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Globalization and the Remembrance of Violence: Visual Culture, Space and Time in Contemporary Berlin[1]

Abstract

As the meeting-point of the era's two defining global ideologies, Berlin was arguably the city of the twentieth century. If one were to attempt to write a history of globalization and its effects on the city of Berlin, then the Second World War would loom large in that narrative. This essay examines the way that the Second World War, as a form of globalized violence, manifests itself in the urban environment of contemporary Berlin, and how visual culture attempts to make the memory of violence visible in that urban environment through a process of defacement.

      The aesthetic strategies employed are made more complex by the impact of the contemporary phase of globalization on the city which sees the enlarged presence of multinational corporations in the city, whose impact is principally a violent one: the influx of capital violates the pre-existing spaces, principally at Potsdamer Platz, erasing the traces of time. Such globalizing processes have an amnesiac dimension, which is countered by two forms of remembrance whose 'memory value' acts as a counter to processes of homogenization.

      On the one hand, there is 'monumental memory', which plays on the aesthetic power of memorial images, as illustrated by the exhibition of fragments from the past at the Potsdamer Platz, but also by photographic installations at the Brandenburg Gate, Christo's *Wrapped Reichstag*, Norman Foster's new Reichstag cupola and Peter Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial. On the other hand, there is 'critical memory', which seeks to instrumentalise the aesthetic qualities of a material space and its visual representation to generate a form of critical insight through the fracturing of the time of the city. This is illustrated by the work of Shimon Attie, Christian Boltanski, Daniel Libeskind and Hito Steyerl.

      The conclusion identifies a contemporary playfulness in the work of Mark Wallinger, whose video-work *Sleeper* does not engage in the gesture of defacement, but instead teasingly engages with the city's surfaces and its own attempts at transmutation, rather than invoking authentic historical depth in contrast to the superficial exterior of the contemporary city. Wallinger's focus suggests that examinations of 'exchange value' and how it operates might be becoming more pressing than the valorization of memory that is considered to exceed it and that has been coopted into the marketing strategies of the would-be global city of Berlin.

Globalization and the Remembrance of Violence: Visual Culture, Space and Time in Contemporary Berlin

      Some of the contributions to this volume are important reminders that the impacts of imperialist capitalism have been acted upon and reacted to for the past century. Berlin, though evidently affected heavily in the past two decades by the end

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[1] I would like to thank Charlotte Govaert for taking, under my instruction, many of the photographs in this article.

of the Cold War and the consequent market liberalization, also bears the traces of earlier phases of globalization. In the notes that accompany his 1991 design for the rebuilding of the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, which is discussed below, Daniel Libeskind makes an observation that helps explain the surfeit of academic and cultural projects that have been associated with the city in the past two decades. He writes: 'Berlin could be seen as an exemplary spiritual (geistig) capital of the 21st century, as it once was the apocalyptic symbol of the 20th century's demise'.[2]

As the meeting-point of the era's two defining global ideologies, Berlin was arguably the city of the twentieth century – not its capital, perhaps. If one were to attempt to write a history of globalization and its effects on the city of Berlin, then the Second World War, firstly with the global ambition of the Third Reich, and secondly with its carpet bombing of certain parts of the city and the physical (and psychological) damage inflicted by the invading Soviet army would loom large in that narrative. What concerns me in this essay is the way that the Second World War, as a form of globalized violence, manifests itself in the urban environment of contemporary Berlin, and more importantly how visual culture attempts to make the memory of violence visible in that urban environment through a process of defacement.

This concern is made more complex by the impact of the contemporary phase of globalization on the city: the enlarged presence of multinational corporations in the city, whose impact is principally a violent one. This influx of capital violates the pre-existing spaces, erasing the traces of time. I elucidate in the first section of the essay the amnesiac dimensions of such globalizing processes.

There is, however, also an enhanced presence of international cultural producers and academics working in the city and thinking about the way it remembers its violent past Not only that, but Germans also think about the city in terms of its relationship to a global marketplace, something evident in a film such as Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Downfall*, which markets the violent end of the Third Reich to a global audience.

Libeskind's observation helps explain contemporary international academic and artistic interest in Berlin. It is an open space for future ideas, poised between the 'no longer' and the 'not yet'; things are in process here and can be tested here that would not be possible elsewhere in the Western world.[3] For that reason, I would argue though that the two processes outlined above must be thought together. Rather than arguing that these works of visual culture focus on space, their defacement of that space actually constitute attempts to produce the experience of time in the (presumed) empty, homogeneous space of contemporary global capitalism. The predominance of visual culture in the generation of remembrance is important, as Henri Lefebvre identifies a 'logic of visualization' in the increasing dominance of abstract space within the city, with the visual gaining the upper hand over the other senses.

