

THE WALL

PANORAMA OF THE DIVIDED CITY OF BERLIN

This, the most personal of Yadegar Asisi's panoramas, consolidates his experiences of everyday life in Berlin, a divided city, into one evocative snapshot of the 1980s. THE WALL has been on display in a specially built panorama rotunda at the symbolic Checkpoint Charlie since autumn 2012.

For a long time, the artist, who grew up in the former East Germany and has lived in West Berlin since 1978, struggled with how to deal with the subject of the Berlin Wall. The brutality of the wall – its construction, the escape attempts, the fate of those who tried – and its peaceful fall in 1989 were and continue to be much discussed. It was by looking back and pondering what daily life was like in the shadow of the Wall that Asisi found the inspiration he was seeking for his panorama: the sheer normality of it. After 30 years of division, people had grown used to it.

The panorama encapsulates everyday life in one grey, 1980s November day. It is positioned in Sebastianstraße, in West Berlin, close to the border crossing on Heinrich-Heine-Straße. Asisi had lived in Kreuzberg since 1985 and so had first-hand experience of life in both the old West Berlin and the GDR, as well as what it was like after the wall came down in 1989.

The vantage point is from the scaffold platform of a house by the Berlin Wall – similar to what it would have been from a watchtower. Everyday life is depicted via several scenes: people go about their business in the streets, the displays outside the fruit and veg shops tempt passers-by, the contents of an apartment are loaded on to a hand-cart in divided Sebastianstraße, drunks stumble out of the pub on the corner after a heavy night, punks loll about in front of a squat and, not far away, there is a petting zoo right next to the 'Death Strip' and tourists wandering alongside the Berlin Wall in the famous SO 36 district. On the East Berlin side, there are the grey façades of apartment buildings, St. Michael's Church and, rising above them all, the GDR TV tower. The same, or similar scenes could be seen all over what is now the centre of Berlin.

THE WALL is on long-term view at the Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin.