

Original Paper

The Berlin Wall as Living Ornament

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Abstract

In this article I argue, based on Gilles Deleuze's concept of affect, that the aesthetics of the Berlin Wall, i.e., the aesthetics of the different generations of the Wall itself (especially the last generation of the Wall) and the artistic interventions on the Western side of the Wall, in form of graffiti and wall art, have created effects which not necessarily challenge the Wall's function as a border fortification system, but incorporate it in dialectical form. Affects triggered by the Western Wall's sensational effects and its meandering course through the divided city have animated the Wall in such a way, that the Wall transforms into a living ornament. I read the Wall's aesthetics as Baroque, in which façade and inner structure are seemingly unrelated but not separate and condition each other. I argue that the growing tension between Western surface intervention and Eastern military structure have the potential to bring forward states of e/motion, which I term in the Deleuzian sense: becoming political.

Keywords

aesthetics, ornament, affect, Berlin Wall

1. Introduction

In "A Natural History of Ornament" (2016) Vittoria Di Palma discusses in her historical account the difference between affect and effect vis-à-vis ornament. Both are rooted, according to Di Palma, in sensation and involve the body but conceive of the individual in different ways. Di Palma describes a relationship between observer and object observed, which produces effects, as one-directional. Effects are transmitted from object to observer. A relationship, which triggers affects, on the other hand, is understood as two-directional and conceptualised as a tension which affects observer as well as object in such a way that both categories become unstable.

Affect, like effect, is rooted in sensation. Both concepts attempt to theorize (to greater and lesser extents) the response mechanisms of a relatively primitive, instinctual part of the brain. By operating on a biological level, by privileging the body and its forms of knowledge, both affect and effect also

hold out a promise of universality. [...] Yet despite these important similarities, effect and affect are premised on radically different notions of the individual. Whereas effect sought to theorize architectural response as a one-way relationship, something transmitted by the building to its spectator, affect is configured as a much more dynamic and reciprocal force. Affect, moreover, dissolves rigid categories like object and subject, imagining instead a distributed field in which distinctions between human and nonhuman no longer apply. (p. 33)

In this article I will demonstrate in which way sensational aesthetics seemingly competed with an aesthetics of sensations vis-à-vis the Berlin Wall (1961-1989), depending on point of view and corporeal engagement. Instances, where effects set affects in motion, will be seen as an aesthetic “Wende” (Note 1) or turning point in order to trace the “becoming political” of the Wall’s aesthetics.

Affect, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argue in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) is [...] not the passage from one lived state to another but man’s nonhuman becoming. [...] It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons [...] endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an *affect*. (p. 173)

When the Berlin Wall, the image/texts on the Berlin Wall and the people engaged with the Berlin Wall become entangled in such a way, that a zone of indistinction momentarily arises, affect shows its twisting and turning potential. “Becoming political of the Wall’s aesthetics” will, with reference to Gilles Deleuze, describe a process where the Wall’s always already political aesthetics will loosen its own petrification and pass into another, animated level of intensification, where human affects and movement will not halt at the Wall but pass through it; as if through a threshold. The framework of mutual blaming and discursive appropriation of the Wall for one’s own political purposes in form of *the Wall of Shame* or *Iron Curtain* (Note 2) for “the West” and *the Anti-Capitalist Protection Wall* (Note 3) for “the East will be replaced by the conceptualisation of the Berlin Wall and its Janus-faced structure as at once two-directional in terms of the before mentioned Cold War dichotomies as well as porous and fluid as a result of the Wall’s very own effects and the affects it produces.

In *Francis Bacon* (1981) Gilles Deleuze differentiates the violence of sensation, where the world seizes the subject by means of powerful affects, from the violence of the sensational, which is based on representation, the symbolic and clichés (p. 29). According to Deleuze the English painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992) excelled in the art of creating sensations, by clearly delimiting the plane on canvas, where a tortured figure seemingly dehumanizes and becomes animal. Becoming animal, in the Deleuzian sense, does not mean a transformation in appearance (looking like an animal) but a transformation in the way sensations are processed. Becoming animal then will entail the reduction to the pure presence of the body in spasms without the possibility of distancing oneself from it by means of language and representation. The human eye is liberated from the yoke of following the lines and outline of representation and will turn into the polyvalent eye that sees and feels with all body parts:

Painting is hysteria, or converts hysteria, because it makes presence immediately visible. It invests the eye through color and line. But *it does not treat the eye as a fixed organ*. It liberates lines and colors

from their representative function, but at the same time it also liberates the eye from its adherence to the organism, from its character as a fixed and qualified organ: the eye becomes virtually the polyvalent indeterminate organ that sees the body without organs (the Figure) as a pure presence. Painting gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs (the painting breathes ...). (p. 37) Contrary to Lacan's concept of the mirror stage where the infant, who is not yet in perfect control of his/her body parts, gains a feeling of visual control by looking at his/her reflection in the mirror (Note 4), the Deleuzian eye/I is an "[...] I do not see myself in the mirror, but I feel myself in the body that I see [...]" (p. 35). Instead of visual control, instead of a Lacanian optical eye/I, the Deleuzian eye/I in the process of transformation is based on haptic vision; it "sees" and experiences the body's very presence. Painting, Deleuze argues, has the power to make the body's "mannered postures" (p. 112) visible by means of non-figurative lines and color. In Francis Bacon's paintings "a zone of indistinction" Deleuze calls a diagram, which is demarcated by a clear contour, functions as "agent of transformation" (p. 109) where the formerly figurative (representation; resemblance) passes into the figural (trait; abstract resemblance). At the moment when the figurative transforms into the figural, contour functions as membrane filtering the exchange between the "plane of the figure" and the "plane of color as material structure" which surrounds the figure. The transformation can be set in motion by an inner force which is aroused from within or an outer force which traverses from without (pp. 111-112).

I will argue, that Wände (the Berlin Wall functioning as screen to paint on) at specific moments, by means of Wende ("seen" and felt e/motions in form of twists and turns), pass into much more dynamic constellations. A change in point of view might trigger the transition from the Wand/Mauer (Note 5) dichotomy to the Wände/Wende dyad. The person looking straight at the Western Wall will make use of his/her optical eye in order to decipher the image/texts on the Western Wall, whereas the person, standing on an observation platform or looking down at the fortification system from a heightened position will follow its meandering course. For the former the Wall will function as screen, for the latter as membrane, filtering commotion, inhaling and exhaling its very own "mannered postures".

