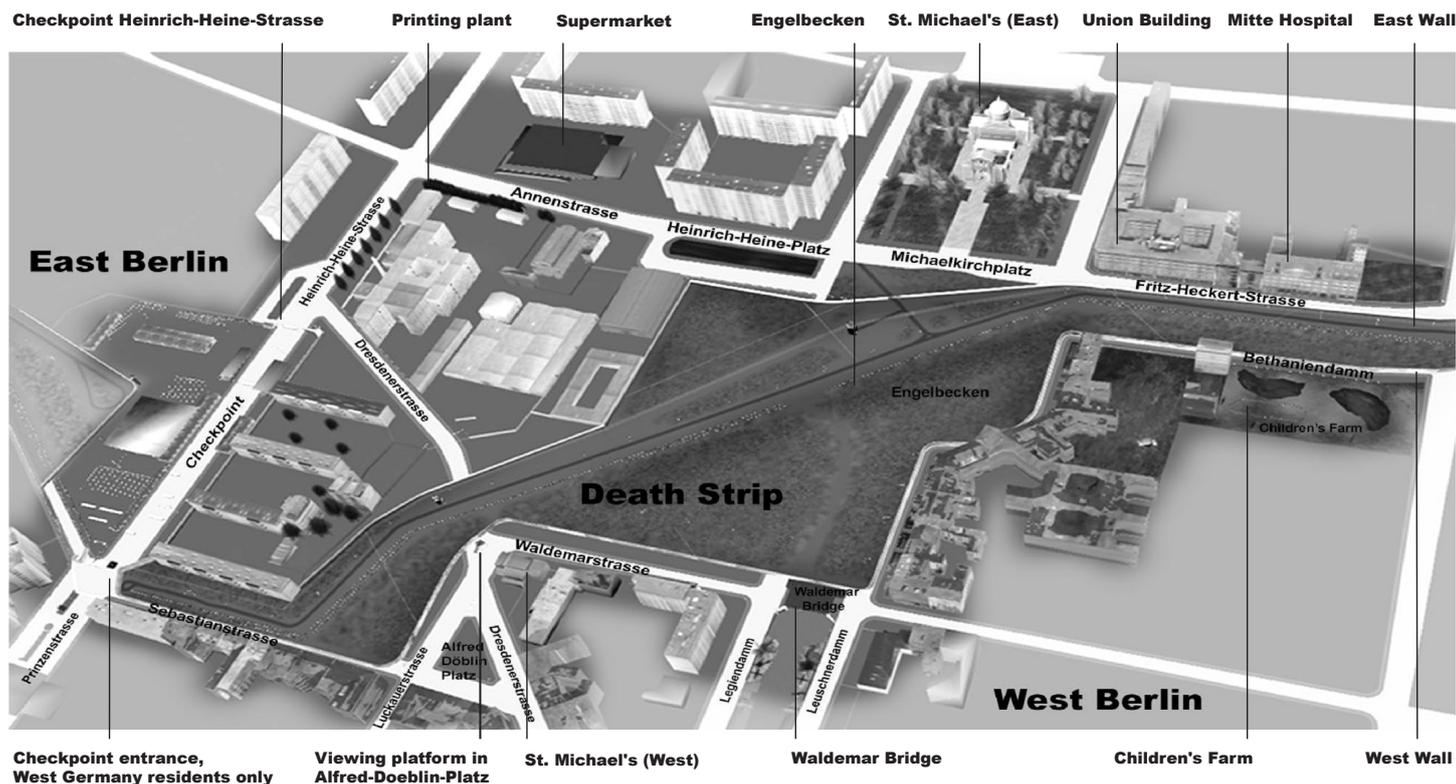
**Where was the Wall?
Are we in East Berlin or
West Berlin?**



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Map of the Virtual World



This text describes just a few of the situations and events to be discovered in **Virtuelle Mauer / Re-Constructing the Wall**.

► Alfred-Döblin-Platz (West Berlin)

In Alfred-Döblin-Platz in West Berlin we can eavesdrop on two people on a sight-seeing tour of the Wall. They speak in German and English about a successful escape from East Berlin, and the subsequent demolition of several blocks of buildings. On a trip back in time to the 1960s, we see that the West Wall actually consisted of the facades of the buildings themselves. On a trip forward through the 1970s, we see how the Wall and Death Strip was successively fortified over time. Arriving in the 1980s, we can climb a viewing platform to get a good view into the Death Strip. If we walk out of Alfred-Döblin-Platz along Waldemarstrasse, we get a good impression of the colorful and diverse “Wall art” of 1980s West Berlin.

► Waldemar Bridge (West Berlin)

Before the Wall and after its fall, there was a striking view from Waldemar Bridge north across the Engelbecken Park to St. Michael's Church in East Berlin. In the 1980s, when the Wall obscured the lower part of the church, the artist Yadegar Asisi painted the missing part of the church on the West Berlin side as a “trompe l'oeil” optical illusion. If we approach this artwork on the bridge, we are catapulted to the spot where the trompe l'oeil on the Wall merges with the “real” church to form a complete image. The

ringing of church bells draws us through the Wall into the Death Strip, and forward in time to the present. The Engelbecken, at the time of the Wall part of the vast wasteland of the Death Strip, is restored to its original splendor as a park.

Certain exits lead out of the Engelbecken into East Berlin; others lead into West Berlin. As soon as we cross the – invisible – boundary of the Death Strip, we fall back in time to the 1980s. The Wall closes behind us. Are we in the East or the West? It depends on our own choices and actions – just as it did on the day the Wall was built.

► Fritz-Heckert-Strasse (East Berlin)

The Fritz-Heckert-Strasse (now Engeldamm) in East Berlin was one of the few streets where normal citizens could see and approach the East Wall. Two imposing buildings stand in this street. The building on the corner of Michaelkirchplatz was built by the famous architect Bruno Taut. At the time of the Wall it housed the official East German trade union, the Free German Trade Union Federation. The large, older building near it was also erected as a union building, but was later converted to Mitte Hospital. This was one of the few buildings open to the general public from which East Berliners could see into the Death Strip and over the Wall into West Berlin. If we enter the open stairwell, we can share their view: not the “Golden West” of legend, but shabby, rundown residences and the surreal sight of a Children's Farm in the middle of metropolitan Berlin.