Memory and Monuments in City Space

Writing in 1995 on the 'museum boom', Andreas Huyssen argued that, 'even if the museum as institution is now thoroughly embedded in the culture industry', it was not commodity fetishism that was at stake.[4] He argued that the 'museum fetish

[2] Daniel Libeskind, *radix-matrix* (Munich: Prestel, 1997), p.58.
[3] It is not dissimilar to Robert Smithson's presentation of the holes of Passaic versus New York
[4] Andreas Huyssen, 'Escape from Amnesia', in *Twilight Memories. Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York, 1995, pp.13-35: p.33.

transcends exchange value', carrying with it something like an 'anamnestic dimension, a kind of memory value.'[5] One can identify two major forerunners to Huyssen's terminology. Such fetishizations and the 'memory value' associated with it, does not rely on a deep knowledge of the material object (on display), and as such has strong affinities with Alois Riegl's term, 'Alterswert' ('age value'), used in his reflections at the beginning of the twentieth century on what he saw then as the 'moderne Denkmalkultus' ('modern cult of monuments').[6] Riegl recognized that 'age value', which judged the patina of age definitive in determining the value of buildings, was gaining ground over the 'historical value', where such value was determined by antiquarian knowledge of a building's history. Elsewhere Huyssen suggested that 'the newfound strength of the museum and the monument in the public sphere may have something to do with the fact that they both offer something that television denies: the material quality of the object'.[7] This again echoes Riegl, who promoted a radical conservation policy by which buildings were to be maintained but eventually allowed to deteriorate and 'amortize' their full age value 'naturally'. Such perception of the patina of age is dependent on the pleasure of the spectator, indicating that such age value lay more in the aesthetic impulse than the ethical.

Given that the auratic power of materiality is connected with the visual pleasure of seeing the object, another important forerunner for Huyssen's conception of 'memory value' is Walter Benjamin's consideration of 'Ausstellungswert' ('exhibition value'). For Benjamin, the cultic value of the sacred object was transferred into the value imbued into the material presence of the individual (non-reproducible) art work being exhibited.[8] Both Riegl and Benjamin were attempting to describe how auratic value is established in terms of 'cultural capital'. The 'memory value' of an image or object from the past derives its auratic quality from being, in Benjamin's terms, 'the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be', due to its indexical link to a inimitable past.[9] With its roots in Riegl's and Benjamin's examination of the powerful aura of objects from the past, Huyssen's 'memory value' implies that what we may have witnessed in the last thirty years is a further stage in the processes of acceleration and decomposition that first generated Riegl's reflections of the 'modern cult of the monument'.

There are two major distinctions to be made, however, between Huyssen and his predecessors. Firstly, both Riegl and Benjamin were writing about the relatively narrow field of art and architecture, whereas Huyssen's frame of reference is much wider. Secondly, Huyssen explicitly places 'memory value' in relationship to, namely above and beyond, 'exchange value', raising the question of how this operates in the arena of commodified public space. Huyssen writes of the 'power' of monuments that stand in a 'reclaimed public space', but how might we conceive of that power: is it economic, political or aesthetic?[10] And how might it manifest itself?

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[5] Ibid, p.33.

[6] Alois Riegl, 'Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung', in *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Vienna, 1996. [first pub. 1903], p.145.

[7] Huyssen, 'Monuments and Holocaust Memory in a Media Age', in *Twilight Memories*, pp.249-60: p.255.

[8] Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann / Hermann Schweppenhäuser, I.2, pp.471-508: p.484.

[9] Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', in W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972-89), 1.2, pp. 431-508, here p. 479.

[10] Huyssen, 'Monuments and Holocaust Memory', p.255.

Henri Lefebvre examined the meaning of the monument within 'absolute space' (which is made up of 'sacred or cursed locations [...] a space at once indistiguishably mental and social which comprehends the entire existence of the group concerned'[11]). Such monuments 'offered each member of a society an image of that membership, [...] a collective mirror more faithful than any personal one'.[12] Although Lefebvre writes against any straightforward teleological development, he nevertheless describes a discernible contemporary tendency for 'absolute space' to yield to 'abstract space'. For Lefebvre, such monumental space is incompatible with abstract space, which is a

medium of exchange (with the necessary implications of interchangeability) tending to absorb use. [...]. It is in this space that the world of commodities is deployed, along with all that it entails: accumulation and growth, calculation, planning, programming. Which is to say that abstract space is that space where the tendency to homogenization exercises its pressure and its repression with the means at its disposal: a semantic void abolishes former meanings (without for all that, standing in the way of a growing complexity of the world and its multiplicity of messages, codes and operations).[13]

It is important to remember, however, that 'abstract space is not homogeneous; it simply has homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its "lens"'.[14] That orientation leads to the principle that 'the entirety of space must be endowed with exchange value'.[15] As suggested, Lefebvre examined the monument within the context of absolute space. If we now live in an era dominated by 'abstract space', then the 'memory value' of the monument may operate as a potential irritant to the semantic void which the production of abstract space has as its goal.