In "Four Things Deleuze learned from Leibniz" (2010) Mogens Loerke discusses Gilles Deleuze's reading of the works of the German philosopher and mathematician of the 17th and early 18th century. According to Loerke, Deleuze's concept of the world as a complex curve, constituted by events, folds and inflexions is derived from Leibniz's philosophy. In *The Fold* (1993) Deleuze follows Leibniz's train of thought in his inquiry into the nature of matter and in which way thought and affect are enfolded in it: "[...] the universe appears compressed by an active force that endows matter with a curvilinear or spinning movement [...] Matter thus offers an infinitely porous, spongy, or cavernous texture without emptiness [...]" (p. 5).

To conceptualize matter as a force in the infinite process of folding and unfolding, constituting a series of events rather than a set of things, enables Deleuze (via Leibniz) to analyze difference without introducing division and discontinuity between the subject and his/her complex relationship to the world:

[...] there is, on the one hand, the fold of the world which must be *expressed* or *actualized*; on the other hand, there is the folding or enveloping of the world in the subjects that *express* or *actualize* it. The world in which we live is thus folded into us; it is us who bring this world into actual existence through our inner perception of it. (p. 30)

By shifting the analytical point of view from the Berlin Wall as discrete fetishized object, to a complex relationship of the subjects seeing with all organs, moving, along, between and through a fortification system, where two walls point in different directions and fulfill completely different roles, I hope to make visible the inner tension between the frontline and hinterland wall in the Berlin of the 1980s. Due to its Janus-faced character and the resulting tension, the Berlin Wall will be conceptualized simultaneously as fetish and “folded” membrane.

2. Main Part

When in the late 1970s the third generation of the Wall was replaced by Grenzmauer 75, an assemblage of steel-reinforced, whitewashed concrete segments, it is tempting to argue that the communist regime in the GDR created, apart from a sound military fortification system with frontline, hinterland wall and death strip, a late modernist, purified, serene material structure merging with its whitewashed Western façade in such a way, that the strength and beauty of its form would override its deadly content (Note 6).

While the prefabricated Wall segments perfectly matched the socialist egalitarian ideals of post-stalinist Platten (concrete block) architecture of the 1960s and 1970s, the individual Wall segment’s structure with a base, slim body/ pillar and pipe (Note 7), which was supposed to deter fugitives from scaling over the Wall, as quasi-capital, remind of Le Corbusier’s early modernist fascination with the beauty of classical architectural forms. In his collection of essays *Toward an Architecture* (1923) Le Corbusier celebrates ancient Greek architecture, especially the Parthenon temple on the Athenian Acropolis, for its pure, geometrical symmetry, where architecture reflects a harmonious inner state, originating from a “pure creation of the mind” (Le Corbusier, p. 231). About the Propylaea, the monumental gateway to the Acropolis, Le Corbusier muses:

Where does emotion come from? From a certain relationship between categorical elements: cylinders, polished floor, polished walls. From an accord with the things of the site. From a plastic system whose effects encompass every element of the composition. From a unity of idea extending from unity of materials to unity of contour modulation. [...] The emotion comes from a unity of intention. (Le Corbusier, pp. 235-236)

Is it an accident or intention that the symbol of early German classicist architecture, the Brandenburg Gate, which was modelled on the very same Propylaea, Le Corbusier was so fascinated with, stood in close proximity to the Wall and, from the beginning, replaced the Wall on the visual level in East German propaganda? (Note 8)

The iconic image (taken on August 14, 1961) of a group of GDR soldiers, guns in their hands, standing

in front of the Brandenburg Gate in such a way, that the soldiers seemingly merge with the classical columns of the gate, forming a wall of people ready to defend their country, was heavily exploited by GDR propaganda. (Note 9) The soldiers, who filled the empty spaces between the columns of the Brandenburg Gate, with a bit of fantasy, already foreshadowed the “colonnade” of concrete slabs to come. In classical antiquity, John Onians argues, “the erectness, and disciplined regularity of a row of columns” (p. 8) which held together a temple, easily prompted military associations and the wish that “the disciplined immovability” (p. 8) of the columns reflected back on the strength of their soldiers forming a phalanx. As will be shown, soldiers, columns and concrete slabs had become interchangeable in the imagination, not only reinforcing the collonade’s strength but also giving it a human face.

For each anniversary of the construction of the Berlin Wall the same image of the armed soldiers in front of the Brandenburg Gate was circulated in East German newspapers. The wall of people, according to Elena Demke in “Mauerfotos in der DDR” (2004) functioned as a visual euphemism, a human/ humane protective wall, replacing the fortification system of the first generation with its trademark barbed wire on a visual as well as on a verbal level. (p. 95) In order to underline her argument Demke cites letters to the editor in communist party newspaper Neues Deutschland (1966), in which the Wall is described as “lebender Wall” (living barrier) and “leibhaftige Mauer” (incarnate, embodied wall). (p. 95) While East German Hans-Joachim Näther as early as 1950 was shot for illegally distributing leaflets showing members of the FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend, communist youth organisation) imprisoned behind the classical columns of the Brandenburg Gate (Note 10), 11 years later the same columns were successfully transformed into protective structures magically interchangeable with the people defending the GDR; an image that would later seem aged and lifeless but never entirely loose its fascination.

For Berlin’s 750 year’s anniversary in East Berlin in 1987, one of the 300 “living” images (lebende Bilder) of the procession was formed or rather haunted by some of the aged soldiers of 1961 in front of a Brandenburg Gate dummy. (Demke, p. 94)

In *What Color is the Sacred* (2009) Michael Taussig argues, that from an anthropological point of view, color must be considered a living force rather than a mere sign. Color should be understood as calor, heat, a polymorphous magical substance rather than “a surface layer applied to a preexisting form” (p. 48). Color (as well as song) was experienced as transformative agent in the primitive cultures Taussig worked with, which as a play of light and energy entered and merged with the shaman’s body in ceremonial practice. Tim Ingold also stresses in *The Life of Lines* (2015) that color retains a dynamic and affective quality: [...] color gets inside us and makes it so that whatever we do, say, draw or write is done with a certain affection or disposition. “Drawing gives shape to all creatures”, wrote the encyclopaedist Denis Diderot, “but color gives them life.” Thus does color lend atmosphere to the line. (p. 104)

Could a similar boost in affection have resulted in the loss of distance between the intoxicated viewer and the polychrome excess on the Western Wall? Was the alleged *Sieg des Bunten* (victory of the

colorful) (Note 11) based on color or color's false aura? The answer is complicated and a detour to Austrian Art Brut seems necessary. The heavy, colorful tattooing of the Berlin Wall certainly reminds of Austrian Art Brut artist August Walla's (1936-2001) obsessive confrontation and bodily engagement with color, image and words, which enabled him to "survive" in an allegedly extremely menacing environment. For Stephen Barber in "August Walla: Devil/God, Image/Text" (2010) the saturation and collision of images (mostly human and animal figures) with words, he inscribed on the furniture and wall in his room, on the street, on trees ... enabled Walla to effectively play out inner conflicts since the "[...] zone between word and image is one that gathers confrontation, and sensitizes the work to transmit corporeal, political, historical or sexual conflicts." (p. 321) Walla's universe was characterized by the confrontation of monstrous, malign as well as benign figures with textual references to religious, political, historical as well as personal matters. Into this "zone of combat", Barber argues, Walla entered with his body, which in the field of image/word tension was exposed to terror as well as underwent transformation, enabling him to elude complete (psychic/corporeal) annihilation (p. 328). A similarly obsessive corporeal engagement such as Walla's with image/texts on hard surfaces can, even on its Western side, rather be attested to the hard surface itself and its function as inner city border than to the image/texts on the Berlin Wall. The historian Martin Schaad mentions in *"Dann geh doch rüber" Über die Mauer in den Osten* (2009) more than 400 cases of people climbing/ jumping over the Wall from West to East. One of the most famous cases was unemployed West Berliner Arnold Kabe, who breached the Wall eighteen times (1974-1977). Despite several stays in psychiatric clinics and great efforts by the Stasi to make Kabe respect inner city borders, he continued to jump over the Wall (pp. 128-136). While Kabe was driven by inner necessity, activist John Runnings, used a similar strategy for political ends. He relentlessly climbed and ran on the Western Wall, attacked it with a sledgehammer, tried to ram it, was arrested and had to serve prison sentences in the GDR between 1986 and 1989 (pp. 161-184).

A willingness to enter "the combat zone" of words, images and color, as August Walla did, was with regard to the Berlin Wall more often due to optical illusions than inner necessity. In his essay on Walla, Stephen Barber shows several photographs of Walla kneeling on the street, covering it with images, text and symbols, lying next to the finished work. The close proximity between the image/texts and Walla's imposing body underline Barber's convincing argument. Walla, who was suffering from schizophrenia, certainly used words (from different languages), common symbols and images to cope with his fear of the void:

He works relentlessly until the page is all covered. His drawings testify of the fear of space. In other words, empty space is felt like a threat, the threat "letting through" a "malignant look" that would annihilate everything. (Note 12)

Obsessive Kilometer artists (Note 13) like Thierry Noir or Christophe Bouchet might have become entangled with their artwork on the Berlin Wall and posed in front of it for a photograph, but a similarly intense bodily experience of and engagement with graffiti has been recorded elsewhere (Note 14).

What were the possibilities to puncture the colorful screen, which had become so approachable from the West, that it was mostly ignored? Janet Ward, whose understanding of the Wall is that of a living, breathing, vulnerable membrane, mentions little cement doors in Grenzmauer 75. Through these doors border guards could access the Western side of the Wall, which still belonged to the GDR, inspect, clean and repair it.

Yet these Mauertore caused no end of security headaches, with several keys from different officers needed just to open them and the ladders for repair-work kept at a distance – just in case a border guard tried to get away. (Ward, p. 82)

Unsurprisingly, this Eastern military vulnerability was reflected in the West. Several illusionistic doors can be found on the Wall's Western façade or comments such as the following on one of the real doors: "Das gehört (beiläufig) nicht hierher." (Note 15) (Gründer, p. 163) The line is taken from Kurt Schwitter's absurd Dada love poem *An Anna Blume* (1919) (Note 16), which, according to Michael White in "Sense and Nonsense in Kurt Schwitters" (2010), challenges common sense as well as appeals to the senses:

As in English, the German word Sinn (sense) connotes both "meaning" and "feeling"; the "twenty-seven senses" mentioned by the poet indicate an abundance of both and the poem prompts manifold interpretations and sensations. It has a strong degree of pattern, produced by the repetition of certain lines, breaking it into distinct sections [...] frequent mention of intense color [...] physical texture [...] sound [...]. (204)

Not unlike Schwitter's poem, the Berlin Wall's eventual ornamental carpet of image/texts might have deeply affected the viewer's senses, while he/she tried to make sense of the accumulation of images, words, colors, and lines. Taken as an intertextual reference, the graffiti, seemingly functioned as a reminder of making sense of senseless juxtapositions on the Wall in general, which gave rise to diverse sensations. Taken literally, however, it immediately made sense and its irony could not be missed. Neither the Wall nor the inconspicuous door, used by the GDR border guards to swiftly pass through in order to control the small stretch of GDR territory on the Wall's Western side, did -incidentally- not belong here (Berlin). This mixture of non/sense while always appealing to the senses was consciously or unconsciously used by a group of young (East) Berliners, who wanted to puncture, if not cut through the Wall's polychrome screen.

Wolfram Hasch on November 4, 1986 was certainly taken by surprise when suddenly a door opened in the Wall and three GDR border guards arrested him for illegally drawing a white line on the "Antifascist Protection Wall". Hasch, together with four other expatriated GDR rebellious youth, had decided to create a Dada inspired, only partly politically motivated, intervention at/on the Berlin Wall: "Die Idee des Weißen Strich war für mich weder politisch noch künstlerisch, vielleicht eine Mischung aus beiden." (Note 17) (Hasch in Hahn & Willmann, pp. 123-124) Already in their home town of Weimar they had been observed by the Stasi and arrested for various provocations against the GDR state such as dressing up as punks, spraying subversive graffiti on Weimar's walls, distributing leaflets

calling for the boycott of local elections, asking to be exempted from military service on religious grounds, participating in discussions on peace and environmental topics organised by the local church (Hahn & Willmann, pp. 19-29). After their (gradual) expatriation and immersion in the bohemian life of Kreuzberg on the Western side of the Wall, their intention was to make visible what had become invisible: the border line. While for West-Germans or international artists, who had come to West-Berlin because of its special (inspiring) Frontstadt status and had not experienced the brutal division of the city themselves, the Wall had positive connotations (Note 18), for the ex-GDR youth however the Wall was a constant, corporeal, reminder of their separation from their families and former life in the GDR:

Die Mauer war uns nicht Feind, doch wir nahmen sie wahr, mit unserer Geschichte, unseren Körpern. [...] Wir versuchten uns als Künstler zu outen, als kreative Geister ohne eindeutig politischen Hintergrund. Das Ganze eine dadaistische Aktion. (Note 19) (Schuster in Hahn & Willmann, pp. 84-85)

The ludic aspect of the Dadaist performance (eventually gone awry) was made clear by their selfmade masks, “Mutantenmasken für ironische Ungeheuer” (Note 20) (Hasch in Hahn & Willmann, p. 125), which, rather than being a simple protection against identification by the GDR border guards, functioned as grotesque reinforcement of the intended transformation from Wall as screen to Wall as (border) line of separation. The original idea was to whitewash a large stretch of the inner-city Western Wall but for lack of color and money they contented themselves with a white line crossing out the Wall art and graffiti on the Wall. Unintentionally they had dramatically heightened the effect of their aesthetic intervention, since the GDR border guards observing them from their watchtowers did not read the white line primarily as an artistic provocation but a politically subversive attempt to re-define the borderline. The original white borderline in inner city Berlin was drawn by East German border guard Hagen Koch in 1961 in order to clearly demarcate GDR territory in front of the Western Wall. Instead of running several meters in front of the Western Wall, the new white line suddenly appeared on the Wall:

Mit einem weißen Strich pflegten die östlichen Uniformierten selbst die Grenzlinie zu markieren. Wenn also die Maskierten ebenfalls so einen Strich aufmalten, so mussten sie dasselbe Ziel verfolgen: die Grenzlinie kenntlich machen. Jedoch befand sich der Strich nicht auf der Grenzlinie, sondern auf der Mauer selbst, die mehrere Meter hinter der Grenze stand. Demnach versuchten die maskierten Männer also, die Grenze um mehrere Meter nach Osten zu verschieben! Dies wurde als Angriff auf die Souveränität der DDR interpretiert, dem entgegengetreten werden musste—eine Kunstaktion vermutete im Osten niemand hinter dieser Performance. (Note 21) (Hahn & Willmann, pp. 67-68)

The Dadaist white line, in my eyes, coincided with the white line as memory trace, recalling states of emotion for the ex-GDR youth (separation, imprisonment) as well as the GDR border guards (original white borderline, defining the GDR state), prompting Eastern reactions, which, simply by judging from the boys’ improvised intervention and grotesque masquerade, might have been entirely different in another context. Not unlike Tim Ingold’s ghostly line, an invisible line of experience with all too real

affects/effects (Note 22) the white line as memory trace triggered strong reactions. Suddenly a field of force, into which all participants entered, had opened up and the white line itself had assumed the role of transformative agent, calor, while the polychrome excess it crossed out remained distracting surface decoration. In the momentary zone of indistinction humans, movement, white line, color, image and Wall, optical vision passed into haptic vision, as if seized by a force, where lines and color are experienced and “seen” with all organs.

In *The Spirit of Utopia* (1918, 1923) Ernst Bloch reflects in his second essay on the genealogy of ornamental structures and its effects. According to Bloch, ornaments, which support and harbour life instead of death, are characterised by expressive lines, which exceed a strictly geometrical structure. Bloch sees in Baroque furniture’s excessive ornamentation and vivid lines a perfect example for the possibility of ornamental structures to transcend mere style:

[...] there are Baroque armchairs too significant for practical use, that make something new out of the strange attitude, out of the removed mask, so to speak of “sitting down”: something casually spectral, fabulous, the most remarkable line. No longer taste; no longer deliberate, laboriously stylized, autonomously immanent form; rather what emerges here—and extends into a sphere in which stands only the ultimacy of pure art—an impression from life, indeed an already indicatively descriptive formal sign, a seal of the depth and the waking dream: painted as if to copy the skin, and carved as if to copy the skeleton of a wraith, a spirit, an inner figure. (pp. 16-17)

Contrary to Adolf Loos’ battle cry against the superfluousness of 19th century, historicist, sensual ornament in modernity (Note 23) and Siegfried Kracauer’s conception of the modern mass ornament as homogenizing, meaningless and empty form (Note 24), I argue, following Bloch’s train of thought, that the Wall’s mass-ornamental carpet, due to its character as a fetish, never erased its other side (Note 25): the symptomatic re-collection of expressive lines in form of individual graffiti, Wall art and white line(s). They must be counted as traces of the other living ornament, shock experiences in which inner figure and outward form momentarily overlapped and human figure, material structure and surface decoration seemingly merged into one all-embracing ornate form. At the same time or as reaction to the ornamental pattern, individual, expressive living lines emerged.

These living lines resemble the infamous Sprayer of Zurich’s abstract expressionist Liniengeister (line ghosts), which voiced Harald Naegeli’s revolt against the inhuman, modern, concrete architecture in the Zurich of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Similarly, the graffiti of the Berlin Wall, at times, haunted the onlooker in my eyes. Manfred Schneckenberger, in his defense of Naegeli’s “vandalism” wrote in 1982:

Die laufenden, jagenden, tanzenden Linien legen ihre Schlangenfingern auf Wunden, die wir den Städten geschlagen haben. Sie diagnostizieren Betonagonie mangels Phantasie und blasen hier und da sogar noch eine Brise Sauerstoff ein. (Schneckenberger, 1982) (Note 26)

I read the image of a “line in motion” (“expressive” lines of graffiti, graffiti/ Wall art “woven” into an “ornamental carpet”, held together by organic lines/ arabesques, illusionistic images) on the Wall as a

sign/ ornament as well as a presence, similar to a Warburgian pathos formula in which states of e/motion have become fossilized in images (Note 27); and where the unintentional re-collection of such pathos formulae as pre-existing forms in images stirs the experience deposited in them (Note 28).

Nora Aurienne's illusionistic images drawn onto the Berlin Wall in the 1980s come to mind. In her trompe l'oeils dishes, arrows, snakes are seemingly flung against the Berlin Wall, attempting to break, breaking at (dishes, arrows) or crawling up (snakes) the barrier. The expressive force, anger and frustration, with which the objects confront the Wall, can be felt by the viewer, who is drawn into the now ambiguous space of representation by means of the trompe l'oeil. Entering the "shadowy zone" of ambiguity, where images acquire an uncanny presence, the viewer, like the creator of the images, might feel a certain relief, having banned and displaced an unbearable tension on the Wall and in space.

In *On the Animation of the Inorganic* (2012) Spyros Papapetros dedicates a chapter on the movement of snakes. At the very beginning of his chapter, he quotes from Paul Soriau's (1852-1926) *Aesthetics of Movement* (1889) which served the art historian Aby Warburg as textual source for his "psychology of motion" (p. 71). Soriau presumed that the limbless movement of snakes, without any external signs facilitating locomotion, must have prompted the observer to equate the recoiling pattern of the reptile with animation. For Soriau, the movement of snakes resembles the "progression of a wave moving from head to tail" (Soriau in Papapetros, p. 83). One of Soriau's contemporaries, the architectural historian James Fergusson (1808-1886), described the movement of snakes in a similar manner, as anorganic, pneumatic movement due to its visible lack of agency (pp. 77-78). Nora Aurienne's illusionistic snakes flung against the Wall, then do not only appear animated because of the cleverly carried out trompe l'oeil but also because the snakes' anticipated movements generate an uncanny form of e/motion.

The careful reader of Aby Warburg's observations on Pueblo Indian rituals in 19th century America will immediately be reminded of the Walpi Indian ceremonial practice of throwing real snakes against their stylized representations in sand in order for them to merge and as embodied messengers of lightning bring the necessary rain for survival:

The snakes are flung down violently on to the first sand picture so that the drawing is obliterated and the snake is covered in sand. There is no doubt in my mind that this magic throw is intended to make the snake provoke the lightning or bring rain. (Warburg, 287)

In his analysis, Warburg compares this magic throw with similarly violent, expressive gestures in representations of Greek mythology in antique art/ cultic images; such as the Maenads (in the cult of Dionysus) dancing with live snakes in one hand before tearing the sacrificial animal in their other hand apart, or Laocoon and his sons being engulfed by the deadly force of snakes. Rudolf Raulff in his 1988 afterword to the first German edition of Warburg's Kreuzlingen lecture "Schlangenritual" (1923) stresses the phobic potential of snakes more than any other animal. He cites from Balaji Mundkur's interdisciplinary study *The Cult of the Serpent* (1983), in which Mundkur attributes the prevalence of the ancient serpent cult in many primitive cultures as (an almost natural) reaction to the terror inducing

meandering movement of the reptile, in order to corroborate Warburg's own observations. (Raulff, pp. 103-105) Unlike the Greek Maenads, the Indians do not sacrifice the animal anymore. Instead, it is released and turns into the symbol of lightning bringing the necessary rain for the Walpi tribe. However, Raulff points out, the serpent as symbol is not entirely reduced to a verbal or visual image but, in Warburgian manner, must be read as a living symbol. (Raulff, p. 105) In this way Warburg locates the 19th century Indians as occupying a middle ground between magic and logos, oscillating between mimesis and abstraction. Not only does Warburg find Greek primitive passion and living symbols in the "prairie" (Raulff, p. 96), he also traces and detects the expression of antique passion in 15th century Italian Renaissance art, in which the antique pathos formulae, psychic states of emotion, survived for him as motion in ornaments, "dead" accessory forms, for example, the curious agitation of garments and hair in Boticelli's female figures (Venus, Spring) in *The Birth of Venus* (p. 1486). By linking distinct and temporally distant cultures through the expressive gestures of their visual repertoire Warburg on the one hand risked leveling out significant historical and cultural differences, on the other hand, he revolutionized the art history of his time, by restoring a primal pathetic violence to 15th century Renaissance art in form of an anthropology of the visual as well as establishing a history of fossilized states of e/motion the art historian Didi-Hubermann argues in his foreword to Philippe Alain Michaud's *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (2004). Above all, Alina Payne, stresses in *From Ornament to Object* (2012), Warburg, as art historian and in his art historical analysis, brought the importance of bodily sensations to the fore.

But what constituted the real watershed was the experience of the snake ritual of the Pueblo Indians, which revealed to him, with a vividness that no theory-writing could achieve, the importance of the body as lightning rod of reception, the importance of touching and handling as epistemological moments, as moments of great intensity that throw the user into an abyss of time and allow vertiginous shortcuts to exist between cultures. (p. 153)

Following Aby Warburg's path and possibly running the same risks, I read Nora Aurienné's "magic throw" of snakes as an epistemological moment of great intensity. By means of an expressive, violent gesture, echoing similar pathos formulae in history, the image of snakes becomes entangled with its referent and transforms into a "living symbol", which, like in Seth Tobocman's contemporary comic *Disaster and Resistance* (2008), encircles and imprisons (in this case occupied Palestinian) land and people, but might just as well self-destruct/ disappear into the desert as a messenger of lightning bringing rain; recalling the ambivalent character of the snake as symbol of destruction as well as re-birth, echoing the Janus-faced, destructive/protective character of the Wall itself. Or in terms of modern art, a white line in charge of outlining/giving life to an object is being freed from its yoke/ taken out of context on its way to transformation. (Note 29)

In his 1910 Essay "Die Linie" Belgian-Flemish painter, architect and designer Henry Van de Velde defines the pre-historic primal line as the displacement of expressive bodily gestures on the picture plane, caused by primitive psychic states of excitement. While the primal line has given way to the

“tracing, communicative” line, which gives objects their shape, it has not entirely disappeared and still represents a challenge for the latter (pp. 183-184).

