

August 25th 2018

Dear Longtang,

I am sorry to announce that the workshop I was intending to organize in the playground behind the palissade is cancelled.

When I visited Longtang in March, walking through its elongated space, I was struck by this very familiar image: the wooden palissade facing the west side of the pavilion, that encloses a 200 square meter DIY playground for the children of the neighbourhood is a beautiful cliché.

This isn't your regular picket fence as depicted in the grotesque wood carvings of the Dolomites, nor is it exactly like the fence of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. This palissade is a facsimile of how palisades were depicted in late 19th century press illustrations, and early 20th century comic strips. The kind Paris had in the thousands in 1888 as a result of Georges-Eugène Haussmann's Gigantic urban redevelopment that brought us the modern police-friendly city we know today.

The palissade is the physical and legal threshold between the street and the private lots waiting to be constructed. Advertising posters for the emerging bourgeoisie on one side, underground society on the other. Kids, homeless people, prostitutes, criminals. And nowhere else than in Montmartre were they more welcome. Up there, the palissade is both a piece of the charming country side surrounding the mills, and a symbol of its poverty.

The palissade will become a graphical icon found in comics throughout the 20th century, mostly depicting anarchistic figures of young people playing and hiding from the police.

When I spoke to Steven, who built the palisade and runs the Robinson playground behind it, he told me that the random cuts at the top of each boards are a technique to prevent rain-water from rotting the wood, but they enjoyed designing several random shapes.

My intention was to animate a workshop during my residency here, maybe to create comic books with the kids or something. But then all the children were on holiday except for this one kid who just didn't care for my pedagogical methodology, and the teenagers smoking weed outside the space.

So I don't know who stole my toupee, nor who grafitied the palissade, but please give me back my toupee

Mathis Collins,

Éducateur

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