



## Wall woodpeckers project

Kaifan Wang

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Building a wall to make supposed borders visible and to include and exclude people has always been a national principle and political concept. I make feelings of great anxiety and insecurity tangible in my multiform installation *Wall Woodpeckers*. The mattresses come from students who had to return from Germany to their home country China due to the pandemic. I have tightly tied up the mattresses where the bodies of students are inscribed; and they appear full of tension. In this context, the tiny ceramic objects, resembling nails, circling the rolled-up mattresses, cause feelings of fear and threat. The painting in the background evokes a hopeful yet unknown mood in the spectrum of the scene.



*Sleeping promises*, feld fünf Metropolenhaus, Berlin © Kaifan Wang

Walls are used to divide and block space both physically and psychologically. As a generation with a multicultural identity background, how do we break down the wall or how do we survive under such a solid wall? With urbanisation and social development, walls are constantly being torn down, rebuilt or relocated elsewhere. These large and visible ‘billboards’

have been damaged and disintegrated, obscured and replaced by natural and human influences.

The simplest material that constitutes the border is the wall, which is a common building in the world, including the 'Berlin Wall' with its political background, the Mexican border wall, the 'Red Wall' symbolising imperial power, and the 'GFW' network wall. Whether it is these walls that existed in history or the 'virus protection walls' established today, these walls seem to have become a form of self-protection that represents the conflict of consciousness of the other side.



*Wall Woodpeckers Project*, Berlin University of the Arts © Kaifan Wang

I was born in Inner Mongolia and grew up with Mongolian culture and education. As a Han Chinese, even with the same educational background or living customs, I found that in terms of being recognised, ethnic identity seemed to be the first issue I faced, which is a 'Clan Wall'. When I went to the China–Mongolia border at the age of six, I began to realise that every country in the world has borders. I've noticed the existence of cultures and borders and the conflicts that can arise, as an invisible wall or a visible wall. The former is based on ethnic identity and the latter is based on the country. What's more, after coming to Germany, I have been faced with a second personal reinvention, a foreign identity, or a new cultural immigrant identity.



*Wall Woodpeckers Project*, Berlin University of the Arts © Kaifan Wang

One is an act of building walls, and the other is an act of tearing down walls. The demolition of the wall is the result of globalisation, which to a certain extent provides an economic equality of cooperation, but at the same time, there have also been numerous dilemmas under the peers. The existence of the 'other', as an artist, 'the existence of the other' is a difference that not only maintains the individuality, but also advertises the 'I' in a world of great unity.

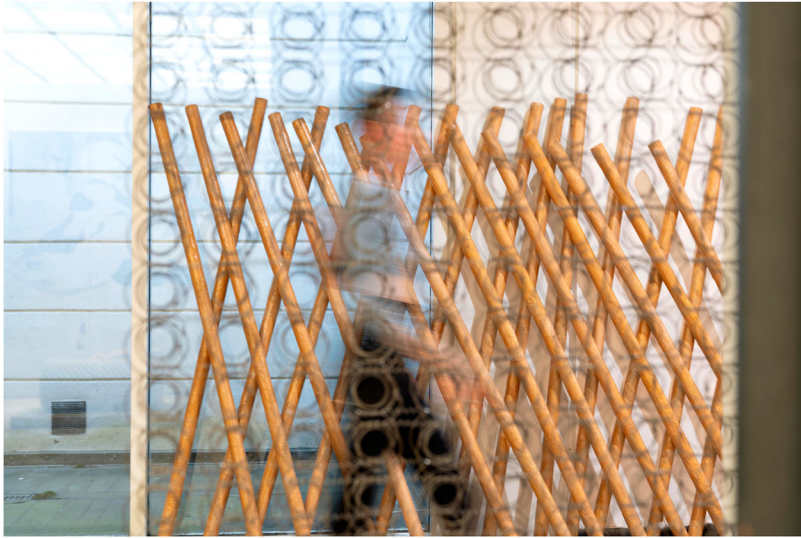
In the context of globalisation, it seems out of place to put forward the concept of 'wall', but it is an existence that cannot be ignored. Under the premise of blurring boundaries, should we be wary of what is our own and what is foreign?

One of the reasons paintings have become important to me again since the Covid-19 pandemic is that I have started to focus on understanding myself. Paintings carry a lot of my memory about me, including muscle memory and daily chores. Under the quarantine, I have discovered that a lot of people don't get along with themselves. As a generation that grew up with the Internet, we have been surrounded by all kinds of voices from short videos and social media, letting 'I' become a microcosm of the masses, so I want to re-explore myself through painting, to construct an intrinsic value.



*The sand blew into my eyes I* / 200 × 280 cm / oil, oil stick, marker, acryl on canvas/ 2022 / Kaifan Wang

My works are related to my memories and life experiences. I hope to express this sense of struggle, reconciliation, and self-created security through painting. My paintings often start with violent collisions, but are slowly covered and summarised by careful lines and moods. Because of my experience, I am influenced by traditional Chinese painting, religious colours and sketch training. And I am used to collecting slogans, epitaphs, slogans and advertisements produced in different cultural and political eras with the same topic I want to explore, and they often express a strong purpose.



*Wall Woodpeckers Project*, Berlin University of the Arts © Kaifan Wang

There has been always a wall somewhere. As long as we question the future, there will be a wall in front of us, which exists in different ways. In my *Wall Woodpecker* series, I want to raise a question about how individuals can break through an established 'fortress of thought' in different 'Wall' states, while providing the audience with such a reasonable 'middle ground'?