Not only the Dadaist white line stung and stirred deep-seated emotions. Already, the very first white line, “drawing the line between East and West”, was emotionally charged. In a tense moment in history the already mentioned border guard Hagen Koch was in charge of marking the (communicative) line between capitalism and communism in Berlin. He traced the outline of the Wall to come, a wall, which in a brutal gesture was to ensure the political and economic existence of the GDR. At the same time, I argue, a more primitive state of excitement, found its expression and was reinforced by the Wall’s meandering course.

The Wall itself, seen from an aerial perspective, embodied movement and deceptively forged its own meandering path along the GDR demarcation line. A Wall assuming shape and life, is cleverly evoked by the perspective and movement of the “camera” in a German educational animated video about the Berlin Wall (Note 30); but best understood by land artist Andrew Goldsworthy’s *The Wall that Went for a Walk* sculpture (1990) in Grizedale Forest, Cumbria, which wound along the surrounding trees so perfectly as if it was its natural habitat and a large reptile rather than a stony wall built along a winding course. Goldsworthy’s large as well as small scale works often assume snake-like forms, but rather than referring to the animal itself, they connote time and change, as William Malpas points out in *The Art of Andy Goldsworthy* (1998); possibly the time it takes to choose, build and wander along its winding course as well as the changes the open air sculptures will be exposed to. Goldsworthy states in Kenneth Baker’s introduction to *Wall* (2000), a collection of (aerial) photographs of Goldsworthy’s wall sculptures that

I am not interested in the symbolic or representational aspects of the snake ... (sic) But I have to admit that when I see snakes, they are the perfect sculptural form. They draw the path they’re taking, and I look for the same quality in the sculpture I’m making. (Goldsworthy, p. 13)

Following Goldsworthy’s train of thought of perfect form and radical self-sameness, the Berlin Wall spoke, not only by means of human intervention such as graffiti, Wall art, performance art but simply through its meandering course, creating the illusion that instead of a brutal political intervention the Wall almost naturally followed its own path through the divided city. Effects, as argued before, can pass into affects or oscillate between them. When the serpentine movement overrides the symbolic form, matter and the observer enter into a field of force. Instead of the “animated” figure of the serpent, the figural aspect of serpentine movement comes to the fore. In Deleuzian terms, “the figure” then no longer represents anything but its own movement. (Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. 112)

3. Conclusion

The Wall as animated, ornamental and “naturally given” monument in the 1980s reminds of Baroque undulating walls, which were first introduced by Francesco Borromini (1599-1667) in the Roman church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane. The highly decorated church façade (Note 31), according to

Sigfried Giedion in *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), not only created flexibility and a wave-like movement but through the clever arrangement of the façade's décor an upward straining impulse (pp. 110-111). At the time of the counter-reformation, an undulating wall was one of the best ways to attract the attention of a potential believer in a narrow Roman street, who would then immerse himself/ herself in the theatrical wonders of the façade while eventually gazing upwards, towards heaven. The pleasurable, dizzying effect created by artifice (highly decorated undulating façade in this case) was proof of and guide to God's supreme being and power. (Note 32)

In the late 1980s the Wall's most ornamental and fetishized stretch without doubt created an immersive (transformative as well as deceptive) space, which might have sent the viewer upwards towards one of the observation platforms, where he/she could have enjoyed the unobstructed panorama. It's just as much likely that he/she was equally dazzled by the serene white of the death strip, which seemed even brighter due to the sharp contrast with its Western façade. Whether polychrome and ornamental or white and purist, the Wall's different clothings (Gewänder) (Note 33) seemed equally deceptive; serving either Eastern attempts of purifying, whitewashing "raw" power or Western attempts of appropriating the Wall through ornamental, polychrome interventions. While both strategies seemingly oppose each other, they paradoxically share the same narrative: they invite the viewer to follow a seemingly co-scripted path - from Western excess outside to Eastern purity inside and vice versa.

One of the defining characteristics of Baroque space Gilles Deleuze writes in *The Fold* (1993), apart from the infinite movement of (un)folding, is the strict severance of the façade from the inside of a spatial structure. In a double movement of folding and unfolding, the façade thrusts itself forward while the inside closes in on itself. In the Deleuzian reading of Leibniz's concept of the monad consisting of pleats of matter and the folds of the soul, the Baroque world is "[...] a world with only two floors, separated by a fold that echoes itself, arching from two sides according to a different order." (p. 33). The dark chamber on the upper floor is windowless and closed in, the façade on the lower floor is open to sense impressions which transform and eventually resonate through the movement of the fold in the upper chamber.

It is the upper floor that has no windows. It is a dark room or chamber decorated only with a stretched canvas "diversified by folds," as if it were a living dermis. Placed on the opaque canvas, these folds, cords, or springs represent an innate form of knowledge, but when solicited by matter they move into action. Matter triggers "vibrations or oscillations" at the lower extremity of the cords, through the intermediary of "some little openings" that exist on the lower level. Leibniz constructs a great Baroque montage that moves between the lower floor pierced with windows, and the upper floor, blind and closed, but on the other hand resonating as if it were a musical salon translating visible movements below into sounds above. (p. 4)

The extreme tension between open façade and hermetic inner volume, which are independent of each other as well as regulated by a preestablished connection (fold), is described by Deleuze as almost schizophrenic (pp. 36-37).

Nothing could be more true for the Berlin Wall in the late 1980s. The visually highly effective but from a military point of view completely superfluous Western Wall stood in stark contrast to the serene and functional military system behind it. While the Western Wall could be experienced as one big, ornamental illusion, a living “magic” wand pushing forward, inviting the viewer to enter a protective buffer zone, the death strip behind the façade remained seemingly unrelated, a closed, in this case, white chamber, whose military function was heightened visibility in case of escape attempts, many of which were fatal. The awareness of the “deadly, closed white chamber” however, could have influenced the expressively carried out lines and images on the Wall in such a way that emotion and motion, like in Aby Warburg’s pathos formulae became interchangeable. A petrified outer polychrome landscape might have become animated by e/motion while at the same time an inner, seemingly unrelated deadliness destroyed life and movement by inviting the look, pushing the viewer back and establishing distance.

