

Proposition for Art Focus, Jerusalem 1997

Tower (Without wall)

When you look at the city of Jerusalem, you see not only its buildings but also a structure that seems to be profoundly European: a town surrounded by a wall. Although we know the city wall has always been there, we are aware that it is profoundly linked to a concept invented at a certain time and that the wall is not as obvious a structure as it may seem. The wall surrounding a town is a concept usually linked to a political will or, more generally, to a certain political idea of a threatening foreign power.

If we think of "city wall", we automatically think "tower", too. Whereas the wall blocks the sight from the surroundings - other people, nature, and landscape - the tower opens the eye to look beyond this barrier. The tower dominates the landscape as it controls the view, the expected danger being detected from afar. However, at the same time it opens the mind, as it brings into view the land where the viewer is absent, or at least for the moment. Because the tower brings us into contact with the unknown, and therefore the feared - and this only in an abstract or looking way - it opens out the concealing wall via the imaginary. Whereas the wall is an obstacle to the dreaming view, the tower on the contrary is an open invitation to dream.

What do the walls protect? What do they stand for and what is their purpose? And what if, as Kafka proposes in his text about the construction of the Chinese Wall, the wall should function as the foundation of a new tower of Babel? (see: Franz Kafka, *During the construction of the Chinese Wall*).

Looking at history, not many civilizations could resist the building of walls. The Egyptians and Maya are rare examples of the contrary. Their temples and tombs - the pyramids - come into immediate contact with nature and men. Only the Egyptian temples were signed by a surrounding construction, which characterized the area as different from the rest of the universe. In Egypt these places were conceived as islands in the surrounding sea of the universe. Surprisingly, the walls took the shape of waves and were inhabited by people. Although a clear limit, the wall did not belong to the inside but was still part of the outer world.

Walled settlements were constructed in Israel during the period of "Homa umigdal" (Tower and Wall), from 1936 to 1939. These structures - a surrounded territory with an inner camp and an outer demarcation - in other words a wall together with an inner tower had, for the first time, a political-territorial (army) motivation. Before and after that period there were no walls. The outer demarcation-line signifies a separation from nature, topography, and neighbors.

In the traditional way of constructing a wall around a place - which means, an independent construction that is not directly linked to housing or to the use of a protected indoor space - the wall is a clear distinction from the outer surroundings. You can see a city or an encampment from far away. It marks a place, a signal towards the people living outside this space. As history shows, walls in general have been erected by foreign people who settled in a conquered territory. Roman colonies, Arab settlements, medieval castles, American Far West forts or missionaries in foreign cultures, adopted the same idea: a wall to protect against the unknown/ local, whether nature or people, and a wall to indicate their own right of being in a place they did not belong.

Tower (Without wall)

The proposition for the project "Tower without Wall" is to get rid of barriers and to imagine the places without walls, leaving them open to mix with whatever exists beyond the walls. There will be projections on the existing wall of Jerusalem of the landscape behind it - the desert, mountains, houses and streets, sky or whatever. Then you will be able to see beyond the wall, as if in a dream, vision fixed yet elusive. Only the David tower maintains its intrinsic purpose of looking far beyond and of dreaming about what and whom you cannot touch. Within the space I would like to place in vitrines imaginary models of some of the historical places of "Homa umigdal" (Tower and Wall) without the wall. For this I would need to visit Israel to take photographs and research archives for pictures of the earlier settlements.

Part 1 (October 1997)

The proposal for the project "Tower (without wall)" is to imagine that, during the period 1936-1939, there were only towers and no walls constructed in different places in the territories of what was then Palestine.

I intend to photograph buildings as objects that are not visible as a whole because there is a wall constructed in front of them. If it's not possible to photograph them as a whole, I would like to photograph them bit by bit, then pull them together into one image through computer work. This one image is to be projected on a wall.

The image is projected several times (10 to 20). Each time, the different images show the same object, Image A :

- You, the viewer appear to be approaching the object step by step.
- With each step the object should become bigger but does not.
- All that surrounds it does become bigger and slowly disappears from the image but that one part, which is a part of the whole projected image, always remains the same size.

This project is not a critique of an historical event but an imaginary proposition for the present.

Part 2 (June 1998)

Because of a political decision of the new curators, the space where the exhibition should have taken place changed. The new place chosen to realize the project is the valley out of the old city of Jerusalem. This valley is rocky and it is impossible to accomplish any projections there.

I decided to change my project. I took pictures of the rocks in the valley and enveloped big parts of the rocks with their own negative image.

The visual result of these yellow rocks is that their color became blue (like sky or water) in its negativ but kept all their plastic forms.

The exhibition should have taken place in October 1998 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Israel but finally didn't take place and was postponed to next year. Therefore this project was never realized.