Memory Value at Potsdamer Platz

Lefebvre argued that space is 'produced' through the interaction of three aspects - spatial practices, the development of representative spaces, and the construction of spaces of representation. From the 1990s onwards in Berlin, the most prominent example of the production of abstract space dominated by visual 'representations of space' is the Postdamer Platz. The physical state of the square before 1989 was that of a remnant of the end of the Second World War and its outcome: the bombing and division of Berlin into four sectors, and the building of the Berlin Wall. The ongoing ruinous condition of Potsdamer Platz was directly linked to the low exchange value of the site, cut off from the circulation of goods and commodities. Ironically, precisely that ruinous condition made possible a number of scenes set in the walled-in wilderness in Wim Wenders' 1987 film Wings of Desire (*Der Himmel über Berlin*) which demonstrated, however, that the invocatory power of the name had far from disappeared.

The potential of the space was transformed by the events of 1989 and 1990. Indeed, the historical Potsdamer Platz was invoked in designs by those planning the production of a new centre in this space - rather conventionally by the new owners of

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[11] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, tr. Donald Nicholson Smith, Oxford, 1991 [first pub. 1974], p.240.
[12] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.220.
[13] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.307.
[14] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.287.
[15] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.287

the space and rather more radically by Daniel Libeskind.[16] The construction of a new Potsdamer Platz also had to deal with the reality that the space was not entirely empty. In contrast to other buildings, such as the GDR's Palace of the Republic, there may have been relatively few people who could invoke the memory value of specific spatial practices associated with the site in the 1920s. Nevertheless those who had used it since the Second World War, such as those living in the caravan settlement (Wagenburg) on the site, had a very different attitude to spatial organization. While the Wagenburg was moved elsewhere, there were also less mobile physical remnants, including two major buildings - Hotel Esplanade and Weinhaus Huth; and a row of trees as a reminder of what had previously been the Potsdamer Strasse, not to mention remnants of the Wall. It had been established that all of the first three named remnants had to be maintained in any reconstruction of the Platz. The new Potsdamer Platz thus had to negotiate with the potentially awkward 'memory value' of the remnants. The answer was to incorporate the memory traces into the corporate citadel and by doing so delimit the semantics of their memory value.

The remnants of the past that are to be found at Potsdamer Platz are exhibits in the architectural display that is the square as a whole. In technologically very complex manoeuvres, Weinhaus Huth was incorporated into the surrounding buildings of the Daimler Quarter and the 'Kaisersaal' of the Hotel Esplanade was transplanted to be incorporated into the Sony Centre. It need hardly be said that both are sites of visual and physical consumption. (Fig. 1)

The trees in the Potsdamer Strasse, which had survived the planning for Albert Speer's Germania and the post-war building of the Wall and the Kulturforum, were integrated into the re-named Alte Potsdamer Strasse, a neat signifier of 'age value'. The S-Bahn sign that had stood by the Wall throughout the years of the Cold War was incorporated into the Sony Tower when it was renamed Bahn Tower after the Deutsche Bahn moved its headquarters there. (Fig. 2) In addition, there is a reconstruction of the famous green signal box from the 1920s. Its lights change, but it has no bearing in controlling the circulation of the traffic or consumers. (Fig. 3) Three aspects of these remnants need to be drawn out. Firstly, their artificiality. They could not have been maintained 'naturally' in their condition within all the new construction that has taken place. In that sense, not only the signal box is the simulacrum of a material remnant. Secondly, there is the use of signs to limit the semantic potential of the monument, for, as Lefebvre suggests, a monument 'does not have a 'signified' (or 'signifieds'); rather it has a *horizon of meaning*: a specific or indefinite multiplicity of meanings'.[17] In the case of both the S-Bahn sign and Hotel Esplanade, these signs do not locate the meaning of these remnants in their fate during the post-war era. Rather, reference to the bullet hole in the S-Bahn sign relates its memory value to the Second World War, rather than, say, its emblematic quality as a remnant of divided Berlin; the Hotel Esplanade's signs point towards the hotel's role in the Wilhelmine Empire. These signs offer narratives that offer a fundamentally affirmative narrative of the relationship of the past to the present. Perhaps even more striking than the use of signs is, thirdly, the employment of glass. This way of presenting traces has also become fashionable in the presentation of the memory landscape in Berlin, if one considers Norman Foster's glass cupola, and more particularly the graffiti left by the Russian soldiers at the Reichstag in 1945. The

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[16] *Daimler Benz, Potsdamer Platz*, Berlin, 1995, p.2. Daniel Libeskind, *radix-matrix*, Munich, 1997, pp.59-61.
[17] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.222.

meaning of the remnants on Potsdamer Platz is fixed in a quite specific fashion: a remnant is an object behind glass. They have become intended monuments whose meaning, however, is exhausted in exhibition value. The glass exhibits the aura, but also arguably dematerializes and neutralizes it. These remnants are no longer irritants in the smooth efficient functioning of an interchangeable abstract space, but belong to the exhibition spectacle that works against the potential for the trace as a palimpsest of historical processes as it fixes them in a musealized situation. What matters on Potsdamer Platz is the *image* of the past as fixed in the past and *incorporated* within the present face of the urban environment.

These corporate strategies of incorporation at Potsdamer Platz are also complexified by the need to integrate the other major remnant of the past, the Berlin Wall, a trace of the global Cold War, enacting its own architectural violence on the centre of the city. In August 2003 the archaeologist Leo Schmidt from the Technical University of Brandenburg in Cottbus argued that barely noticeable remnants of the Berlin Wall (such as the light masts on Heinrich-Heine Strasse), which his team had spent two years documenting, might, as material testament to the Cold War, become a World Cultural Heritage site, joining such Berlin locations as the Museumsinsel and Sanssouci.[18] Many parts of the Wall (such as the towers at the Bornholmer Straße and the colourful Eastside Gallery) have long been placed under preservation orders.In 2003, at Potsdamer Platz, where the Wall had been very noticeable, one slab of Wall was to be found by the entrance to the S-Bahn station, and a further series of slabs are to the south of the square along with the remains of a former watchtower, while another slab was situated on the not-yet-completed Leipziger Platz. (Fig. 4)

By 2008, the presentation of the Wall had become more organized, as illustrated in Fig. 5. As can be seen, the material remnants are placed in such a way as to divert (predominantly) tourists from their chosen path, and situated in alternating fashion alongside signs which provide historical information about the Wall and the experiences related to it. Thus the space of the Potsdamer Platz is fractured by the past, but to what extent, other than in the apparently self-conscious provisionality of the sight, this goes beyond the exhibition value demonstrated by the corporate solutions is debatable. The exchange value of such material, ironically referred to in Edgar Reitz's *Heimat 3*, where Warner Bros profiting from the mediatisation of Wall fragments, is never far from such locations in Berlin, as illustrated by Figure 6. Never far away either is the dominating presence of corporate architecture, as illustrated in the way in which the Beisheim Center towers over the fragments in Figure 7.

The strategies of incorporation outlined above have been countered by a number of artistic interventions, which, rather than superficially fracturing space, instead emphasize the fracturing of time. The photographic works by Michael Wesely and Manfred Walther are both fascinated with the construction process at the site, and through the use of time-lapse photography transform it into a sight that questions the 'timeless' logic of visualization embedded in the grandiose architectural designs (although Wesely's project was perhaps not insignificantly funded by Daimler Benz). *The Empty Centre* (*Die leere Mitte*), completed in 1998 by Hito Steyerl, is, by contrast, a film which reveals layers of history underneath the construction site at Potsdamer Platz throughout the period from 1990 to 1998. The film makes use of slow superimpositions to uncover the architectonic and political changes of those eight years, while through dissolves of archive material with present day images, the film engages the viewer in what might be termed an archaeology of the present. In

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[18] C.v.L, 'Mauerreste Weltkulturerbe?', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 7.8.2003. Many parts of the Wall (such as the towers at the Bornholmer Straße and the colourful Eastside Gallery) have long been placed under preservation orders.

Steyerl's film, history is condensed in metaphorical transitions from one frame to the other, from GDR socialism to FRG capitalism, from past to present, but hidden connections between continents are also revealed, an unknown genealogy of earlier globalisations. Steyerl's aesthetic strategy is the temporal defacement of the facades of the new structures on the Potsdamer Platz to reveal, as it were, the complex, authentic historical space. The Potsdamer Platz as a palimpsest whose layers need to be revealed by a process of archaeological defacement was also central to Daniel Libeskind's plan for the reconstruction of this space.

Libeskind's major contribution to Berlin's built environment is the Jewish Museum, but the design which perhaps best connects to the projects I have just described are his aforementioned 1991 plans for the Potsdamer Platz, the conception of a space radically idealistic in light of the pragmatic spectacle that would eventually be built in the city. In Libeskind' s plan, Berlin is conceived as potentially 'an exemplary spiritual capital of the 21st century', a space for the enactment of what Libeskind describes as the 'post-contemporary city, where the view is cleared beyond the constriction of domination, power and the gridlocked mind'.[19] Strikingly though, 'what is needed is a connection of Berlin to and across its own history'; the 'profound undertaking of refounding Potsdamer Platz must be taken at its face value, through the presence of witnesses, dates, anniversaries'. The clearest note in Libeskind's musings is his rejection of a conventional reconstruction of a 'hollow past'; he argues strongly that his design is not utopian, but concrete.[20] This archaeological mosaic is illustrated in the Illuminated Muse Matrix, what would effectively be a series of life-worlds embedded within the topology of Berlin's culture, refracting this urban space through the intervention of time.

In the case of Libeskind and Steyerl, the staging of the remembrance of the past has a critical intentionality. They are attempts to instrumentalise the poetic qualities of a memorial location and its visual representation to establish a form of critical insight. This can be contrasted with the ways in which other objects are framed at Potsdamer Platz, which could be described as monumental through the way it reduces the con*text*ualization of the image, implying an unmediated access to the past and emphasising its poetic qualities, also through aesthetic strategies. Such monumentality combines age value and exhibition value in the service of an affirmative narrative. This distinction between the two strategies, which can be linked to the memory value associated with the object, requires some elucidation.

A Benjaminian auratic quality is the foundation of both 'critical memory value' (Steyerl and Libeskind) and 'monumental memory value' (other remnants at Potsdamer Platz). These terms are derived from Nietzsche's analysis of history in 'On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life', where monumental history equates to a form of history that is ultimately poetic in its appeal to the aesthetic sense, and fundamentally affirmative, whereas critical history is a form of history that ultimately appeals to the use of reason in a critical understanding of the past.[21] Nietzsche's third category, antiquarian history, is more appropriate to a reading of visual culture in the heritage and conservation context of *Denkmalpflege*. The usefulness of these

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[19] Libeskind, *radix-matrix*, p. 58.

[20] Nevertheless, what it is important to remember about Libeskind's theoretical projects such as this one, and *Ueber den Linden*, is that although they could be said to exist in a somewhat rarified public sphere, but they are not manifested in public space.

[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', in F. Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. by Karl Schlechta (München: Hanser, 1977), pp. 230-37.

categories for an analysis of forms of visual culture and remembrance in contemporary Berlin will now be illustrated.

The Aesthetics of Monumental Memory in Post-Unification Berlin

The power of the visual, and the temporal and spatial location of the spectator, are important factors in the 'construction' of a ruin. For the remnant to be a 'ruin', it has to be seen as such. Prior to, or indeed after that moment, it is regarded as meaningless, 'undistinguished' material. For Alois Riegl, a Baroque palace in a state of ruin had been an object in need of restoration, not a ruin to be admired as such, like a medieval castle.[22] Over the course of the twentieth century, processes of ruination have accelerated and what has been seen as a ruin has expanded, and is indicated by this photograph, taken by Miguel Parra Jimenez, (Fig. 7) and posted on the Trekearthers site.[23]

This is a photograph of people in front of a constructed image of the ruins of central Berlin at the end of the Second World War which was temporarily installed at the centre of the new capital by the artist Marcel Backhaus working for the architectural association 'Gruppe 180' and with the backing of the Berlin Senate in 2005, to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War.[24] It could be said to 'fracture' the monumental space of the city centre that is framed by the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag, Albert Speer's East-West axis that leads to it and the Pariser Platz on the far side of the gate. Nevertheless the aesthetic strategies it employs in fact heighten the poetic effects of the image in an assimilating fashion: the gothic rubble and the predominance of stone produce the ruin aesthetic, while the use of a monochrome image only heightens the sense of historical distance: the past does not troublingly co-exist with the present, but is clearly designated as distinct and yet directly accessible in visual terms. The absence of the actual ruined material is compensated for by the material photographic image of the material, and so the photograph of the ruin operates as a surface on to which memory value can be projected. Here, the perspective engendered from a certain standpoint would place the quadriga atop the contemporary Gate apparently top the ruined Gate, but as the photograph taken by Thomas Schwarzberg (Fig. 8) illustrates, this need not be the case. Given this fact, and also in the way that the image eschews almost any kind of textual correlate or supplement that would interrupt the aesthetic perception of the image (in the form of signage; the image is flanked by visual designs explicating how it was constructed), the 'memory value' invoked is monumental in that the visual is self-evident and apparently self-sufficient.

A significant part of this image is the cupola of the ruined Reichstag, a building that prior to its refurbishment, was the site for Christo's *Wrapped Reichstag*, put into practice in 1995 after decades of planning. Beatrice Hanssen has described this project as an example of 'globalized art in a national context' and suggested that it presented 'the first truly global media art event'.[25] Christo's project does not deface in order to reveal the 'true' face, but adds yet another layer to the palimpsestical quality of Berlin's urban environment. It may add another layer, but it also reliant on

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[22] Riegl, 'Der moderne Denkmalkultus', p.169.

[23] (at: http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/Europe/Germany/photo178645.htm).

[24] 'Künstler und der Senat erinnern an den 2. Mai 1945', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 3.5.05

[25] Beatrice Hansen,'Christo's *Wrapped Reichstag*: Globalized Art in a National Context', *Germanic Review,* Vol. 73, 1998

the presence of the layer below; it exists in an explicit dialectical relationship with the past, admittedly, and perhaps significantly, is rendered invisible.

Christo's project was just the first stage in the rehabilitation of the Reichstag completed by Norman Foster's architectural reconfiguration. Foster's cupola ostensibly makes that history transparent. His reconstruction of the building was mostly interior, but his exterior reconfiguration clearly involves the 'masking' of the building's face, which is literally marked by history and is a remnant of Imperial ambition. This monumental façade was ultimately to create a new meaning to the face, allegedly symbolizing the democratic transparency of the new dispensation, although this metaphor is at least debatable, if not downright suspect. Perhaps, like globalization, democracy does not have a face?

A further example of 'monumental memory' in contemporary Berlin is Peter Eisenman's €25.3 million 'Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe'. In many ways, although it occupies the same topographical terrain as both the temporary photographic installation referred to above and the Reichstag, it is the converse of those images. The monument is made up of 2,711 concrete steles and covers an area the size of three football fields. (Fig. 9) The steles precisely refuse visual referentiality, denying the representability of the past, scarcely permitting any 'horizon of meaning' and demanding a spatial (aesthetic) experience in the present. Nevertheless, although they could be said to fracture the spatial organization of the modern city, they do not fracture the (a)temporal organization of the contemporary urban environment. Admittedly, an underground Information Center, added to the original design, might be said to mediate the monumental experience of the site through historical information, although it is precisely invisible.

What all four pieces of visual culture discussed here have in common is that their aesthetic strategies eschew the use of text as a way of mediating the 'horizon of meaning' of their object. That horizon is left deliberately open, and the aesthetic power of the visual is allowed freer play to generate ambiguity, or, perhaps more frequently, a reassuring 'monumental' narrative of the relationship of past to present.

Critically Reframing the Traces of Violence: Strategies of Defacement in the Work of Shimon Attie and Christian Boltanski

The aesthetic strategies of Marcel Backhaus in the gigantic photograph at the Brandenburg Gate, were prefigured by work in the early 1990s by Shimon Attie and Christian Boltanksi. These works, however, like those of Steyerl and Libeskind, seek to evoke a critical relationship to both past and present.

Shimon Attie's *Writing on the Wall* project was realized in 1992-3 in Berlin's former Jewish quarter, the Scheunenviertel, located in the eastern part of the city, close to the Alexanderplatz. At the heart of Berlin, the Scheunenviertel was a center for eastern European Jewish immigrants from the turn of the century. The few historical photographs that remained after the Holocaust reflect the world of the Jewish working class rather than that of the more affluent and assimilated German Jews who lived mostly in the western part of the city.

Attie slide-projected portions of prewar photographs of Jewish street life in Berlin onto the same or nearby addresses today. By using slide projection on location, fragments of the past were introduced into the visual field of the present. Thus, parts of long-destroyed Jewish community life were visually simulated, momentarily recreated. The projections were visible to street traffic, neighborhood residents, and

passersby. The contrast with the 'ruin image' at the Brandenburg Gate is in the intersection of past and present as an aesthetic strategy. Rather than presenting an 'old face' *alongside* the 'new', he rather defaces the contemporary face with the 'old' face, creating a complex object that fractures and places in question the contemporary experience of time. Although, due his source material, the 'old' photographs are black and white, they are also frequently 'textual', containing Hebraic lettering, that acts as a kind of self-consciously textual supplement to the image, as alluded to in his title for the work.

Attie also noted that, in the early 90s, the Scheunenviertel today was a neighborhood undergoing rapid gentrification. His own commentary runs as follows

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, it has become the new chic quarter and frontier for many West Berliners. As a result, the neighborhood has seen a huge influx of new residents and capital from the West. Within the course of only a few years, block after block of houses and buildings in the Scheunenviertel had become completely transformed. Most have been entirely renovated, from the inside out. Others have been transformed into fashionable and trendy bars and restaurants. As a result, Attie observed in 1996, the Scheunenviertel has become almost unrecognizable even in the few years since the Writing on the Wall project was realized.

The "remaking" of the Scheunenviertel affects both Jewish as well as postwar East German collective memory and identity, as the last physical evidence of these histories is now disappearing as well.[26]

It is clear from the photographs taken by Attie of his project that it involves the violation of everyday visual field of the urban environment, defacing it to make another face evident. But his commentary also makes clear that he has perceived that his project *not only* confronts the fact that the Jewish presence in this part of the city had vanished, but also engages, almost unintentionally, with processes of gentrification and the influx of capital into an urban location seen as ripe for redevelopment. What begins as a comment on German forgetting becomes through time a more general comment on the effacing of time in the urban environment through the workings of capital.

Christian Boltanski's work *The Missing House* (from 1990) focuses on an empty site in Grosse Hamburger Strasse left by a house destroyed in aerial bombardment in February, 1945. It is thus an immaterial trace that has eluded redevelopment that would have effaced even the absence. As with Attie's project, the focus was initially on Jewish experience, dealing with an area had a large proportion of Jewish residents until the 1930s. The artist carried out archive research on the building's former residents and discovered that the Jewish inhabitants had been expelled or deported by the Nazis. Plaques were attached to the fire wall of the adjacent building bearing their names, occupations and the dates they lived in the house. (Fig. 10)

The gap left by the destroyed house is thus linked with references to its former residents, who are thus no longer anonymous. These are, however, not just the names of the Jews, but also of those who were resident in the house at the time of the bombing. Boltanski thus mediates the horizon of meaning of his 'unintended

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[26] Shimon Attie, 'The Writing on the Wall, Berlin, 1992-93: projections in Berlin's Jewish quarter', *Art Journal*, Fall, 2003, 74-83; here p. 75. Accessible, including Attie's photographs , at: http://www.jstor.org/view/00043249/sp060003/06x0045s/0

monument' through these textual references, another form of textual supplement. He also linked his installation with the presentation of his research findings, giving visitors additional information on what happened to each of the residents. Ownership of the work later passed into the hands of the district office of Berlin-Mitte, and today the archive findings are on display at the district's local museum. Boltanski's aim was to open up a "space for memory" between the exemplary and "authentic" place on the one hand and the researched individual biographies on the other, aiming to encourage the viewer to take the initiative in reflecting on them.

So Boltanski too defaces the urban environment as way of making another, more complex face visible. His work also functions as a kind of defence mechanism against redevelopment; once this space is designated as a material trace of memory, it is 'sacred', absolute space in Henri Lefebvre's terms, and thus (still, in 2008) offers a kind of resistance to the homogenizing violations of the 'specifically local' enacted by the economic dimensions of capitalism. 'This vacant lot stands out all the more as others are filled in and as the neighboring buildings are renovated', wrote Brian Ladd in 2000, but, 'some passers-by see only the new restaurant garden in front of the installation'.[27]

The works of both Boltanksi and Attie are comparable to those of Steyerl and Libeskind in their invocation of a 'critical memory value' that seeks to instrumentalise the aesthetic qualities of a material space and its visual representation to generate a form of critical insight through the fracturing of the time of the city.

Such aesthetic strategies of defacement are serious and sincere in their implication that the pre-defacement 'face' is the bearer of a false consciousness of space, but more importantly of time. Particularly striking is the fact that these works date from the early 1990s, a time when Berlin was most clearly an open space for future ideas, poised between the 'no longer' and the 'not yet', and the meaning of both has been transformed as that 'window of liminality' has become increasingly closed, perhaps best demonstrated by the demolition of the GDR's former representative building, the Palace of the Republic. After 1990 it had functioned as a site of cultural intervention both in its cadaverous interior and in visual manifestations of its exterior (see, for example, the photographic work of Tacita Dean). This demolition, discussed very publically since 1990, became a very public dismantling in the summer of 2007 that resembled nothing so much as a state-sponsored Gordon Matta-Clark installation/exhibition. (Fig. 11)

It is intended that the Palace of the Republic will be replaced by a new building that sports the façade of the former City Palace that had stood on the site before being demolished by the nascent GDR state in 1950: the memory of images comes to dominate in creating a suitable global identity for the city of Berlin, something already seen in the coalescence of Christo and Norman Foster's work in the 1990s and the Senate's support for Backhaus's project. We see here the way in which culture and memory can be appropriated in the construction of a 'monumental' civic and international urban identity. Memory can thus be used to put a 'face' on the city's image, or urban processes can efface that memory.

Faces instead of Traces: Mark Wallinger's *Sleeper*.

[27] Brian Ladd, 'Center and Periphery in the New Berlin: Architecture, Public Art, and the Search for Identity', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Berlin 2000. (May, 2000), pp. 7-21.

Sleeper (2007), Mark Wallinger's 154 minute video of himself dressed in a bear costume pacing around the New National Gallery in the city, won the artist the Turner Prize, and can be read as exploring the mechanics that underpin Berlin's civic symbolism in a global era. The bear has indeed long been a heraldic symbol of Berlin's civic identity, and has been reinvented hopefully in the post-unification era as a 'cuddly' image for the former Cold War city. (Fig. 12)

Wallinger's recent version of this mutation of Berlin's civic identity is interesting, because it refuses the pose of memorial sincerity underpinning the aesthetic strategy of defacement in favour of the playfulness of the mask itself that has effaced any depth behind it. Wallinger takes this civic tourist image and literalizes it, with the bear becoming a spectacle for tourists presumably on their way to or from the nearby Potsdamer Platz.[28]

Walllinger's mask may be a playful reminder of the espionage specialists who roamed the city during the Cold War era and the terrorists who may be lurking in its contemporary midsts, but it can also be shown that the site, the New National Gallery is itself an archetypal example of the palimpsestic quality of Berlin's urban environment to which so many cultural products discussed here have alluded. Wallinger may evoke the city's spy past but it does not specifically invoke the historical. The 'blank' face of Wallinger's bear is mirrored by the images of his installation which give the impression of an empty homogeneous, dehistoricized 'white cube' museum space. Indeed the gallery building is itself a reminder that Berlin is a site for the presence of architects working on a global stage: it was designed by Mies van der Rohe, not originally for this location or this function, but as corporate offices for Bacardi in Havana.[29] When that project could not be fulfilled, the building was erected in Berlin in the early 1960s, a stone's throw from what were then the abandoned wastelands of Potsdamer Platz. The building was at that point a part of the 'Cultural Forum' built on this space which was effectively cut off from the flows of capital through the fact that the road on which it was located, the Potsdamer Strasse, came to a very sudden halt not half a mile later at the Wall. So, it was indeed part of West Berlin's civic symbolism during the Cold War, a reminder that this was a war waged on all fronts, political, economic and cultural. We could however go back further, and recall that the site was also the location of one of the few buildings actually erected in the execution of Albert Speer's megalomaniac plan for Germania: this was the site of the House of Tourism, which was then erased after the end of the war.[30] So the contemporary 'tourist icon' of Berlin is pacing around a site previously devoted to the tourist marketing of a very different notion of Germany. The traces of that earlier site have however been utterly effaced. In line with the new image of 'new' Berlin, the New National Gallery has been the site of such moments of event culture as the MOMA exhibition held there in the autumn of 2005, where most reporting related to the length of the queues of (tourist) visitors.[31]

The historical depths that *may* be drawn from Wallinger's work show how it implicitly engages with the same kinds of concerns we saw in the work of the other cultural producers, but significantly he does not engage in the gesture of defacement, but instead playfully engages with the city's surfaces, its own attempts at transmutation, rather than suggesting some authentic depth in contrast to the

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[28] See http://sineload.files.wordpress.com/2007/12/beares_468x335.jpg [accessed 22.04.2008].
[29] See Phillip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, 3rd edition (New York: MOMA, 1978), p. 216; 219-220.
[30] Alan Balfour,
[31] See http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1300387,00.html.

superficial present. He consciously engages with (his own) exchange value, rather than a memory value, be it monumental or critical, that is believed to exceed it.

Wallinger's interest in transmutation is clearly linked to Berlin's changing civic face, and as such addresses the tension between the 'local' (the 'civic') and the 'global', both in terms of municipal identity-strategies and also in terms of a global art world. It highlights the process by which artists such as Wallinger come to Berlin to create works of art that can be consumed, i.e. are consumable, elsewhere. (Attie's photographs of his installation are an example of this, Boltanski's work less so), and the very blankness of Wallinger's white cube stage is an implication that this stage could exist anywhere on the globe. What draws all the artists discussed in this essay to Berlin is the desire to trace how processes of globalization cause violence to be enacted upon the city fabric, and how the origins of that city in global violence have become masked. Violent defacement is required to make that process visible. There is thus a subterreanean link between their contemporary work and the Second World War as one of the founding moments of our contemporary era of globalization and violence, an era distilled in the work for which Wallinger, in effect, won the Turner Prize in 2007: 'State Britain', his reconstruction of Brian Haw's protest site directed against the Iraq war outside the Houses of Parliament.

Biography

Simon Ward lectures in Film, Visual Culture and German at the University of Aberdeen. He has published a monograph on Wolfgang Koeppen, and recent articles dealing with the spatial relationships encoded in literary representations of railway networks, cityscapes and ruin landscapes. He is currently completing a book on the history of the visual culture of memory in post-war (West) Berlin, which deals with the tension between places of memory and the empty homogeneous space of the modern city as mediated through film, photography and architecture.