While outer Western façade and inner death strip as well as hinterland wall had hardly anything in common, they evolved from the same mold and shared a Baroque aesthetic, which led the viewer from the fascinating chaos on its Western side, via panoramic vistas to the serene whiteness of the closed Eastern chamber (and back again).

The illusion of movement on or of the Wall itself, apart from being deceptive and serving narrowly defined Eastern and Western ends, created a zone of indetermination which triggered affects. Affect-ridden Wände, as already discussed in the introduction, always already contain within themselves a Wende, an “einschneidend” (cutting, radical) twist, a turn, an unmaking, and sometimes, as was the case for the Berlin Wall, inner figures and outer form do not condition each other but converge and instead of the figurative the figural emerges.

While the Wall itself was demolished, some of its segments and an abundance of photographs and filmed material survived, some of which have been heavily fetishized. A contemporary, cleverly staged illusion of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s, done by the Berlin panorama artist Yadegar Asisi near Checkpoint Charlie (Note 34), also suggests that Baroque “trickery” has survived the disappearance of the Wall and once again might prove more effective than its material remains. Let’s not forget however, that, both, affect and effect “vibrate” in the body and a simple forceful throw of imaginary arrows might dissolve the illusion, create a “slit” in the panoramic vision.

In *What is Philosophy?* (1991) Deleuze celebrates the violence of sensation a poet like D.H. Lawrence demanded of art while denouncing the violence of representation:

In a violently poetic text, Lawrence describes what produces poetry: people are constantly putting up an umbrella that shelters them and on the underside of which they draw a firmament and write their conventions and opinions. But poets, artists, make a slit in the umbrella, they tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit of free and windy chaos [...] (p. 203)

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Notes

Note 1. See Michael Richter “Die Wende. Plädoyer für die umgangssprachliche Benutzung des Begriffs” (2007) for a detailed discussion of the term Wende in the sociopolitical context. Michael Richter discusses the controversy around the popular usage of the term “Wende” in post-Wall Germany since the term was associated with Egon Krenz, the communist elite and false promises of greater freedoms and democratic change.

Note 2. See Patrick Wright, *Iron Curtain. From Stage to Cold War* (2007). Wright discusses the history of the concept at great length. From the actual iron curtain as complete barrier between stage and audience to prevent fire from spreading in the theater to Winston Churchill’s famous speech in 1946, using the Iron Curtain as political metaphor to describe the unbridgeable divide between capitalist Western and communist Eastern Europe.

Note 3. See Edgar Wolfrum, *Die Mauer. Geschichte einer Teilung* (2009) for a detailed account of the history of divided Berlin, the Wall’s construction, its 28-year existence and its “fall” on November 9, 1989. Wolfrum discusses the mutual attempts to denounce the other side on ideological and economic grounds by means of loudspeakers and the transmission of radio broadcasts at the Wall, signs posted along the Wall, metaphors such as Iron Curtain, Wall of Shame or Anti-Capitalist Protection Wall in discourse, graffiti on the Western side of the Wall, sensational reports and iconic images which circulated in the media. See also Elena Demke. “Antifaschistsicher Schutzwall”—“Ulbrichts KZ” (2011) for a discussion of the political metaphors.

Note 4. See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1978) and Sunil Manghani, *Image Critique & The Fall of the Berlin Wall* (2008). Manghani uses Lacan’s concept of the mirror stage and adapts it for his own concept of the Berlin imaginary, as a collective imaginary identification with the eventual Western appropriation of the Wall and the divided city.

Note 5. See Frederick Baker, “The Berlin Wall and the Bastille: Tearing down Walls and building

Myths” (1995) for a detailed discussion of the German terms Wand (a wall to paint on, the surface of a wall) and Mauer (a wall’s materiality) vis a vis the Berlin Wall.

Note 6. See Olaf Briesse, “The Wall as a Wall: Some Thoughts on Concrete” (2011) and Michael Diers “Die Mauer. Notizen zur Kunst-und Kulturgeschichte eines deutschen Symbol(l)Werks” (1992) for a detailed discussion of the Wall’s aesthetics.

Note 7. See Sigrid Mayer, “The Graffiti of the Berlin Wall” (1996). Mayer pointed out the quasi-classical appearance of the last generation of the Berlin Wall.

Note 8. See Anke Kuhrmann, “Grenzsituationen—Die ‘Berliner Mauer’ in der Kunst” (2009).

Note 9. See Gerhard Paul in *Das visuelle Zeitalter* (2016). According to Paul, the image of the GDR militia in front of the Brandenburg Gate evolved into the icon in GDR, which was meant to overwrite Western images such as the desertion of GDR border soldier Conrad Schumann, who leapt across barbed wire from East to West Berlin in 1961 (p. 584).

Note 10. See Ralf Gründer, *Berliner Mauerkunst* (2007), 28-29, for a detailed discussion of the event.

Note 11. See Lutz Henke. “Mauerkunst” (2011). Henke, following the historical development of graffiti and Wall art on the Berlin Wall, stresses the “Sieg des Bunten”, the victory of the colorful (316), as dominant contemporary metaphor. He cites, among others, American singer David Hasselhoff performing on the Wall at New Year 1989/90, kissing a colored fragment of the Wall, celebrating its fall: “It turned from black and white to color.” (Hasselhoff in Henke, p. 316)

Note 12. <http://www.museumdrguislain.be/en/collectie/outsiderkunst/12-walla>, last accessed, September 11, 2013.

Note 13. See Ralf Gründer, *Berliner Mauerkunst* (2007) for a detailed discussion of Kilometerkunst. Wall painters Thierry Noir and Cristophe Bouchet spent two years (1984-1986) incorporating isolated wall art and graffiti into a colorful ornamental carpet with the ambitious aim to cover its surface, kilometer after kilometer, completely by repetitive patterns, images, and Wall art (Kilometerkunst).

