

The Atlantic Wall Linear Museum / 2005

cultural heritage, collective memory and common roots for the forthcoming Europe

brief description

The Atlantic Wall is one of the last major defence lines of this century. It was build by the German occupation forces in the period 1941-1944 along the coast of France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Norway and Denmark. The main goal was to prevent allied landings on the shores of these countries.

During this period more than 15000 heavy, concrete bunkers were built. An amount that is impressive by the quantity, the cost and the involved labour. Moreover many prisoners were forced to work on the construction and lost their lives there intersecting private stories with social history.

The infrastructure, which is a unique example of its kind, is of great value for many reasons. The architectural quality of its vast building system, the ability of these objects to define a new aesthetic canon for modernity, the relationship they have established with their natural and or urban contexts becoming essential elements for interpreting the cultural landscape . The greatest value of this system of military fortifications however resides in its being the most widespread heritage of European culture preserving a collective memory of WWII.

The state of abandonment of much of the Atlantic Wall jeopardizes both its existence and the values, which it represents. Preserving this memory and history is essential for a Europe intent on building its own future . At the same time, it's also important to form and sensitize public opinion concerning the value of such an extraordinary transnational territorial infrastructure.

To underline the Atlantic Wall's architectural, aesthetic and cultural landscape value as a transnational cultural heritage, preserving a shared collective memory on European soil. This heritage would be salvaged and protected through the creation of The Atlantic Wall Linear Museum, contextualizing the fortified landscape into a series of 'museum spaces' spanning the Wall, which would provide the inherent infrastructural information needed to instill in individuals and communities a process for reappropriating the landscape and their collective memory.