Note 14. In “Eiffe verbessert die Welt” (2007) Mererid Pew Davies analyses student activist Peter Ernst Eiffe’s radical intervention in the public realm by obsessively covering Hamburg’s walls and street signs with absurd, non-sensical, ironic political graffiti in a ten-day session in 1968. According to Davies spraying graffiti was fairly new at the time and Eiffe, who occupied a rather marginalised position within the student movement, was one of the first to use and interact with the new medium in order to propagate his political convictions.

Note 15. “This (by the way; incidentally) does not belong here.” [my translation]

Note 16. “Das gehört (beiläufig) nicht hierher” is the fourth line of the poem.

Note 17. “The idea of the White Line was for me neither political nor artistic, maybe a mixture of both.” [my translation]

Note 18. In Hahn and Willmann’s *Der Weiße Strich* (2011), Frank Schuster, one of the participants of the aesthetic intervention, says in an interview that the Wall created room for self-realization (Raum zur Verwirklichung), being a Frontstadt citizen was something special (p. 84).

Note 19. The Wall was not an enemy, but we were aware of it, with our history, our bodies. [...] We tried to come out as artists, as creative spirits without any clear political background. The whole thing a Dadaist intervention. [my translation]

Note 20. Mutant masks for ironic monsters. [my translation]

Note 21. By means of a white line the Eastern men in uniform used to mark the borderline themselves. If the masked (men) themselves painted such a line, they had to pursue the same aim: to mark the borderline. However, the line did not match the borderline but was on the Wall itself, which stood several meters behind the border. Thus the masked men tried to shift the border by several meters towards the East! This was interpreted as an aggression against the sovereignty of the GDR, which had to be prevented—nobody in the East suspected the performance to be an aesthetic action. [my translation]

Note 22. See Tim Ingold, *Lines*. London: Routledge, 2007 (pp. 47-50), for a sociohistorical and anthropological analysis of the function of lines.

Note 23. See Adolf Loos, “Ornament and Crime” (1908). In Loos’s manifesto against the use of ornament in modern architecture, the ornament is granted an erotic function but its use is relegated to pre-modern, primitive urges of decorating and tattooing the body, childish forms of artistic expression or criminal practices (tattoos). Loos insists that the ornament is no longer organically linked to the modern experience (p. 22). In a modern society, the (magic) function of the ornament has been lost, and new forms of (capitalist, mass-) production make the use of ornament in architecture and design inefficient as well as superfluous (p. 23).

Note 24. See Siegfried Kracauer, “The mass ornament” (1927). In his essay Kracauer detected the uncanny survival of the ornament in modernity. The performance of the American dance troupe Tiller Girls served as the prime example of the mass ornament, in which individual girls were transformed into anonymous, geometrical clusters, reduced to a “pure assemblage of lines” (p. 76), a linear system devoid of (erotic) life.

Note 25. See Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996). Mulvey locates fetishism in capitalist societies of the spectacle, where collective fantasies/phantasmagoria are projected on a cinema-like screen in order to distract and screen the onlooker from collective repressions. The material, that has to be covered up, has been distorted into the fetish as symptomatic signifier, which, while concealing what needs to be hidden, at the same time acknowledges its uncanny, persisting presence.

Note 26. The running, speeding, dancing lines put their serpent fingers on wounds, we cut the cities. They diagnose agony of concrete (architecture) in absence of imagination and here and there supply a bit oxygen. [my translation]

Note 27. See Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (2004) and his discussion of Aby Warburg’s pathos formulae as images in motion.

Note 28. See Sigrid Weigel, *Body- and Image-Space: Re-Reading Walter Benjamin* (1996) and her discussion of Walter Benjamin’s theory of Denkbilder or thinking in images.

Note 29. Compare Brüderlin, Markus, ed., *Ornament and Abstraction*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. In *Ornament and Abstraction* Brüderlin traces the importance of ornament for the emergence of modern art and discusses the increasing ornamentalization in works of some modern artists (e.g., Sol LeWitt or Frank Stella).

Note 30. In *Walled In!* (2009) the inner German border as well as the Berlin Wall at Bernauerstraße are not only re-constructed in this animated educational video by German Deutsche Welle broadcasting but seemingly re-animated. In the beginning of the video the inner German border is shown winding its way from the southeast and coming to a halt in the north(east), separating East from West Germany. In Berlin, the imaginary camera travels along the Wall from a heightened perspective lending movement to the Wall's (meandering) course. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwQsTzGkbiY> (last accessed November 25, 2012)

Note 31. For Sigfried Giedion, the undulating wall has become a "constituent fact in architecture" (20). Le Corbusier, for example, used it to bring movement to and enhance the effect of his modern, purist buildings.

Note 32. In *The Vatican to Vegas, A History of Special Effects* (2004) Norman Klein traces the history of Baroque special effects as "pleasurable" instruments of power from the 16th to the 21st century.

Note 33. See Gottfried, Semper, *Style* (1860-1862). Semper dismissed the long-held conception of the archetypal wall as a system of support, based on columns and beams such as in ancient Greek and Roman architecture and instead traced it back to textile enclosures. Not only did the etymological link between Wand and Gewand point to a common origin for Semper, but also testified to a desire to dress and decorate the structures enclosing the human body. In this way architecture had to be understood as a form of "petrified" and monumentalized cladding (Semper, pp. 247-248).

Note 34. More than twenty years after the fall of the Wall, Asisi, who had experienced the divided Berlin himself, managed to build a monumental panoramic image (60 meter length and 15 meter height) of Zimmerstraße and Checkpoint Charlie, re-constructing from more than thousand photos and detailed drawings a fictitious day in November 1980, on the actual historic site. It had taken Asisi three years to create the panorama, whose images are based on personal experience. Born in Vienna but growing up in East-Berlin, Asisi was forced to leave the GDR in 1978 and decided to live close to the Wall on its Western side. Condensing life in the shadow of the Wall, Asisi confronts and overwhelms the visitor, standing on a quasi-observation platform, with a world, which he and others sought to overcome. euromaxx highlights (September 29, 2012), http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,16273844,00.html?maca=de-podcast_euromaxx-highlights-2112-xml-mrss, last accessed November 2, 2012.

See also http://www.asisi.de/index.php?id=7#asisi_index_id_71, last accessed September 14, 2013.