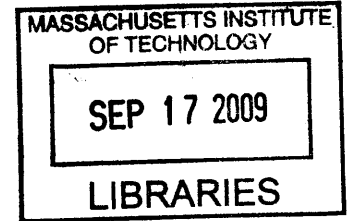


Performative Monuments: Public Art, Commemoration, and History in Postwar Europe

by

Mechtild Widrich

Mag.Phil. University of Vienna, 1995



Submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture: History and Theory of Art
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

September 2009

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Signature of Author:.....


.....
Department of Architecture
August 3, 2009

Certified by:

.....
Caroline A. Jones
Professor of the History of Art

.....

.....
Martha Buskirk
Professor of the History of Art
Thesis Supervisors

Accepted by: ...

.....
Julian Beinart
Professor of Architecture
Chairman, Committee on Graduate Students

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Thesis Supervisors:

Caroline A. Jones
Professor of Art History
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Martha Buskirk
Professor of Art History
Montserrat College of Art

Reader:

Mark Jarzombek
Associate Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning
Professor of History and Theory of Architecture
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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ABSTRACT

The performative monument, as I term an emergent genre of interactive public actions, rests on a new notion of agency in public space, in which political responsibility is performed by historically aware individuals in acts of commemoration. This dissertation argues that public performance art starting in the 1960s provided a crucial impulse for new forms of commemoration in 1980s Europe and beyond. I claim that performance, a supposed antipode to the monument in its ephemerality and dematerialization, did not neutralize the monumental but reinvented it as a new practice: one that involved the audience explicitly through conventional transactions, best understood through the speech-act theory of J. L. Austin (who coined the term “performative” in the 1950s).

To specify the correlation between performance and monumental public space, I draw attention to the empirical shift from performance to monument production in the work of postwar Central and Eastern European artists, and to the theoretical continuity that makes this shift possible. Monumental architecture played a role in the early performances of Anselm Kiefer, Joseph Beuys, Jochen Gerz (all German), Valie Export, Peter Weibel, and Günter Brus (Austrians), Marina Abramović and Braco Dimitrijević (from former Yugoslavia), among others. These artists brought a performative component to the memorial culture of the 1980s and ‘90s, mediating between history and the individual in ways sketched by the ephemeral events of ‘60s and ‘70s performance. I examine these interconnections in the passage from confrontation to commemoration through a variety of heterogeneous but related documents: photographs and eyewitness accounts of early performance; interviews and press accounts that evolved their own logic and myths over the years separate from the events; plans and drawings of unrealized monuments, and that most complicated and characteristic form of ‘performative documentation,’ photographs modified through drawing, painting, or collage techniques to involve their viewers in a collaborative re-imagining of the role of commemoration in public space.

Thesis Co-Supervisor: Caroline A. Jones
Title: Professor of Art History
Thesis Co-Supervisor: Martha Buskirk
Title: Professor of Art History, Montserrat College of Art

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Vienna, July 2009.

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Introduction: What is the Performative Monument?

To see the most notorious artwork in the 2002 documenta exhibition, visitors to Kassel had to make a detour. On the outskirts of the German industrial town, in a neighborhood marked by a high number of immigrants, exploding unemployment, and desolate gray building projects, Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn had installed his *Bataille Monument*. [Fig. 1.1., 1.2] In fact, the physical ‘monument’ itself was just one among eight elements of the expansive project: besides the sculpture resembling a tree stump, a “Georges Bataille Library” invited visitors to browse books arranged by keywords like “word,” “image,” and “sex”; a didactic exhibition presented Bataille’s life and work; various workshops were open to residents and organizers; a fast-food stand run by a Turkish couple served tourists and neighborhood kids; a television studio allowed the local youth as well as philosophers to broadcast on topics however loosely connected to Bataille; a free shuttle service brought visitors to the site, and locals to the main art venues downtown; a webcam and website expanded the reach of the already extensive endeavor. The project was built and overseen by the young members of a local boxing club.

Hirschhorn explained the work as a critique of the monument genre:

The Bataille monument is a precarious, temporary art project in public space, which is erected and looked after by the youth and by inhabitants of a quarter. The Bataille Monument wants to pose questions and wants to open space and time for discussions and ideas through the site, its materials, and the duration of the exhibition. The Bataille Monument is a critique of the existing monument; the Bataille Monument comes from below, it does not want to intimidate anyone, it is not indestructible, it is not defined for eternity.¹

Hirschhorn’s account reveals—in its negations—common postwar views of the traditional monument: authoritatively installed ‘from above,’ intimidating, permanent, and oblivious to its social environment. His own monument, in contrast, was meant to turn the local audience

¹ Thomas Hirschhorn, “‘Bataille Monument’ für Documenta 11 Kassel 2002,” dated February 2002, reprinted in Thomas Hirschhorn, *Bataille Maschine* (Berlin: Merve, 2003), 42 [my translation].

into participants. “He does not want to work for an exclusive public. He wants to include and connect people. A noble thought,” (*ein herrlicher Gedanke*) commented a local newspaper.²

If the *Bataille Monument* itself consists in part in the selling of kebab, the media complex, and the broadcasts that are launched from it, in short, in the social connections and the press that the monument generates, then the monument is a complex, temporally and physically manifold event rather than one discrete object. Are we not then justified in considering Hirschhorn’s statement, or the newspaper interview and the resulting article, as *themselves* parts of the monument? These declarations and acts of communication fit the requirements of the ‘monument from below’ that Hirschhorn has articulated. These strategies are more typical of ephemeral urban performance art than of the traditional memorials. Nor are they the end of the story. For what remains after the exhibition has ended are individuals who remember having participated in or encountered the work, and documents and artifacts that recorded its presence. The public statements and press clips that seemed so ‘action-like’ a moment ago in fact immortalize the project as they enter libraries and archives, and circulate in historical reconstruction. This element of permanence or at least extended duration brings back with it some of the functions and authority of the classic monument. Must we then read the *Bataille Monument* as monument or as performance? I will show that these two seemingly contradictory genres are in fact intertwined, and that Hirschhorn’s work is unthinkable apart from a historical process of rapprochement reaching back to the 1960s.

This dissertation is an account of the unstable relationship between monument and performance during the second half of the twentieth century in Europe. Since ‘monument’ and ‘performance’ represent the extremes of duration conceivable in public art, the tension

² “Mehr ist mehr; weniger ist weniger. Martin Scholz über das ‘Bataille Monument.’” *HNA-Hessische/Niedersächsische Allgemeine* (June 15, 2002).

between them also reveals the shifting bond between contemporary public art and its audience. The document (often photographic) bridges the ephemerality of performance and the permanence of the monument. And as metaphor for a fragmented past, the document and the documentary would prove an indispensable tool for mediating the traumatic recent past of Europe: world wars, political repression, genocide. As I will show, the key works in this history consciously mobilize documents in order to engage an audience with the past: in the mid-1980s, German artist Jochen Gerz had passers-by in Hamburg-Harburg sign the lead surface of a column as a commitment to remaining “vigilant” against fascism. [Fig. 1.3] His *Monument against Fascism* does not generate empathy for the victims; rather, it invites viewers to *act*, symbolically to be sure, by signing the column, a commitment that is then memorialized by being recorded on the lead surface. I call works that consciously demand of their audience a public act of taking of responsibility for the past performative monuments.

In institutionalized form, I will argue, performative monuments have been driving the memorial practice of the past three decades. Given their mode of address and their insistence on interaction, it is appropriate that many of the new monuments are made by former performance artists. Gerz began his career with actions in the streets of Florence and other European cities. In *Attenzione, l'Arte Corrompe* (1968), stickers declaring that “art corrupts” were placed on (the copy of) Michelangelo’s *David* and other tourist sites. [Fig. 1.4] In the revolutionary context of 1968, we may assume Gerz wished to voice skepticism concerning historical artifacts, the cult of heroes, and the political authority of ‘masterpieces.’ But he also articulated reservations about the manipulative qualities of art in general, including his own labels (is art that declares art to corrupt, corrupt?). At the same time, the stickers pointed emphatically to their settings, putting them in new context for the audience, and revealing

Gerz's fascination with the monumental in public space. The ephemeral gesture that at first glance sought to dispose of the persistent bulk of the monument in fact underlines it urgently as a site of contention.

Gerz and other performance artists of the 1960s and '70s did not dissolve the monument so much as reorient public art around an intersection of performance and the monument, of which Hirschhorn is a recent manifestation.³ The common denominator of these performative monuments, audience participation, is a characteristic of performance art. Some performative monuments are ephemeral objects in a literal sense—Gerz's column was lowered into the ground, and the *Bataille Monument* was dismantled after documenta closed. This might therefore suggest ephemerality as their main proximity to performance, but this proximity is itself deceptive. In the case of the *Monument against Fascism*, the 'ephemeral' object is still visible through a peephole, and conserved in photographs, frozen at every stage of its descent. The cars used for the shuttle service of the *Bataille Monument* were even auctioned on Ebay—signed by the artist, no less. What *is* crucial to the performative monument, then, cannot be impermanence as such, but the temporal interaction with an audience that itself is no eternal public, but a succession of subjects of commemoration. Ephemerality of the object is just one strategy among others in making concrete this temporality of the work. Could a monument consisting of two 75 meter-long granite walls function as performative monument? It does. Visitors to Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans' Memorial* in Washington trace the names engraved into the stone on pieces of paper to take home. [Fig.1.5] This may not be a new practice in itself—indeed, the Renaissance saw

³ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh builds a historical arc from Hirschhorn's practice to the classical avant-garde, Fluxus, and post-minimalist sculpture in "Cargo and Cult. The Displays of Thomas Hirschhorn," *Artforum*, Vol.40, no. 3 (November 2001), 109-115. He emphasizes the importance of theatricalization in sculpture. Hirschhorn names Beuys as a predecessor.

similar rituals of remembering the dead, and Lin may not have foreseen this particular ritual—but what is new are the photographs that *invariably* reproduce this performative action with the monument. The ritual is made a public act of commemoration for a wider public to see: it is part and parcel of the monument’s “success story.”

Hirschhorn’s, Lin’s, and Gerz’s work are often subsumed under the category of the countermonument, but, as I have indicated, these works do not simply negate monumentality. Since we cannot think through these works solely in terms of genre and formal deviation from the classical tradition of monumentality, I approach the performative monument on a functional level: how can it or does it activate its audience? By ‘activate’, I do not mean only the production of official acts of commemoration or political action, but every act of representing the performance—in rumors, interviews, and historical texts like this one. To think through these public performances, to narrate their stories, is in a sense to re-perform them. Activation is not limited to the audience in its corporeal presence. Not do only the individuals who physically interact with the work become involved. The documents of this interaction give later audience the chance for continuing the performance. Through this “second” encounter, a reading audience carries the process into the future; the performative act is re-instantiated again and again, creating an ever wider public through the interpretation of photographs. It might be objected that this re-performance implicates all documents, not just artworks with a memorial function. I would agree, adding only that performative monuments make the potential for re-performing the past implicit in all documents explicit. Private reception becomes publicly productive, in the moment artists consciously start to factor mediation and reception into their works.

I will show how monumental architecture played a role in the early ephemeral practices of Gerz, Anselm Kiefer, and Joseph Beuys (Germany), VALIE EXPORT, Peter Weibel, and Günther Brus (Austria), Marina Abramović and Braco Dimitrijević (former Yugoslavia), and how, in turn, they brought a performative component to the memorial culture of the 1980s and '90s. The significant turning point is the early 1970s, when a '60s emphasis on revolutionary presence gave way to non-hierarchical collaboration between act and mediation, clearing the way for the contemporary performative monument. To trace a shift from confrontational performance to commemorative architecture, but also to show the broad range of the performative monument, is the empirical aim of this work.

Theoretically, the problem is to understand the work of performative monuments and the needs these monuments address. The historical presuppositions of my dissertation are the trauma of World War II, the (repressed) memory of the Holocaust in the decades after 1945, and the politics of the Cold War. Not all the performances I discuss deal openly with Fascism or Stalinism, but all can be read in the tension between the individual and the (mass-)political under the historical conditions of Europe after 1945, which laid great stress on memory and its suppression. These circumstances provide us with the necessary footing for understanding why the performative monument became a privileged locus of political reckoning with the past. Artists in the postwar period redefined the idea of the monument, first by involving their own bodies in the politically charged built environment of the city, and then by giving the individual spectator a space to bring history together with personal experience in a public manner: a past-oriented performance for which, in contrast to private memory, I reserve the term commemoration. Commemoration cannot resolve political problems, but it is central to a democratic discourse of the European past that the present cannot afford to do without.

The difficulty of representing the Holocaust may indeed explain the prominence of performative monuments in the new memorial cultures of Germany and Austria. It is also the reason why I devote a large part of my study to these countries. The need of the descendants of the perpetrators to remember the victims of National Socialism made the engagement of (personal or mediated) memory—often channeled through bodily experience—indispensable to establishing bonds between individual responsibility and historical events. The act of commemoration does not narrate the past but is itself a present fact of public conduct.

To show how this functions in practice, it is necessary to turn to specific instances of commemoration. The chapters of this dissertation identify different possible relationships between performance and the monument. In Chapter One, *Performance and its Afterlife*, I connect performance with its history through the recent phenomenon of re-performance. In the last few decades, performance has been canonized as an ‘objectless’ genre of one-time events, which have been celebrated retrospectively in images, narratives, and myths. Yet, far from having no history, performance stands at the intersection of subjective experience and media dissemination of ‘the factual.’ This has emerged dramatically in the recent enthusiasm for re-staging classic 1960s performances. Through a close case study of Austrian artist VALIE EXPORT’s *Genital Panic* of 1969, and Marina Abramović’s re-performance at the Guggenheim Museum in 2005, I show how performances can be understood as a set of imaginary encounters that we—the audience—retrospectively construct on the basis of historical artifacts.

This contemporary phenomenon of performance turning to its past leads us to think that performance always had a past—and thus the potential to address it explicitly through commemoration. The second chapter, *The Mediated Monument: Presence, Photography, and*

Recollection in Vienna, asks whether performance in the 1960s and '70s already entailed commemoration through its documentation in photographs and films. The chapter examines the transformation, from the mid-1960s to the present, of performance into photographic documents and finally multimedia public monuments in Vienna. I begin with the violent performances of the Viennese Actionists, which aimed at breaking down the prevalent attitude of repressing the Fascist past. In particular Günter Brus's actions are monumental in character; it is appropriate that he also staged himself as a "living picture" walking through the imperial center of Vienna. The successors of the Actionists, VALIE EXPORT, and to a certain extent Peter Weibel, carried on their political ambition in a much more conscious staging of performance for the camera in monumental architecture. Their examinations of the performative interaction of body and architecture led to monuments that take the audience into account as performers, notably EXPORT's proposal for the Holocaust memorial in Vienna, which I compare with the winning project by the British sculptor Rachel Whiteread.

The third and fourth chapters trace German memorial culture through the national identity debates of the Cold War and Reunification, starting with the tentative re-education efforts of the 1950s, and concluding with the politics of Holocaust remembrance in post-Wall Berlin. Chapter Three, *Redemptive Myth and Ritual Performance*, looks into the avant-garde's early ritualistic attempts to work through the Holocaust. Joseph Beuys's proposal for a memorial at Auschwitz (1958) and his subsequent efforts to "heal" the wounds of Fascism are compared with Anselm Kiefer's work on submission and Fascist monumentality, *Besetzungen (Occupations)* of 1969, photographs of the artist in public squares throughout Europe performing the illegal Hitler-salute. The early work of Jochen Gerz, on the other hand marshals language as the shared context of authority *and* commemoration, in a shift from

ritual to convention that asks both for acknowledgement of and a decisive break with the past. The problem of German identity as a framework for commemoration is exemplified by the participation of Beuys and Gerz in the 1976 Venice Biennial. Both artists took on the genre of the monument, both showed the difficulties in representing their country critically: Beuys through monumental performance, and Gerz through a “self-defeating” monument in the form of a Trojan Horse. The fourth chapter, *The Commemorative Turn*, investigates the crucial but subtle shift from monumental performances in the 1960s and ‘70s to performative monuments proper. Since the 1980s, Holocaust museums opened throughout central Europe, memorials were erected, and extensive oral accounts compiled to preserve the voices of the victims. Gerz’s major commemorative projects are discussed in this context, together with the protracted competition for a monument in Berlin through which a newly united Germany is to commemorate the Jews murdered under National Socialism (won by Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra), and Hans Haacke’s ‘representative’ monument *To the Population*.

Though it would be possible to trace the proliferation of the performative monument globally on the contemporary scene, it seemed more useful to focus this study historically through a parallel but distinct coming to terms with the memory of World War II. The performer’s bodily investment in—and resistance to—the public presentation of political authority was a concern not just in post-Fascist central Europe, but in the politically complex history of Yugoslavia. The fifth chapter, *The Place of the Public: Site, Audience and political Context in Yugoslavia*, follows interventions in public space in the early work of Abramović and Braco Dimitrijević. Their work of the 1970s in Belgrade and Zagreb, and later in an international context, placed political myths of communist Yugoslavia in cosmopolitan perspective. The chapter thus broaches a question of concern of all performative monuments:

where exactly is the public located, and how is it addressed or constructed? The conclusion recapitulates the theory of performative monuments, and speculates on the future of performative public art in the context of today's socially activist 'relational art.'

Having discussed the subject matter, a few words are required on the method and terminology of my study: although I have already discussed "performance" and "monument" as these terms are understood in the contemporary art discourse, and will historicize them in the chapters to follow, my use of the term "performative" is not meant simply as an adjective form of performance. Performance art is often though not always performative, and, I argue, so are monuments. What these works often have in common is their performative *force*, the fact that through conventional gestures they effect changes in experienced reality.⁴ The theoretical model I employ to extract these political implications is speech act theory, itself a philosophical and political produce of the period under study. Speech acts or 'performatives,' as defined by the English philosopher J.L. Austin in lectures of the mid-1950s, are ordinary behaviors like promising, betting, and asserting; in thinking through how these humble activities define our responsibilities and failures of responsibility, Austin hoped to turn ethics from the abstract study of freedom to a more humane engagement with daily moral problems.⁵ Even though my reading of Austin is informed by later criticisms, in particular Jacques Derrida's notion that the frame of communication can never be exactly determined, and thus that effects are unpredictable, I do think that Austin's texts anticipate most of this analysis. A careful reading of his texts shows an awareness of the instabilities of

⁴ This performative model is distinct from that of theatricality. For this reason I do not discuss the protracted debate about theatricality and minimalism. See Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967), 12-23, reprinted in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 148-172; Yves-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll around Clara-Clara," *October*, vol. 29, (Summer, 1984), 32-62 and Anna Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 5 (January 1990), 44-63.

⁵ J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses," in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 175-204.

communication, instabilities that are even more acute in artistic contexts (Austin himself tended to exclude all “artistic” speech such as on stage from his preliminary analysis). I return to this fundamental terminology because it offers a flexible, lucid framework for thinking about performance *and* the monument in their formal and political dimensions. It is revealing that Austin’s theory was incorporated by the German postwar philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who has made the performative central to political theory and memory work.

The historical and ethical force of everyday language informs the new performative monuments. Instead of ‘telling’ political facts the works participate with their audiences in establishing new ones. Herein lies their political appeal, but also the danger of revisionism. Can political art generate consensus, or even evoke memories, when its results are not representations of the past but new historical facts? It is here that we must rethink art’s role not as the bearer of information, however necessary or valuable. Performative monuments try to establish a political relation to a history one has not personally experienced. The attitude to the past of the spectator of a performative monument is conventionalized and made public, and thus becomes an object of political and moral inquiry. Once this phenomenon is noticed, new questions arise about its legitimacy. Is the new relation more politically responsible than traditional spectatorship? Is performative public art also in a sense politically compulsory or manipulative? These questions can only be answered in specific cases. This is probably the main theoretical lesson one learns from reading Austin, that there are no universally valid answers but many locally adequate ones. The change in the ways Europeans (and, to an extent, North Americans) remember the recent past and make that memory public—through what I call commemoration—is already a fact of the recent past, rich and contradictory in its implications. I have teased out some of these implications, but others are yet to be explored.

The aesthetic and political practice which issues in performative monuments takes as its starting point the assumption that symbolic acts (like signing Gerz's column) have social consequences. This assumption binds bodily presence, history, and politics in intimate and sometimes uncomfortable ways. It is appropriate that the flowering of the new performative monuments corresponds to the renewed political call, during the last years of the Cold War and beyond, for political discussion of the relationship of the individual to the state. In the decades that form the main focus of my dissertation, we can witness a sea change from a general distrust of the very idea of "monument" in the 1960s, to a conscious involvement of the body and its architectural surrogates in remembrance in the 1980s and '90s, when personal memory and oral history become officially accepted 'democratic' models of commemoration. Yet performance art in public space of the 1960s and '70s provided the stimulus for these new art forms: monuments that are activated only through the performative involvement of the audience. This shift from seeing the monument as authoritarian machine to harnessing its performative force to question authority is the story of my dissertation.

Chapter 1: Performance and Its Afterlife

'Presence,' in its dual significance of immediacy and being in the right place at the right time, has long been considered the key term for artists and historians conceptualizing performance art. In recent years, however, the intense interest in the status of the documentation of performances—mostly photographs and films—has challenged the dominance of this term. While some dismiss these documents as commodification of an originally irreproducible encounter between the performer's and the audience's bodily presence, others have concluded that the document is a privileged link between performer and the public.¹ This dichotomy has become even more complex in recent artists practice: over the last decade, artists have begun to destabilize the one-time experience of performance art by reenacting their own or their colleagues' works. Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy's look at the 1970s in their *Fresh Acconci Portfolio* from 1996 (in which they hired aspiring Hollywood actors to re-do key Acconci works), Dan Graham's reflection on his own 1975

¹ Peggy Phelan writes e.g. "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so it becomes something other than performance." Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London / New York: Routledge, 1993), 146. RoseLee Goldberg approached performance from a similar perspective much earlier: RoseLee Goldberg, *Live Art from 1909 to the Present* (New York: Abrams, 1979), especially 9ff; revised under the title *Performance Art. From Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988); id., "Performance: A Hidden History," in Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas (eds.), *The Art of Performance. A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984), 24-55; id., *Performance. Live Art Since 1960* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998). Amelia Jones discusses different options of accessing performance art than through "presence," in *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Michigan, 1998), and problematizes the document in "'Presence' in Absentia. Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal*, vol. 56, no. 4 (Winter 1997). Nick Kaye devoted much of his research to the tension between presence and documentation. See e.g. *Postmodernism and Performance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), id. *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London / New York: Routledge, 2000), and his ongoing presence project: <http://presence.stanford.edu:3455/16/529> [online document, accessed July 23, 2008]. Philip Auslander has theorized performance art as entirely mediated. I will discuss his approach in more detail shortly. Philip Auslander, *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); id. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London / New York: Routledge, 1999), id. "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *PAJ. A Journal of Performance and Art*, 84, vol. 28, no. 3 (September 2006.). Martha Buskirk discusses the issue of the "delay" in performance art in her book *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge: Mass.: MIT Press, 2003). Describing Acconci's *Following Piece* and Adrian Piper's *Catalysis*, she states that "both performances partake equally of absolute immediacy and significant delay... The delay is in the dissemination of knowledge about the work to an audience that has access to the activity only through the accounts and documentation the artist decides to provide." (217) I am certainly indebted to her approach.

videotaped performance *Performer/Audience/Mirror* under the title *Video/Architecture/Performance* in 1995, and Yoko Ono's redoing of her most famous performance, the mid-1960s *Cut Piece*, in a small theatre in Paris in 2003 as a protest against the war in Iraq are the most prominent examples of this recent trend.² These mature artists posed newly forceful questions concerning the status of performance, its historicization and the role of the document decades after they themselves began their artistic production, surfacing questions that were already problematic—but had been concealed by more pressing political issues—in the 1960s.

Entering performance art through the looking glass of re-performance is thus a history from the present. Through this, I will ask new questions about the concern with history in performance art. How history is concretely performed and how performance practice since the 1960s has led to commemorative “performative monuments” will be my concern in the following chapters of this dissertation. But before we can follow this historical arc, re-performance helps us to understand how history plays a role in performance art as such. Re-performance strikes at the foundation of performance by challenging what used to be considered the core value of the medium, its dependence on the ‘authentic’ encounter between artist and audience. It is certainly time to rethink this foundation, in order to arrive at a reading that approaches performance art as it is re-performed: as an art form the life of

² *Cut Piece* had been performed several times in the 1960s. See Kevin Concannon, “Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*. From Text to Performance and Back Again,” *PAJ. A Journal of Performance and Art*, 90, vol. 30, no. 3 (September 2008), 81-93. In recent years, artistic reenactments of historical events as well as restagings of postwar performance art have also attracted enormous curatorial attention. Exhibitions such as *A Little Bit of History Repeated* (Kunstwerke Berlin, 2001), *A Short History of Performance* (Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2002/03), *Life once More: Forms Of Reenactment In Contemporary Art* (Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2005), *Ahistoric Occasion: Artists Making History* (Mass MOCA, North Adams, 2006), *Now Again the Past: Rewind, Replay, Resound* (Carnegie Art Center, New York, 2006), and Inke Arns, Gabriele Horn (eds.), *History will repeat itself. Strategien des Reenactment in der zeitgenössischen (Medien-)Kunst und Performance* (KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2007) are symptomatic of this interest in reenactment.

which does not simply “end” with its taking place, but one which allows us belatedly to refer back to this event, to think and argue about it—in short to *remember* it.

The insistence on the ephemeral value of performance art stood at the very beginning of its historiography. Scholars such as RoseLee Goldberg began to publish in the late 1970s, tracing performance back to the endeavors of that segment of the European avant-garde of the 1920s concerned with theatre, particularly Futurism, which she interpreted as a “manifesto” of performance preceding its practice. The plays of the Austrian artist Oskar Kokoschka, the Dadaists at the Cabaret Voltaire, and the theater works of the Bauhaus featured prominently in a trajectory that was in her view taken up by Black Mountain College in the US, highly influenced by European émigrés since the late 1930s.³ Goldberg criticized conventional art history for ignoring ephemeral practices of the avant-garde:

Despite the fact most of what is written today about the work of the Futurists, Constructivists, Dadaists, or Surrealists continues to concentrate on the art objects produced by each period, it was more often than not the case that these movements found their roots and attempted to resolve problematic issues in performance.⁴

Her focus on the immaterial base of all performance art in its connection to the early twentieth century was groundbreaking, and yet, in her advocacy of performance as a “live art,” Goldberg smoothed over the fact that she herself had to reach her conclusions with the help of historical sources: texts and grainy images dating from the time.

Younger American scholars from the 1990s on produced a different legacy. They focused on the document (albeit in a more self-conscious way) to trace performance art back to object-based art forms, such as action painting, and the polemics of a post-World War II art world discursively severed from the classic European avant-garde. More specifically, prominence was given to art critic Harold Rosenberg’s 1952 interpretation of the production

³ RoseLee Goldberg, *Live Art from 1909 to the Present*; id., “Performance: A Hidden History.”

⁴ RoseLee Goldberg, “Performance: A Hidden History,” 26.

procedure of the New York School as “arena in which to act,” and Allan Kaprow’s reading of Jackson Pollock as precursor of his own happenings in his 1958 manifesto “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock” (both nurtured by Hans Namuth’s famous photo series—the documentation of Pollock working in his studio).⁵ As different as the conclusions stemming from this trajectory might be—ranging from psychoanalytical discussions of desire to critiques of capitalism—they usually included a strong reading of performance *documents* as essential components in the development of performance *art*, consciously reflecting on the demands of the art world that the action be productive, i.e. leave a trace in the form of an object that can be sold or at least exhibited.

Apart from generational divergence, the crucial distinction between these positions is their assertion of a different ideological basis for performance: the live event, developing out of theatre and disavowing the document, versus the document-laden performance, emerging out of a *reading* of painting itself as performative. This second position does not necessarily focus on scripted performance, but emphasizes that the document features prominently as both precursor to and in the afterlife of the event, constituting its “event-character” in the manner of a witness or a piece of evidence.

Documentation has been the ‘faithful’ companion of performance since the grainy image of Hugo Ball reciting his poetry in a cardboard costume, and it has turned up in gallery

⁵ Kaprow’s radical conclusion from Pollock’s work is a breakdown of media specificity: “Young artists of today need no longer say, ‘I am a painter’ or ‘a poet; or ‘a dancer.’ They are simply ‘artists.’ All of life will be open to them.” Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” [1958] in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1993), 9. Harold Rosenberg, “American Action Painters,” [1952] in *The Tradition of the New* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965). Performance scholar Amelia Jones devotes one whole chapter to Pollock’s work in her book *Body Art*, while the most important exhibition catalogue on the subject, *Out of Actions*, starts with Hans Namuth’s photographs. Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*; Paul Schimmel (ed.) *Out of Actions: between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979*. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (London/New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

exhibitions as well as in the art market from the 1960s onwards.⁶ But it was not until the *reading of the document* by the present generation of American performance scholars (most of them comfortable with the poststructuralist skepticism towards the very idea of ‘authenticity’), that performance art was systematically related (or even reduced) to mediation. This interest in the document brought with it new questions: in which ways do these documents play their part in historicization, and— as this dissertation proposes—to what degree do they extend the performance in time for an ever-widening audience? Are they supplemental to the performance or (financially and aesthetically) necessary or constitutive? Does this extension lead to new forms of reception, to a re-instantiation of performative encounters for different audiences and situations? Would this mean that the possibility of repetition is part of the very idea of performance art, once it is documented or mediated in any form—or should we be content with these documents as by-products, however necessary?

Both approaches reveal certain limitations under the pressure of re-performance. How can the repetition be explained by scholars advocating one-time encounter? And why would a re-performance—the redoing of the live act—be necessary or interesting if mediation was the key for understanding performance? It seems obvious that re-performance is both concerned with presence *and* historical mediation. What I want to argue is that artists themselves were aware of the mediating force of the document during the 1960s, even if they insisted also on the direct encounter between performer and audience (a paradoxical view only if we consider presence and mediation as mutually exclusive forces). For the purposes of this dissertation, the most interesting question being posed by contemporary re-

⁶ See Sven Lütticken, “An Arena in which to Reenact,” in id. (ed.) *Life, Once More. Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*. (Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 2005).

performance is the issue of history and memory. How does an art movement ostensibly resting on the 1960s' emphasis on embodied "experience" and personal participation in the socio-political landscape of the US, Europe and Japan ("the personal is political") have to be reconfigured for a later audience in terms of historiography? How do audience and history imply each other, and how does the document mediate and/or produce this relationship? The document will surface prominently in the performative interactions I am discussing. I hope to show how it holds bodily presence in suspension between a document from the past, and a monument that is constituted in the act of remembering.

EXPORT's *Genital Panic* and Its Re-performances

In my first case study, an 'action' by Austrian artist VALIE EXPORT from 1969 that was re-performed by Marina Abramović in 2005, I will neither advocate 'presentness,' nor attempt to efface all differences between mediated and unmediated modes of interaction.⁷ Rather, I will show how ephemeral art practices create more than just one performative situation. We need to differentiate discrete levels of mediation, without simply favoring one of them a priori. Even the 'zero-level' of the live event is mediated through seeing, hearing, the air that circulates around the performer, the architectural space, and the audience. Other instantaneous communication media (visual material, radio, TV, closed-circuit video) can capture traces and bring them into an uncertain future, introducing performance art to a later audience as well as inaugurating more elusive forms of social mediation (gossip, hearsay, legends) and historicizing media (books, art catalogues, lectures, finally re-performances). What connects all of these modes is a flexible concept of memory (and forgetting), which can be more or less social or personal, depending on the level of direct involvement: Performance

⁷ VALIE EXPORT is the artist's stage name, to be spelled in capital letters.

is always bound to factors of historicization, reception, and memory of space. Considerations of medium specificity will not play a prominent role in my discussion—though photographic practice is important—because labels such as ‘photo-performance,’ or ‘performance for the camera’ seem to prematurely encapsulate the complexity of the performative action that unfolds rather than reveal the actual dynamics of the interaction between the piece, its context, and its audience(s).⁸

Instead of medium, I will draw upon another set of ‘specificities,’ namely reception, history, and memory. These terms are neither interchangeable nor strictly analogous, although they fuse at times to play their part in the field of representation. Because of its centrality to the historical reception of live art, the document will surface in all of these settings—and with it the question of whether it is self-contained or discursive in its effects, and to what extent it can reach its own audience. In my reading of re-performance, the body in public will become legible as a monument to past eventness, participating in the performative unfolding of the so-called original rather than offering a belated repetition.

First, let me address the construction of presence where it is most emphatically asserted: For example, in a catalogue text on Marina Abramović, performance scholar RoseLee Goldberg finds “presence” to be the artist’s “overriding obsession.”⁹ Indeed, Abramović has been famous since the 1970s for exhausting her own body in often dangerous performances, some of which have depended on direct audience participation—for example *Rhythm 0*, 1974, in which the spectators were asked to use tools, among them knives, a gun

⁸ Important to a lesser degree will be the intersection of performance and video art, where the performative tends to be subsumed under the video document. See Mechtild Widrich, “Stars and Dilettantes: On the Voice in Video Art,” in *Sounding the Subject* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2007).

⁹ RoseLee Goldberg, ‘Here and Now,’ In Chrissie Iles (ed.) *Marina Abramović. Objects Performance Video Sound* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1995), 11.

with one bullet, and scissors, on the 'objectified' body of the artist, until the performance ended in disarray.

The implicit tension between objectification and an obsession with personal presence became explicit in the fall of 2005, when Abramović staged and re-performed six performances of the 1960s and 1970s, five of which were initially not her own, together with a newly created performance, under the title *Seven Easy Pieces*. Among the chosen pieces were Joseph Beuys's 1965 *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, Bruce Nauman's 1974 *Body Pressure*, and EXPORT's *Genital Panic*.¹⁰ [Fig.1.6] One could read these re-enactments along the lines sketched out by Goldberg, arguing that Abramović replaced the body of the original performer with her own, painstakingly redoing the action decades after the fact, in order to overcome (for herself and the audience) the most obvious limitation of performance art, namely the unavailability of the 'original' experience for all those not present at the earlier event. But things are not so simple. An investigation of the different relocations and re-emergences of *Genital Panic*, from its first occurrence in 1969 to Abramović's reenactment in the rotunda of the Guggenheim Museum in 2005, will allow me to interrogate the presumption that the live act provides unmediated access to performance through the artist's body.

It is said that, in 1969, VALIE EXPORT went into a cinema in Munich, wearing jeans with a triangular cutout aimed to reveal the pubic area. Once inside the auditorium, she

¹⁰ Originally, Abramović had the following selection and sequence in mind: Marcel Duchamp, *Marcel Duchamp playing chess with a nude female model* (1963), Bruce Nauman, *Body Pressure* (1974), Vito Acconci, *Seedbed* (1972), VALIE EXPORT, *Genital Panic* (1968 [sic!]), Gina Pane, *Self-Portrait(s)* (1973), Chris Burden, *Trans-Fixed* (1974), and Marina Abramović, *Crossing to the Other Side* (2005). Due to copyright issues and readjustments, the seven evenings were finally scheduled as follows: Bruce Nauman, *Body Pressure* (1974), Vito Acconci, *Seedbed* (1972), VALIE EXPORT, *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969), Gina Pane, *The Conditioning, first action of Self-Portrait(s)* (1973), Joseph Beuys, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), Marina Abramović, *Lips of Thomas* (1975), Marina Abramović, *Entering the Other Side* (2005). The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archive, New York.

walked slowly through the rows, with her “crotch and [the audience’s] nose on the same level.”¹¹ The intention of this “action,” as EXPORT herself described it, was to confront the voyeuristic male moviegoer with a “real” female body, instead of the mediated one that could be consumed clandestinely—thus anticipating and inverting Laura Mulvey’s famous 1975 feminist manifesto “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” by several years.¹² “People in the back of the cinema got up and fled the situation, because they were afraid I would come up to them as well,” EXPORT stated in a recent interview, thereby confirming that the titular “panic” had in fact taken place and stressing the presence of the real woman as pivotal.¹³

Let us examine the images associated with VALIE EXPORT’s action more closely. Two of them became the representatives for *Genital Panic* in surveys of postwar art throughout Europe and the United States. Taken in 1969, one photograph shows EXPORT, with teased hair, seated on a bench outside what looks like a house in rural Austria, with bare feet, her exposed crotch in the center of the composition, pointing a machine gun in the general direction of the camera. [Fig.1.7] In the second photograph we see EXPORT inside the same building, sitting with one leg propped aggressively on the wooden crossbeam of a second chair, thus emphasizing her pubic area, the gun’s barrel directed at the ceiling. [Fig.1.8] A third photograph, with EXPORT standing, legs apart, in front of the bench, has also been published in recent years.¹⁴ [Fig.1.9]

¹¹ Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT, *Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film* (Frankfurt am Main: Kohlkunstverlag, 1970), 290 [My translation].

¹² Mulvey describes the use of psychoanalysis in her essay as her “political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.” Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” [delivered as a paper in 1973], *Screen* 16 (3, 1975), 6–18.

¹³ VALIE EXPORT, interview by author, audio file, New York, February 19, 2007 [my translation].

¹⁴ This lesser known photograph of EXPORT standing is published in Roswitha Mueller, *VALIE EXPORT. Fragments of The Imagination* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994), 18, and in Hedwig Saxenhuber (ed.), *VALIE EXPORT*. National Centre for Contemporary Art and Ekaterina Foundation, Moskow (Vienna/Bolzano: Folio, 2007), 32.

None of the photographs is a document taken during the reputed performance. None tries to restage the ostensible setting of the performance. On the contrary, all three focus on the carefully posed artist, exchanging the cinema in the metropolis for a suburban milieu—in fact the studio of the photographer, Peter Hassmann, located on the northern outskirts of Vienna. The compositions resemble publicity posters, while the grainy texture links them to the mid-twentieth-century tradition of documentary photography. They seem to be a distillation of the *idea* of the action rather like film stills, and, given the iconic nature of the images, it is no surprise that Hassmann had become locally famous at the time for political advertisements commissioned by the Austrian Socialist Party (SPÖ).¹⁵

Because the photographs are detached from the supposed location of the original performance, they raise the question of how we know what took place during the reported action. This particular case reflects larger issues attendant on any study of live art: how does one link textual or verbal descriptions of the event, which often circulate in conflicting versions, with the few documentary images or films that remain? What, in short, does the *picture* have to do with the *narrative explanation* of the event? Accounts of *Genital Panic* from the time of its execution do sparsely exist; the first description stems from the 1970 publication *Bildkompendium*, which EXPORT co-edited, and from which I quoted the initial description. This is surprising, given the fact that EXPORT received extensive, often

¹⁵ The outdoor photographs were taken in the secluded courtyard of a house in the 22nd district of Vienna, a venue, which, as I was told, had indeed been used for film screenings by the previous owner. Hassmann used a Pentax 35mm camera, which explains the grain when blown up to poster size. Peter Hassmann, interview by author, audio file, Vienna, August 13, 2007.

outraged press coverage for other actions such as *Touch Cinema* in 1968.¹⁶ EXPORT's own extant accounts tend to appear a few years later. Take the following interview from 1979, in which EXPORT describes the situation in a way that closely follows the photographs in some respects (supplying a gun) while elaborating on other aspects of the 1969 performance (the movie theater):

Genital Panic was performed in a Munich theatre that showed pornographic films. I was dressed in a sweater and pants with the crotch completely cut away. I carried a machine gun. Between films I told the audience that they had come to this particular theater to see sexual films. Now, actual genitalia was available, and they could do anything they wanted to it.¹⁷

Twenty years later, however, EXPORT renounced this combative stance, stating: "I never went in a cinema in which pornographic movies are shown, and NEVER with a gun in my hand," a position she confirmed in an interview in February 2007, contradicting her own 1979 description of the event and expressing confusion about the origin of the description of the theatre as "pornographic."¹⁸ Almost parenthetically, EXPORT remarked that if she had actually gone into the theater with a gun, "[t]he security would have shot me."¹⁹ The weapon in the photograph—confirmed by Hassmann to have been an actual firearm—seems unlikely

¹⁶ I discuss *Touch Cinema* in depth in Chapter Two. EXPORT performed *Touch Cinema* as well as *Publikumsauspeitschung* (together with Peter Weibel) in Munich on April 15, 1969—not for the first time—which is well-documented, e.g. in the article "Exhibitionisten an die Front," in the German journal *Der Spiegel* (April 21, 1969), 194; Wolfgang Kudrnofsky, "Dem Publikum die Peitsche," *action. Filmzeitschrift*, no. 5 (Mai-June 1969), 21; "Nun ist es genug! Skandal auf der Strasse," *Film* 46/47 (November 1969); Fred Viehbahn, "Neues Trommelfeuer auf alte Konsumenten. Underground explosion wurde fast zur Nummernrevue," *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* (May 5, 1969); Peter Hajek, "Tapp, tapp, ein film. Austria Filmmakers Cooperative in München beliebt und zu Gast," *Kurier* (November 12, 1968), 11; "Zum Angreifen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (November 15, 1968); the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* (May 10, 1969); *Stern Österreichausgabe* (18, 1970); *Quick* (December 11, 1968).

¹⁷ "VALIE EXPORT interviewed by Ruth Askey in Vienna 9/18/79," *High Performance Magazine* (Spring 1981), 15.

¹⁸ Kristine Stiles, "Corpora Vilia. VALIE EXPORT's Body," in *VALIE EXPORT. Ob/De+Con(struction)* (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art and Design, 1999), note 7, and VALIE EXPORT, interview by author. EXPORT described the theatre as an art cinema. This is consistent with the description in the Guggenheim catalogue of Abramović's re-performance of the piece, taken from an interview with EXPORT by Nancy Spector (October 2005): "the performance took place in an art cinema in Munich, where I was invited with other filmmakers to show my films." Marina Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* (Milano: Edizione Charta, 2007), 118.

¹⁹ VALIE EXPORT, interview by author.

indeed to have been wielded in public, given the politically tense German climate of the time, with the terrorist Red Army Faction about to launch their first attacks, and particularly in conservative Bavaria.²⁰

What are we to make of these multiple revisions, besides the commonplace that art historians should not trust the oral accounts of artists or interviewers, or, perhaps, should not trust published narratives claiming to be artists' oral accounts? Most conspicuous is the correlation of EXPORT's 1979 interview with the photo-pieces featuring the machine gun, a prop that appeared also in Abramović's re-performance in 2005. If EXPORT could not have used the gun in public, then is Abramović's gun an *Ergänzung* (addition, or replenishment) to the 1969 performance, as EXPORT characterized it when asked about Abramović's re-enactment?²¹

Truth and Performative Utterances

I will return to the significance of the machine gun in a moment. First, however, I want to propose that EXPORT's 1979 account of her own piece is not simply a true or false statement; rather we have to consider it an accomplice in the performative production of meaning. The pornographic cinema, the weapon, in short, her role as the feminist warrior, is a performance in its own right, detached from the bodily presence of performer and audience in the "here and now" (ten years later, *there and then*) of the Munich theatre.²²

²⁰ While Hassmann did not remember the details, Hermann Hendrich, photographer of EXPORT's *Body Configuration* series as well as producer of some of her films, recalled that the gun was acquired from Udo Proksch, businessman and weapon collector, who was later convicted of murder in the course of one of the greatest insurance frauds in Austria's history, the shipwreck of the *Lucona* in 1977. Hermann Hendrich, interview by author, audio file, Vienna, January 29, 2008 [my translation].

²¹ VALIE EXPORT, interview by author, *ibid.*

²² The phrase 'here and now' could serve as a talismanic summation of the concerns of early performance studies; it is also the title of Goldberg's text on Abramović, who herself uses the phrase (see note 9).

The interview becomes performative by re-instantiating the earlier performance. The English verb “to perform,” derived from French *perfourir*, can either mean to accomplish a task (as in economic usage), or to carry out a pre-scripted action in public, e.g. in a theatre or musical play. When British philosopher J.L. Austin introduced the term “performative” into linguistic philosophy in the 1950s, he attempted to understand the relationship between speech and actions. It is no coincidence that Austin, who had decoded German messages for the British government during the war and thus had first hand experience of the force of words, should become interested in the necessary circumstances in which a spoken word would constitute an action in real life. In the postwar context, these concerns with actionable words can almost be seen as the philosophical counterpart for social studies of coercion such as the obedience experiments by Stanley Milgram at Yale University in New Haven.²³

Austin described performative speech in the following manner: “by saying or in saying something, we are doing something.”²⁴ His most famous examples are wedding vows (“I hereby take you to be my husband”) and the baptism of a ship, that is, utterances that constitute a change in the social situation because of conventions, often tied to certain rituals (the rings, the champagne bottle), and not comprehensible outside this context (you need to be familiar with the idea of baptizing a boat). He initially differentiated this performative speech from non- performative utterances that are based on the binary relation between “true” or “false.” Later on however, he complicated this strict distinction and introduced the terms locutionary (act *of* saying something), perlocutionary (act *through* saying something, i.e. the performative), and illocutionary (act set in motion by saying something, e.g. convincing someone) in order to suggest that every form of speech contains both

²³ Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority; An Experimental View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

²⁴ J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 12.

performative and descriptive parts.²⁵ For my reading, it is important that constitutive and descriptive statements are not exclusive, as they seldom are in an artistic context that wants to be both political and narrative, or in which the utterance involves an interaction between performer and audience.

In this sense, although legally her statements might have been dubious or false (being unverifiable by witnesses and contradicted by her own later accounts), EXPORT is not *narrating* the performance either truthfully or untruthfully, nor are we dealing with a ‘faked’ work of art. On the contrary, EXPORT’s statements in the 1979 interview must be considered what Austin calls a “happy performative,” namely an utterance being taken for the action of that which is being uttered, an utterance with concrete consequences in contrast to a descriptive statement.

One of the requirements that Austin wishes to find in every “happy performative,” one that works, is “appropriate circumstances,” or a “situation” that makes possible the concrete consequences of the performative. In this case, the situation encompasses the public nature of the magazine in which the interview was printed and the willingness of members of the art world to historicize the event in the reassuring form of the pictures, and also, through these pictures, to forget that they were not present at the “original” event. These “circumstances,” however, are not arbitrarily plucked out of an infinite “context,” as Jacques Derrida argues in his poststructuralist reading of Austin.²⁶ Rather than the concrete conditions serving as a crutch for stabilizing an infinite and shifting range of performed

²⁵ Austin explains the complexity of the distinction in: J.L. Austin, “Performative-Constativ”(translated by Geoffrey Warnock), in Charles E. Caton (ed.), *Philosophy and Ordinary Language* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 22-53. See also Chapter Five.

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 322, esp. note 11.

meanings, we should, with Austin, conceive the utterance and its conditions interacting without hierarchy in a “total speech act.”²⁷

The total speech act in the case of EXPORT’s *Genital Panic* ranges from the seemingly embodied act in 1969, through the 1979 interview (contextualized in its specific site and through its particular disseminations), up to Abramović’s re-enactment and beyond. In this sense, the 1979 interview in its mediated condition, as it was received at the time or as we read it today (for example, through my citation of it here), draws its authority from, but also itself *enacts* the belief in, the bodily presence of the artist, which is thus retrospectively projected back into the event. The interview, along with other re-articulations of the work, thus creates a new form of audience to which that body is (imaginatively) ‘present,’ a *reading audience*. The readers of 1979 could thus connect the event to the photograph, affirming or even producing a new historical version of the performance ten years after it was done: an audacious and aggressive act in public.

Is it appropriate to apply Austin’s theory, which is concerned with concrete actions in everyday life, to the context of artistic practice? Indeed, over the last two decades, the idea of the performative has been fruitfully extended to relate cultural practice to linguistic usage, and specifically in the realm of theatre and performance studies. In particular Judith Butler was crucial to make Austin relevant for cultural studies. She introduced the term “performativity” to describe the social construction of the individual through the

²⁷ Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 52.

performance of gender.²⁸ While the etymologic closeness of the terms might be responsible for the recent loose application of the term “performative” to describe all kinds of performance practices, attention to the core idea of “doing through saying” can shed much light on performance and its documents. For example, in a discussion of Yves Klein’s *Saut dans le vide* (*Leap into the Void*, 1960) and Chris Burden’s *Shoot* (1971), the American scholar Philip Auslander has employed speech act theory to provocatively conclude: “*The act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such.*”²⁹ Klein’s dangerous-looking jump out of the window is a photomontage, while Burden was actually shot in his arm by a friend, an act artfully recorded through depth of field and long camera exposure that captures the durational event in one image (showing both shooting and wounding).³⁰ Is in fact the image the *true* performance? Auslander ascribes the performative content of a live act exclusively to its documentation.

Taking Auslander literally, in our case the contradictions between versions of *Genital Panic* would be irrelevant, since the photograph would constitute the performance itself: it would be of little interest that EXPORT’s photo pieces are not taken at the public performance, nor that the gun is present in the pictures and then reported in the Munich action in her 1979 interview but disclaimed in recent publications and statements of the artist. It would also be of little interest whether the artist ever went into a cinema with her ‘Action

²⁸ See Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 49/1 (December 1988), 519-531. See also her books *Bodies That Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), and *Excitable Speech: a Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997).”For a good overview, see Sybille Krämer (ed.) *Performativität und Medialität*, (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004). In her introduction to this extensive anthology, she distinguishes three concepts of performativity, which she relates to a historical chronology: “Universalisierende Performativität;” (Austin’s “universalizing” concept, which, as Krämer puts it, shows the “permeability between word and act”), “Iterabilisierende Performativität” (based on Derrida’s iterability, and including Judith Butler’s politicization of Derrida’s reading of Austin) and Korporealisierende Performativität,” (the use of the concept of performativity in performance studies). Sybille Krämer, “Was haben Performativität und Medialität miteinander zu tun?” *Ibid.*

²⁹ Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Pants.’ The photographs have all the ingredients of a performative gesture, as we have seen, and they seem perfectly to illustrate EXPORT’s oral utterance (or verbal performance) of the piece in the first interview.

And yet, Auslander’s argument rules out the complexity inherent in the tension between acts and performative documents. He cannot account for what I am interested in, namely the oscillations between different instances of the performative, oscillations that in turn reveal the different audiences produced in each instance. Auslander’s disregard for original context roughly follows Derrida’s expansion and criticism of Austin, stating that—due to the iterability of linguistic signs—context cannot limit the meaning of these signs.³¹ In the end, Auslander’s manifesto works only partially even for his carefully chosen examples from the early days of performance documentation. The fascinating aspect in the Klein photomontage is exactly the tension between that which we see and that which might or might not have happened, i.e. the artist’s play with the idea of performance (of a bold leap) contrasted with his introduction of doubt about possibly ‘faking’ it, his ironic use of the image, and his staging of it for an audience through the angle of the camera and the montage technique. Auslander thus flattens the oscillation between different instances of the performative as regards their appearance (corporeal or mediated, partially signed, or citation, or based on conventions, or partially annulling these conventions) and their chronology (the difference between Klein publishing the montage in his own newspaper / artist publication *Dimanche* on November 27, 1960 and the usage of the image today).³² I would argue in contrast that only by minutely historicizing nodes in the performative relay can we disclose the different, historically specific notions of public art and of the audience they can produce.

³¹ Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context.”

³² Today, part of the appeal is the well-known “stunt,” the equally well-known fact that assistants held a safety net, and Klein replacing this “audience” by the indifferent looking man on the bicycle.

What if we were to find the radicality of performance art precisely in its ability to bridge bodily presence and its image? American scholar Amelia Jones has phrased this as follows:

Precisely by using their bodies as primary material, body or performance artists highlight the ‘representational status’ of such work rather than confirming its ontological priority. The representational aspects of this work—this ‘play within the arena of the symbolic,’ and, I would add, its dependence on documentation to attain symbolic status within the realm of culture—expose the impossibility of attaining full knowledge of the self through bodily proximity.³³

Jones points out that the documentation of performance art plays its role in “enacting the artist as public figure,” and acknowledges that it is the moment of the performance where cultural representation, and thus history, begins.³⁴ One could add that history continues to be built through palimpsests of discourse and image that follow inexorably from this moment—including critical reviews, interviews and artist’s statements, art historical texts, exhibitions and catalogue essays and a range of performative enunciations and visual images from the artist’s documents of the supposed original event to later reproductions of these images and re-enactments. How can we bind this reception history to the performative force of the images?

In our particular case, the question of motivation might help us clarify the relationship between image and event. Why, we must ask, would EXPORT insist on the shock value of the real in a 1969 *Genital Panic* ‘action’ and also produce an image of it, only to question the visual ‘facts’ she thus established in her later reminiscences about the piece? Why does the gun enter the picture at all, and why does EXPORT then dispute its ‘presence’ in the original

³³ Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia”, 13; with the phrase “play within the arena of the symbolic,” Jones cites Kathy O’Dell, *Toward a Theory of Performance Art: An Investigation of its Sites* (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1992), 43-44. Both O’Dell and Jones draw from Freudian and Lacanian theory for their discussion of performance art.

³⁴ Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, 6.

performance in her later statements? If we followed Auslander, we might have to conflate all the early interviews and images into one ‘constructed’ performance, or else we would have to declare that various independent performances had taken place due to the multiplicity of images and references. But in my argument, there is no need to multiply the performance. These various and contradictory words and images all point to one historical event, however ambiguously or inconsistently they correspond as factual documents. They clearly speak as performative relays. The shifts they represent are after all shifts in reception and in the history of the piece. What if we pay attention to the *changes* in context instead of declaring the expendability of that frame?

The historicity of the performative is indeed familiar to performance studies: Judith Butler has politicized the notion of Derrida’s performative iterability in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) by contending that the performative constitution of gender is enacted through constant repetition. Instabilities always remain, leaving room for subverting the original meaning of a linguistic sign, as in her example of gay appropriations of the word “queer.”³⁵ Whenever the utterance is repeated, it brings about a change in the context, thus changing the utterance itself, which partially entails the history of its meaning, and at the same time partially changes its connotations and political relevance.

EXPORT, I want to claim, needed to alter the set-up of the action for the photographs in order to achieve a functioning performative action in itself. The photographs in fact circulate under a slightly different title, namely *Aktionshose: Genitalpanik (Action Pants: Genital Panic)*, instead of the mere *Genitalpanik* of the performance, as if EXPORT were

³⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). Judith Butler will ultimately also bring in the social context of the speech act by interweaving speech act theory with Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*. See id., *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1997), and Marvin Carlson, *Performance. A Critical Introduction* (London / New York: Routledge, 1996), pp.76-79.

presenting to us the *prop* or the remnants of the action. The most conspicuous addition, the machine gun, is crucial to the performativity of the photographic piece: it must be seen as a necessary substitute for the most prominent ‘loss’ in the photographic version of the work, namely the absent bodies of her presumably male audience in an encounter outside the art world. In short, the machine gun brings the potential aggression of the encounter with the audience in public space symbolically into the picture, appropriating the signs of sexual aggression (generally coded as male) for the female protagonist; in the photographs EXPORT returns the putative male gaze directed toward her genitals with a feminist appropriation of an obvious phallic symbol. For the reading audience this prop was and is the necessary cue, providing the tension within the picture that performs and thereby instantiates the tension of the movie-theater action. EXPORT had to transfer the gender conflict into the photograph in order for the confrontation to remain legible.

At the same time, however, the machine gun redirects the gaze away from the genitals, transforming the genital panic into a possibly terrorist one, replenishing the effect of the original performance by introducing what Austin might call fresh circumstances, through the performative function of the photographs. The complexity of the (narrated) encounter is recreated in the photographs, which indeed means that the images stand as solid performative pieces on their own.³⁶ The performative utterance can, as Austin points out, be conveyed in written form or through a gesture, and also, I would argue, be transposed from a gesture into a photograph, as long as the narrative conventions and the situational cues enable one to make sense of the action. In fact, photography must be seen as a privileged medium of

³⁶ One could of course argue that EXPORT, unable to use the gun in the cinema, or take photographs in that darkened space, produced photographic and verbal supplements of how she imagined her own piece to function under ideal circumstances. If so, the question remains why she would entirely leave out of the photo the cinema and its audience, rather than attempting to stage that relationship as well.

performance, not because there is nothing outside of it, but through its dual capacity of acting as quasi-legal document of the past (applicable even when the photographs are staged) and as a persistent re-enactment.

Indeed, the balance of autonomy and reference in the photograph has underwritten the long and varied history of *Genital Panic*. EXPORT's idea after producing the photographs was to disseminate the bench image as a poster in public space in Vienna. Silkscreen posters of this image, stamped with EXPORT's name logo, were printed by Kari Bauer the same year. [Fig.1.10] As EXPORT claimed in a recent interview however, after having the posters made, she was not able to get the necessary permission from the city to disseminate the posters publicly, nor did she have the means and the workforce to put them up; she recalls "giving them to friends."³⁷ This informal distribution network, as well as EXPORT's own (together with Peter Weibel) 1970 publication of the *Bildkompendium*, in which the image of EXPORT sitting on the bench was printed together with the first description of the piece, were the initial source for the image in the histories of contemporary art that began to be produced.³⁸ EXPORT had a similar poster displayed in the streets of Berlin as a contribution to the 1994 exhibition *Gewalt/Geschäfte (Violence/Business)* of the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst.³⁹ [Fig. 1.11] Both of the original photographs were sold as photo editions in galleries, shown in exhibitions, and disseminated as stand-ins for the performance (with *captions* providing the necessary link to the live event) in books or accompanying texts.

These images have acquired a historical significance although they cannot be seen as documentary proof of the performance. But are they still dependent on it, their meaning

³⁷ VALIE EXPORT, interview by author.

³⁸ Weibel and EXPORT, *Bildkompendium*, 198.

³⁹ Exh.Cat. *Gewalt/Geschäfte Eine Ausstellung zum Topos Gewalt in der künstlerischen Auseinandersetzung* (Berlin: Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1994).

inherently linked to the original ‘action,’ or are they self-sufficient art projects? EXPORT did experiment with photographic stagings around the time of *Genital Panic* that resemble the ones Cindy Sherman would produce years later, notably the *Identitätstransfer (Identity Transfer)* of 1968, in which she presents herself in a stereotypical male posture for the camera. [Fig. 1.12] From the beginning of her career, photography was never simply a medium for documenting her actions, but one that self-reflexively opened up complex performative interactions—anticipating the current tendency of staging performances expressly for the camera.⁴⁰ EXPORT’s persistent use of photography might at first glance suggest that she privileges the photograph over the actual performance. And yet, given the relevance of *Genital Panic* as performance in public, its need to be *envisioned* as having taken place in the cinema—the argument that performative force fully shifts to the document, or that there is no collaboration between the live action and its documentation, will not hold—not even in a situation like ours, where we have no actual proof of the performance having taken place in the public space of a cinema.⁴¹

I have made the case that photographs refer not so much to the staged version of the performance, the mechanical reproduction of which we are allowed to see, but to an ‘imaginary’ performance, one that is performatively defined through its descriptions, disseminations and other permutations in the public sphere. The reading and viewing public uses the image to point (imaginatively) back to the action; the photograph becomes a metaphorical version of an indexical sign: a sign causally connected to its referent, without

⁴⁰ This trend is finely exemplified in Jens Hoffmann and Joan Jonas (eds). *Art Works Perform* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005).

⁴¹ Cf. Auslander: “Although I have stated that the relationship between the live and the mediated is one of competitive opposition at the level of cultural economy, I do not see that opposition as deriving from the intrinsic characteristics of live and mediated forms but, rather, as determined by cultural and historical contingencies.” Auslander, *Liveness.1999*, 11.

necessarily resembling it.⁴² The photograph provides the imaginary performance with an image, but one we expand in our heads, in imagining the “original” event. If we accept this broader concept of the index as a sign pointing to an action, as a sign that indicates an event has occurred, we can allow into the interpretation of photographs of performative acts such as EXPORT’s a broader context of historical references inside and outside the image. This context is not a supplement, but the medium within which performative action unfolds—which is also how Austin understood the “circumstances” of his “total speech act.”

A monument to performance art: Abramović’s *Seven Easy Pieces*

When Marina Abramović re-performed *Genital Panic*, she based her seven-hour-long performance consciously on the photographic documents she knew. The body she ‘brought back’ was yet another imaginative constitution of presence for a viewing public, informed by mediated historical fragments rather than ensuring at last an ‘authentic’ return to bodily presence. Almost every aspect of the 1969 “action” was reformulated or newly specified: the unspecified duration became a seven-hour marathon, the mythical all-male cinema public became the mixed audience of an art museum. Abramović herself wrestled with the problem of historical amnesia, as we can gather from a statement about her motivation for the *Seven Easy Pieces*:

I’m one of these artists of the 70s and I’m just fed up with the copying of not just my work—of all the artists of the 70s in different ways in MTV, in theatre, in dance, in fashion, in young artists, I’m also fed up with young critics who actually evaluate the young artists’ work and tell us they are original, without referring to the past works at all. They deny history.⁴³

⁴² On the index, see Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 147-149, and 304.

⁴³ Marina Abramović, Q & A Session at the conference *Feminist Future* at the Museum of Modern Art (New York, January 26, 2007). Audio file archived online <http://www.wps1.org/include/shows/moma.html> [online document, accessed April 1, 2007].

Abramović's attention to history is a model to artists and scholars, and yet, her suggestion that somehow there is an authentic version of the performance that is waiting to be excavated for history (and that this version can be retrieved through the work's re-enactment) elides the fact that the circumstances have changed since the original performance. In addition, Abramović's claim that amnesia has removed these originals from history is not convincing, since the works she re-enacted in 2005 have had pronounced historical visibility. Rather, Abramović embarked on a research project and hermeneutical venture of determining what these works exactly said, and what they could mean in the present. In this sense, I would argue, history itself has transformed and recontextualized these pieces.

Abramović's 2005 project is complex in terms of how it shifts our historical understanding of re-enacted works such as EXPORT's *Genital Panic*. First of all, there is the issue of reconstruction of the 'original' action itself. The organizers of *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim Museum ran into various difficulties while trying to unearth the original course of events. The confusion reached a climax when EXPORT stated in a 2005 email to curator Nancy Spector that she "did it [*Genital Panic*] two times, one time in a Art Cinema in München and second for the poster," but only then with the weapon.⁴⁴ This doubling already anticipated the idea of re-performing *Genital Panic*, the possibility of inaugurating performative relays in place of the demand for "presence," but also reveals a readiness to equate performance and photograph, which we could hardly expect in the 1960s. Abramović herself recently recalled the difficulty of accessing the performance through the oral description of the artist:

⁴⁴ Email from VALIE EXPORT to Nancy Spector on January 3, 2005. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archive, New York. EXPORT performed several of her actions more than once, e.g. her *Tapp- und Tastkino*, and in 2007, she re-performed an expanded version of "Up+Down+On+Off" (1968) at the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York. See Chapter Two.

I was the most critical and most careful about this piece because in reality she stated that she originally performed the piece in this theatre at the erotic film festival in Vienna, but at the same time she made the poster as well. *Genital Panic* is a great contradiction because she also made the photograph in her studio and there are lots of different images of that poster.⁴⁵

Having rather unclear information, Abramović decided in her re-enactment to not give up the gun, thus indicating that the images had become central to the historical imagining of *Genital Panic*. The solution at the Guggenheim was to title the evening *Action Pants: Genital Panic*, after the photographic work, but to cite the Munich action as a historical reference point both on the website and in the catalogue.⁴⁶

These complex and often competing histories of *Genital Panic* make it clear that audience members approaching performance must mobilize a version of history that is not necessarily based on facts, but rather on hear-say or traditions associated with the ‘original’ performance but also with its subsequent narrations and documentations. Abramović was concerned with historical truth, as she claimed, but also made a concession to the impossibility of simply reenacting the pieces. She understood well that she performed her *Seven Easy Pieces* for a new public, and the irony in the title (with its allusion to music)

⁴⁵ Marina Abramović in dialogue with Amelia Jones, “The Live Artist as Archaeologist”(New York, August 5, 2007), forthcoming in Adrian Heathfield and Amelia Jones (eds.), *Perform, Repeat, Record: A Critical Anthology of Live Art in History* (London / New York: Routledge).

⁴⁶ Marina Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces* (Milano: Edizione Charta, 2007), 118, and <http://www.guggenheim.org/exhibitions/Abramović/> [online document, accessed July 23, 2008]. The ostensible date of the performance remains unclear. The Guggenheim Museum and some other recent sources date the original action April 22, 1969. EXPORT performed her well-documented *Touch Cinema* in Munich on April 15, 1969. She performed *Touch Cinema* again in Zurich on April 18 and 25 (Archive of the Generali Foundation, Vienna), making an appearance in Munich on April 22 possible but unlikely. The Guggenheim catalogue gives the theatre *Augusta Lichtspiele* as location (*Seven Easy Pieces*, 118).

already suggests her awareness of an appropriation in a new context.⁴⁷ The—by now historical—sources were therefore made more prominent than they would have to be in a reenactment: this was evident first and foremost from Abramović’s decision to formally ‘quote’ the iconic photographs of EXPORT’s piece. Consequently, the performance consisted of her posing statically as if she were doing a *tableau vivant*—using the props of the chairs, the gun, and the cutout pants, mostly sitting in the position of EXPORT’s photo piece, and sometimes—every hour or so—getting up slowly, walking to the edge of the platform, posing upright in the posture of the third photograph, walking back, and sitting down again. [Fig.1.13, 1.14] The “action” became a set of slowly shifting photographic stills, enacted with care not to overstep the bounds of the formative documentation.

Abramović’s reenactment of history is an embodiment of the performative document, and, in its a distillation of reception and memory, proposed a new canonical status for the performance pieces she staged. The weapon in *Genital Panic*—according to the files at the Guggenheim a replica of an American M16 rifle (quite different visually from the one EXPORT had used)—played a particular role for Abramović.⁴⁸ It externalized the potentially violent gender conflict the photographs had staged—since the Guggenheim public was also not the exclusively male audience of the fabled porn theatre. Additionally, the fact that the gun used at the Guggenheim was a replica removed any doubt that the context of the new

⁴⁷ “Easy Pieces” is a common title for compositions throughout the centuries: Ferdinando Carulli (eighteenth century), Niccolò Paganini (nineteenth century), or Ernst Krenek (twentieth century) wrote pieces entitled *Seven Easy Pieces*. They are often used to instruct children or beginners, which means that Abramović is alluding ironically both to herself as a beginner, and the instructor of the audience. More concretely, Abramović lists Richard P. Feynman, *Six Not So Easy Pieces: Relativity, Symmetry and Space-Time*, 2004, based on the physicist’s lectures at Caltech in the 1960s, as influential for her artistic production. From a questionnaire that appeared in *Frieze*, issue 100, and was reprinted in Lioba Reddeker (Ed.), *ACA Art Critics Award. Lesebuch* (Vienna: basis wien, 2007).

⁴⁸ The M16 has been the US infantry rifle since the 1960s and featured prominently in the Vietnam War. Abramović just requested a “machine gun” as necessary prop from the organizers at the Guggenheim, without specifications. Exhibition file *Seven Easy Pieces*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archive, New York.

piece was the “art world” instead of an imagined revolutionary public in 1960s Europe. Abramović as the female protagonist becomes the re-enactor of history and the guarantor of recollection—a recollection that changes the ‘original’ in making it present in new circumstances.

In the European culture of commemoration, female bodies have always played an important part, most manifestly in the iconography of the monument as abstract personifications of virtues or countries.⁴⁹ Could we say that Abramović is monumentalizing EXPORT’s performance, and performance art in general? After all, she decided to restage the performances in the Guggenheim Museum—an institution known for canonizing works of art. Aside from the change of venue and audience, the obvious particularity of the re-performance—apart from the props approximating those in the photographs—was Abramović’s bodily presence, a presence which was tempered by the use of a tall white cylindrical platform which served as her base. Instead of the intimate encounter between the audience’s faces and EXPORT’s crotch—which, EXPORT had argued, ensured the shock value—Abramović was visible from all sides but untouchable. The audience walked freely as in any museum setting, and Abramović’s operational zone was additionally demarcated as ‘forbidden’ by a circle of black tape on the floor around the platform. At one point during the performance a young man with a ponytail tried to climb onstage and was immediately removed by the museum’s security personnel. This attempted interaction, prevented by the guards, did not stir Abramović. She sat in her chair, impassive as a statue—or a photograph. She had to, because the intruder did not understand the recreated piece, which was not, as in EXPORT’s case, about a ‘real encounter,’ about acting out gender relations. Rather, Abramović made herself into what we might call a performative monument—what in

⁴⁹ See e.g. Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens* (New York: Atheneum, 1985).

German is termed a *Denkmal*, a mark for thinking or remembering.⁵⁰ A monument does not ensure ‘authentic’ remembering, since it addresses an audience with disparate experiences of the past. What a monument allows is *commemoration*: a conventional act establishing a new, public version of the past event.

With *Action Pants: Genital Panic*, as with each of the other re-enactments in *Seven Easy Pieces*, Abramović consolidated the consequences of different performative actions, mediating through her body both the document and the imagined historical gesture of the action. Although Abramović did not interpret all *Seven Easy Pieces* in such a static manner as she did *Genital Panic*, the extension in time—every piece was performed for seven hours, no matter how short the original performance had been—led to deliberate aesthetic distance (or exhaustion) on the side of the viewer.⁵¹ Abramović infused the performance with her own memory, which has evolved almost solely through mediation—Abramović was not present at any of the performances which form the ‘score’ for her *Seven Easy Pieces*, excepting of course her own earlier piece, *Lips of Thomas*. Would we see the change in context even in this performance, or would the ‘original’ piece be reperformed ‘faithfully,’ in the privileged case of the performer being the same person? *Thomas Lips*, as the 1975 performance was

⁵⁰ In addition, Abramović decided to show the video documentation (done with a static camera view) of the previous evening on screens in the vicinity of her performance. The audience was thus confronted with the fact that presence turns into mediation in the course of a day. Experimental filmmaker Babette Mangolte produced a 90 minute long film of the events (USA, 2006).

⁵¹ Acconci’s *Seedbed* is the only performance that was shortened in the *Seven Easy Pieces*, as it originally sprawled over several days. There is no proof, however, that Acconci was ever present and “actively” performing his task for many hours at a time. Melanie Gilligan interprets the distance in re-performances as “Brechtian distantiation.” Melanie Gilligan, “The Beggar’s Pantomime,” *Artforum* (Summer 2007), 428-433.

originally entitled, was radically modified for the Guggenheim Museum.⁵² The artist split the complex actions of the 1975 event into smaller units that were repeated several times, as if fragmented pieces of memory had been reactivated. [Fig. 1.15] This suggests that even her own memory was combined with the reception of the piece, including the images that have circulated in the decades since its first performance.

The last evening of *Seven Easy Pieces* makes explicit Abramović's ambition that the performances be construed as a monument to performance art. Abramović titled her new piece *Entering the Other Side*, with the telling subtitle *The Artist is Present Here and Now*. She described it as "an installation."⁵³ [Fig. 1.16] Abramović appeared high above the platform wearing a gigantic blue dress, serving as a "projection screen" for the public (in her words).⁵⁴ For seven hours, she confined herself to several small gestures, such as turning her upper body from one side to the other, extending her arms; at some point a Slavic song was played from a tape recorder. Abramović was not just "present," as she described it, as a personification of performance art. Rather, she was present and distant at the same time, becoming a sublime marker for performance art, comprehensible as both image and monumental landmark. What remained implicit in the other performances was openly treated here: even though the performance premiered at the Guggenheim and was not a reenactment,

⁵² Roughly, *Lips of Thomas* deals with her political biography in Yugoslavia in a tension of Christian and Communist rituals and symbols, and the involvement of both her parents first as partisans against the Fascists and later as high-ranking officials in the civil service. This means that Abramović remembered and worked through her own piece, evaluating and changing it, after—and this surely plays a role—the collapse of communism, which allows for a change in her reflections on her memory. *Lips of Thomas* had already also been incorporated into Abramović's piece *The Biography* in 1992ff., while the iconography of the communist star already features in earlier performances such as *Rhythm 5* (Belgrade, 1974). I discuss these works in Chapter Five. At the Guggenheim, the Russian song "Slavic Souls" also featured, and a photocopy of the text was available to the audience. It is reprinted in Marina Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces*, 202.

⁵³ "The last piece was different, because it was an installation, and I liked the demystification that at midnight I could disappear through the dress and change, and then come out...because when you do performances, you are the object and subject of the work...it was important that kind of ending, it was detached." Marina Abramović in a discussion with Nancy Spector on November 18, 2005, at the Guggenheim Museum. Video document, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archive, New York.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

the audience was invited to cultivate a memory rather than experience an action. In Abramović's reenactment, documents and memories merged into a performative monument which refers to the past by re-instantiating it in the present. Abramović acted for a historically-informed public, not because its members might have been present at EXPORT's, Beuys's or Abramović's performance thirty years earlier, but rather because they heard or read about it (or *will* have heard or read about it in the Guggenheim publications). History and memory, or to be more exact, cultural memory based on mediated experience, were embodied equally in the performer and the audience.

Treating both mediated and unmediated performance as possessing the same logic requires a significant shift from ideologies of the 1960s about authentic and inauthentic experience. In 1961, American historian Daniel Boorstin coined the term "pseudo-event" for occurrences that existed solely for the media or for mediation, i.e. anticipating concepts such as the spectacle of Guy Debord or the simulacrum of Jean Baudrillard.⁵⁵ While from today's point of view, the value-judgment that distinguishes mediated from authentic experience can be questioned, Boorstin exemplifies a general fear of losing authentic experience in the postwar period that also played into the development of artistic practices such as Body Art, Fluxus, the Situationists, performance, and Viennese Actionism. EXPORT's *Genital Panic* makes the problematic nature of the concept obvious already at its high tide, and we can similarly witness the problem of retaining this view in Abramović's case.

But such self-conscious moves to surface mediation in 1960s performance are often obscured by the mediation itself—the discourse around performance art that would disguise

⁵⁵ Daniel Boorstin, *A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* [c. 1961] (New York, Harper & Row, 1964). The difference between Boorstin and Baudrillard is that the latter does not any longer oppose his simulacrum to authentic experience. Not everyone in the 1960s viewed new media as negative impact. Cf. Marshall McLuhan's idea of the "global village," in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

that artists operated within a paradox. Abramović is marked by the era Boorstin inhabited, and still iterates notions of performance art as an authentic experience, as when she discussed her motivation to undertake *Seven Easy Pieces* as correcting the dubious historical status of performance art: “The unreliability of the documents and the witnesses led to the total mystification and misrepresentation of the actual performance.”⁵⁶ Yet on the other hand, as we have seen, she consciously incorporated both historiography and myth in the actual re-performances.⁵⁷

The apparent contradiction between an interest in presence and mediation can be resolved by returning to our speech-act definition of performance. Recall that in Austin, to speak (a mediation) was to do something (an event—presence). With this in mind, let us come back to the root of our inquiry: did EXPORT’s *Genital Panic* ever happen as a performance? Certainly: it continues to do so. But the act of the artist in a movie theatre in Munich might not have taken place. An indication that *Genital Panic* remained in the planning stage is the entry on the piece in the anthology of Actionist works co-edited by EXPORT in 1970, which printed the bench photograph for the first time with a descriptive

⁵⁶ Marina Abramović, “Reenactment. An Introduction by Marina Abramović,” in *Seven Easy Pieces*, 10.

⁵⁷ Even more openly combining the conflicting ideas of historical truth and interpretation, Abramović described her idea of reenacting performances from the 1960s and ‘70s in an interview almost ten years earlier: “There’s the structure of the performance that you can see, and then you can make your own interpretation and have your own experience. You absolutely have to respect the originality of the piece and ask the living artist for the permission. You can do whatever you want after that.” Janet Kaplan, “Deeper and Deeper: Interview with Marina Abramović.” *Art Journal*, vol. 58 (summer 1999), 14. This also brings up the interesting question of intellectual property in performance art.

text that uses the conditional “should happen.”⁵⁸ This indicates the work’s preliminary status; but *should* [German *sollte*] can also be taken as an imperative. This ambiguity is at the center of the piece. The “should happen” may become an Austinian “it is so,” and indeed it has in the brief history of this performance. It is for this reason that the ‘original’ continues to work in our heads, and is inseparable from the later performative utterances that we again and again connect to a presupposed live act.

That we will not be able to distinguish the “truth” in opposition to “myth” holds for most historical events. This is in part so for a simple empirical reason: “myth” is in itself a historical fact shaping our political consciousness of the past. A whole strand of historians have in the last decades devoted themselves to what is called mnemohistory, uncovering not historical facts or the distinction between facts and myth, but on the contrary the more or less hidden “agenda” of historical myth that powerfully shapes tradition and political actions via memory or commemoration.⁵⁹ The “audience,” be it a contemporary of Moses or of the October Revolution, always already mediates the event through perceiving and discussing it, even without political pressure—which is always present, of course. Similarly, historical

⁵⁸ ‘anstelle einer vorführung sollte ich mich mit entblösster fut (an der hose ausgeschnitten) durch die zuschauerreihen drängen, ergo fut und nase in gleicher höhe, indirekter sexueller kontakt mit dem publikum. valie export.’ [Instead of a screening I should push through the rows of the audience with exposed crotch (cut out from the pants), ergo crotch and nose on the same level; indirect sexual encounter with the audience. valie export] Text printed in Weibel and EXPORT, *Bildkompendium*, 290 [my translation]. The live performance of *Genital Panic* in a cinema has not been questioned in the literature: Roswitha Mueller describes the performance briefly in the context of ‘sexual liberation,’ without mentioning the gun (Mueller, 18). A recent Austrian publication revives the myth of the porn cinema: Doris Guth, “Aktionshose Genitalpanik von VALIE EXPORT,” in Carola Dertnig and Stefanie Seibold (eds.) *Let’s Twist Again: Performance in Wien von 1960 bis heute* (Gumpoldskirchen: DEA, 2006), 72-75. Also recently, Bojana Pejić reflects on the state of the public sphere at the time of *Genital Panic*. Although she points towards the staged nature of the photographs and calls the poster an “artist poster,” the (otherwise excellent) text does not question its occurrence. She concludes that EXPORT’s interest lay in an agonistic confrontation in the sense of Chantal Mouffe and Rosalyn Deutsche: Bojana Pejić, “On Pants, Panics and Origins.” In Saxenhuber (ed.) *EXPORT*, 2007, 54-63.

⁵⁹ Jan Assmann is one of the pioneers of mnemohistory. He considers mnemohistory a reception theory applied to history. See Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” [published in German in 1988], *New German Critique*, 65, (Spring/Summer 1995); and Jan Assmann and Tonio Hölscher (ed.), *Kultur und Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), as well as the introductory chapter “Mnemohistory and the Construction of Egypt,” in *Moses the Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass. / London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

“truth” is always inflected by memory, historiography, and mythmaking.⁶⁰ From today’s point of view, distinctions between individual and collective memory, as well as between history and recollection remain slippery. Both halves of the dialectic turn out to be personal, and both are socially bound. We can analyze these occurrences as performative memory events.

If re-performance is related to the monument, in that it points towards the past event, and not simply through the formal qualities of Abramović’s ‘monumentalizing’ gestures, we have to ask: do we need to configure “original” performance art of the 1960s as the counter-pole to re-performance?⁶¹ If mediation plays a role, as I have shown, and even if repetition might thus be anticipated, is there any reason to believe that the first performance for the ‘uninformed’ audience was somehow free from memory? Put differently, were concepts of memory and history of any concern to performance art around 1970? Pressing on Austin’s concept of performative interaction, we could say that, in order to be receivable, performance art has to draw from conventions, even if for many early performances it meant playing with or disrespecting them. The very idea of conventions relates to memory, and I would extend this argument that the conscious use of the document and of documentation provides the option to performatively re-instantiate the encounter with the public.

⁶⁰ This also means that memory is not simply an individual affair, but, as Maurice Halbwachs has first shown, one that is always also connected to a social framework. While in Halbwachs’s view, an individual can only retrieve memories with the help of society, we would need to consider also the individual’s contribution to the collective framework of remembrance. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; [*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. Paris, 1925]. Edited, translated, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). I discuss Halbwachs in more detail in Chapter Four.

⁶¹ Curator and theorist Sven Lütticken raises the question of re-performances as a collapse into Debord’s “spectacle.” Sven Lütticken, “An Arena in which to Reenact,” 23ff. His concluding remarks remain vaguely positive: “Art can examine and try out—under laboratory conditions, as it were—forms of repetition that break open history and the historicist returns of past periods....Operating within contemporary performative spectacle, if from a marginal position, art can stage small but significant acts of difference.” *Ibid.*, 60. See also Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1967).

We have seen that the performative force of conventions was most often transmitted from 1960s performance to posterity through the photographic document. What then, is the relation between the document and history? It extends the potential of the performance into history, but it also helps to test history in the performance itself. I argued that the document is the ideal shuttle to (re)-imagine a performance, that it draws reading audiences into this performative encounter, and that it has the potential to adapt to changing contexts—it is thus not the fixed counterpart to the performance, but its shifting companion over a retrospective lifetime. In this sense, the performance document inherits certain potentials lending itself to commemoration.

In the wider context of knowledge production, Michel Foucault pointed out in the late 1960s the relationship of the document to the monument that lies at the heart of my thesis:

[H]istory, in its traditional form, undertook to ‘memorize’ the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*.⁶²

If, according to Foucault, the historical monument was once made to function as a document (i.e., to make historical facts speak to people in the present about people in the past), he sees the document as functioning inside an enclosed theoretical discourse, referred to as a monument, with no human referent. In this text from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault was concerned with regimes of knowledge in their particular autonomy, and aimed at emphasizing the self-referentiality of historical knowledge. Even if we do not want to do away with individual agency in the anti-humanist manner of late 1960s theory, it is worth interrogating in our context Foucault’s idea of a symbiotic connection between the document

⁶² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [*L'Archéologie du savoir*, 1969], (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 7 (Foucault’s emphasis).

and the monument (encompassing the idea of discourse as “artifact,” and also ruin or landmark) and the importance of an inbuilt directionality in their relationship. I will expand this argument in reference to historicization and commemoration in performance art, arguing that it is not simply the embodiment which connects performance to the monument (in the sense of the “real” body versus a “statue”), but a performative—socially binding—connection to the past. The relationship between presence and mediation in the 1960s became, I argue, the Janus-faced prerequisite of performance art to unfold in the moment of a bodily encounter (at least in our imagination). Via the document the “here and now” of performance becomes the “there and then” of commemoration.

Chapter 2: The Performative Document: Presence, Photography, and Recollection in Vienna

On November 15, 1961, Austrian state television screened an one-man play in which cabaret artist Helmut Qualtinger impersonated *Herr Karl*, an ordinary guy who regales an absent acquaintance with an hour-long monologue about his life.¹ Herr Karl takes the listener on a tour through the twentieth century from the perspective of a Viennese petty bourgeois, the type who managed to live smoothly through rapidly changing and even brutal circumstances; quick to subordinate morality to his survival instincts, he sees himself as a benevolent if bemused spectator of political upheaval. A key scene takes Karl back to mid-March 1938:

And that's when Hitler came. Well that was a buzz, a jubilee that you can't at all imagine—after these horrible years, these sad years...finally, the Viennese had some fun...we was standin' on the *Heldenplatz* [Heroes' Square]...We felt that we were among our own...It was like a wine tavern, only more festive.²

Moments later, he catches himself and switches from his lilting Viennese dialect into High German, as if to distance himself from the events: “It was awful, a crime, how these ingenuous people were led astray...it was the *Führer* that led them.”³

¹ *Der Herr Karl*, director: Erich Neuberg; script: Carl Merz, Helmut Qualtinger; camera: Peter Jasicek, Gerd Hoss, Walter Wirsta; actor: Helmut Qualtinger. The play was performed in several Austrian theatres after its television premiere, and toured Germany, Switzerland, France, and New York (in 1963). See Sabine Krangler, *Helmut Qualtinger oder: die Demaskierung einer Volksseele. Eine Abhandlung des Werks „Herr Karl“ zum politischen und gesellschaftlichen Zeitgeschehen und dessen Medienecho* (Master thesis, University of Vienna, 2006), 42, 48. *The New Yorker* described Herr Karl as follows: “The best known, least liked, and most controversial personality in Austria today is a fat, slovenly Viennese grocery-store clerk in his early sixties, with a cunning look in his watery eyes, a small Hitler mustache, a checkered political past, and a self-righteous attitude. Outwardly easygoing and *gemütlich*, he is filled with pity for himself but none to spare for others. He alternately deploras his hard life and insists that his existence has always been a Hetz.” Joseph Wechsberg, “Enemy of *Gemütlichkeit*,” *The New Yorker* (April 20, 1963). Quoted in Krangler, 48. April 20th is Hitler's birthday.

² “Und dann is eh der Hitler kommen ... Na ja—des war a Begeisterung ... ein Jubel, wie man es sich überhaupt nicht vorstellen kann ...nach diesen furchtbaren Jahren ... die traurigen Jahre ... Endlich amal hat der Wiener a Freid ghabt. Wir san gstanden am Heldenplatz, am Ring. Man hat gefühlt, man ist unter sich. Es war wie beim Heurigen, nur feierlicher.” Carl Merz, Helmut Qualtinger, *Der Herr Karl*, Audio recording, Preisrecords, 1987 [my translation]. The rally took place on March 15th, 1938.

³ “Es war furchtbar...ein Verbrechen, wie man diese gutgläubigen Menschen in die Irre geführt hat ... Der Führer hat geführt.” Merz/Qualtinger, *Der Herr Karl*.

Der Herr Karl touched a raw nerve. In the early 1960s, Austrians did not wish to hear about National Socialism, much less be mocked for their refusal to admit any moral or political complicity. Allied troops had only left the country in 1955. The broad tendency to disclaim responsibility for the war and the crimes against Jews, as well as against other minorities and politically unwanted persons, by putting the blame entirely on the Germans had become government policy. In contrast to West Germans, who were declared the aggressors and were therefore forced to deal with their guilt (even though they also exhibited a “policy of silence” on the level of daily social life—see Chapter Three), Austria officially declared itself the *first victim* of Nazi Germany upon its independence in 1955, citing Hitler’s “invasion” in March 1938 and conveniently forgetting the plebiscite.⁴ Postwar Austria fell gratefully into a conservative restoration, and a strategy of silence dominated. Public remembrance of the victims of Fascism was not an issue for decades after 1955.⁵

⁴ The dominant political parties after the war, the Christian-conservative Volkspartei, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party, agreed on Austria’s victim status in their first declaration of independence on April 27, 1945. Austria was governed jointly by the Soviet Union, USA, France, and England for the next ten years. The National Treaty that codified Austria’s neutrality and the end of the allies’ presence in 1955 originally included a clause of complicity that would have made the state of Austria partially responsible for the crimes of the Nazi era. This clause was deleted before the treaty was signed, marking the allies’ acceptance of Austria’s victim role. See David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Claudia Kuretsidis-Haider, “Bestrafung und/oder Pardonierung - inwieweit konnte Justiz in Österreich und Deutschland nach 1945 identitätsstiftend sein?” Paper given at the German Studies Association, Atlanta, October 1999. http://www.doew.at/thema_alt/justiz/kriegsverbr/justizoed..html [Online document, accessed January 3, 2008]; The question of Austria’s annexation by Nazi Germany is complex. Hitler forestalled a referendum about the voluntary union of Austria with Fascist Germany by marching into Austria on March 12; he met no military resistance, and a manipulated plebiscite held by the Nazis on April 10 overwhelmingly ‘ratified’ the union. See Hermann Hagspiel, *Die Ostmark. Österreich im Grossdeutschen Reich 1938-1945* (Vienna: Braumüller / Universitätsverlag, 1995), and *Betrifft Anschluss. Ein Almanach* (Vienna: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Österreichischer Privatverlage, 1988).

⁵ Commemoration of Austrians who fought against Fascism was conducted via plaques commissioned privately by groups such as the Association of Austrian Concentration Camp Prisoners and Politically Persecuted in Vienna (Verband österreichischer KZler und politisch Verfolgter in Wien). See Heidemarie Uhl, “The Politics of Memory: Austria’s Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period,” in *Contemporary Austrian Studies*, ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka, vol. 5 (New Brunswick / London: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 64-94, id. “Landscape of Commemoration: Historical Memory and Monument Culture in Austria (1945-2000),” in Jerzy W. Borejsza and Klaus Ziemer (eds.) *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe* (New York / Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), and Meinrad Ziegler and Waltraud Kannonier-Finster (eds.), *Österreichisches Gedächtnis. Über Erinnern und Vergessen der NS-Vergangenheit* (Vienna / Cologne / Weimar: Böhlau, 1993).

Herr Karl's performance explodes this quietism from within, as his 'memories' alternate between an official view implemented retrospectively (Hitler misleading Austria) and the incorrigible feeling of enthusiasm.⁶ Herr Karl embodied the milieu of suppression characteristic of early 1960s Vienna; in his inflated persona the mendacious project of 'talking up' the past is exposed ruthlessly. Its means of production matched its ambition: it has its stylistic roots in Viennese cabaret, but was written purposely for television, tacitly relying on recording and mass distribution to reach a broad, and eventually an international, audience.⁷ *Der Herr Karl* was a scandal before it was a success. The station received hundreds of indignant calls during the screening, and a prominent boulevard paper disputed the plausibility of the protagonist: "The supposed Herr Karl of the 20s and 30s, of the pre- and postwar: no one is going to buy him."⁸ Improbable but ubiquitous, ready to cajole the 'man next door' in his living room, *Der Herr Karl* stood at the crossroads of live performance and the mass media. The history he so uncomfortably brought up would ultimately be addressed, but it took many decades for artists to work through issues related to the specific patriarchal milieu of Austrian society.

The theme of this chapter is the way history—in particular the history of National Socialism—surfaced in artistic practices related to performance art in Austria since the mid-1960s. How, in short, *Herr Karl* was processed through performative practices. The tension between presence and mediation that I discussed in the previous chapter will prove crucial. From the aggressive actions of bodily presence of the *Viennese Actionists* to Peter Weibel's

⁶ This split is embodied in the switch between dialect (how Karl remembers) and High German (how he is supposed to remember). Dialect itself is finely ambiguous: does it speak for the individual or his culture?

⁷ About 12% of households in Austria had television in 1961. Krangler, 44. Österreichisches Fernsehen (later ORF) was the only full-time station: in September 1961, ORF 2 sent its first, infrequent broadcasts.

⁸ "Den 'angeblichen' Herrn Karl der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre, der Vor- und Nachkriegszeit, den kauft ihm niemand ab." "Der andere Herr Karl," *Neue Illustrierte Kronen Zeitung* (November 17, 1961).

and VALIE EXPORT's development out of Actionism into themes of public authority, agency, and ultimately commemoration, we will see the performative document surface as prominent marker in these explorations of power and memory in public space.

Der Herr Karl depicts the milieu in which VALIE EXPORT became an artist. When the young Waltraud Höllinger (born Lehner) entered the Viennese art scene in the mid-1960s, the avant-garde was committed to a performance practice that construed bodily presence as rebellion against a repressive society. Upon taking her artist name (as a logo in capital letters) in 1967 [Fig. 2.1], EXPORT was loosely connected to the internationally renowned Viennese Actionists, frictions with whom prompted her to develop what she would call feminist actionism (*Feministischer Aktionismus*) in the late 1970s.⁹ Remarkably for a woman on the margin of the notoriously masculinist group, EXPORT collaborated on a book with Peter Weibel entitled *Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film* (1970), the first anthology of the Viennese Actionists, a term the editors defined broadly to include themselves, the experimental poets of the Wiener Gruppe, architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser, painter Arnulf Rainer, alongside the main protagonists of Actionist performance: Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, and Hermann Nitsch.¹⁰

“Der einfache Bürger von Nebenan” (the simple man next door) is Qualtinger's term for the audience he hoped to reach. Krangler, 33.

⁹ VALIE EXPORT, “Aspects of Feminist Actionism,” *New German Critique*, No. 47 (Spring - Summer 1989), 69-92. The German original (written in 1977) was published in Gisliind Nabakowski, Helke Sander, Peter Gorsen (eds.), *Frauen in der Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980).

¹⁰ Peter Weibel (ed., in collaboration with VALIE EXPORT), *Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film* (Frankfurt am Main: Kohlkunstverlag, 1970). It might be that the name Wiener Aktionisten (Viennese Actionists) came into existence with the book, (in English, *Image Compendium Viennese Actionism and Film*). Weibel refers to the term as his invention on several occasions. In an interview published in 1995, Brus speaks of “Viennese Actionism, as Peter Weibel called it,” confirming Weibel's coinage. “Günter Brus,” in Danièle Roussel, *Der Wiener Aktionismus und die Österreicher. Gespräche* (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1995), 23. In their first common publication in the journal *Le Marais* in 1965, Muehl and Brus had called themselves Wiener Aktionsgruppe (Vienna Action Group). The title *Le Marais* is of course significant, as it points towards the interest of the group in the Parisian art scene. See Hubert Klocker, “The Dramaturgy of the Organic,” Hubert Klocker (ed.) *Viennese Actionism 1960-71*, vol. 2 (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1989), 41. When the Actionists were invited to participate in the Destruction in Art Symposium in London (September 1966), they presented

Embodying Rebellion: The Viennese Actionists and Photography

What did Actionism in Vienna stand for during the 1960s? The Actionists aimed at a “direct art” (a term used by Muehl and Brus), seen as a merging of life and art through spectacular and often aggressive actions that used their own and collaborator’s bodies as “material,” along with excrement (their own), animal blood, and slaughter.¹¹ Nitsch and Muehl’s first public collaborative project, the *Festival of Psycho-physical Naturalism* (1963) is prototypical of Actionist practice. [Fig. 2.2] It also ended typically enough through police intervention. Nitsch planned his action as follows:

Through actions I will get myself psychically and physically excited and reach the experience of primordial excess. I pour, spray, stain the surface with blood and wallow in the pools of paint. With my clothes on, I lie down on a bed, entrails, mangled cow’s udders, hair, hot water being stuffed and poured under the feather bed. With luke-warm water I am cleansed of all secretions...I sacrifice my body to public libation.¹²

Due to the police, Muehl was unable to perform his part, which was to include the

“Degradation of a Venus: a demonstration of the ‘artistic equality of morass, man, rags,

themselves as Institut für direkte Kunst (Institute for Direct Art). Present were Muehl, Nitsch, Brus, Weibel, and filmmaker Kurt Kren. See Klocker, vol. 2, 209.

¹¹ Artistic precedent for the Actionists was international, from action painting and Nouveau Réalisme to the Fluxus movement, a group that the Actionists considered too theoretical. Fluxus was, however, crucial for the conceptual poetry, and cabaret-oriented happenings of the Wiener Gruppe (Friedrich Achleitner, Konrad Bayer, Gerhard Rühm, Oswald Wiener), which had a significant influence on the Viennese Actionists. Al Hansen, Wolf Vostell, and other Fluxus artists were present at the Destruction in Art symposium in London; also, Emmett Williams and Daniel Spoerri visited the Wiener Gruppe (in particular Gerhard Rühm) in Vienna in 1963. See Peter Weibel (ed.), *The Vienna Group* (Vienna / New York: Springer, 1997), photograph in the garden of Schönbrunn palace, 733. Otto Mühl’s last action was presented at the Happening und Fluxus event in Cologne in 1971. See Roussel, 36. Action painting was first shown in Vienna in July 1961 at the Galerie Würthle. See Dieter Schwarz (ed.), *Aktionsmalerei—Aktionismus. Wien 1960-1965. Eine Chronologie von Dieter Schwarz* (Zurich: Seedorf, 1988) 29. While Nitsch acknowledges the importance of the Vienna Group, particularly the poetry of Oswald Wiener, Muehl and Brus emphasized that “direct art and happenings developed directly from painting.” Compare Hermann Nitsch, *Das Orgien Mysterien Theater. Manifeste, Aufträge, Vorträge* (Salzburg / Vienna: Residenz, 1990), 162, and the text for the “Direct Art Festival,” 1967, quoted in Kerstin Braun, *Der Wiener Aktionismus. Positionen und Prinzipien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999), 101. Theoretical concerns ranged from Artaud’s *Theatre of Cruelty* to the ‘repressive desublimation’ of Herbert Marcuse. *Le théâtre et son double* (1938) was translated as *Das Theater und sein Double* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1964). Weibel seeks a Marcusean non-affirmative art in Artaudian anti-sociality in his essay on Muehl and Brus, “Von den Möglichkeiten einer nicht-affirmativen Kunst,” in Peter Weibel, *Kritik der Kunst. Kunst der Kritik* (Vienna / Munich: Jugend & Volk, 1973), 34-43 [written in 1966].

bread and cement.”¹³ Muehl completed the action, which consisted in pouring various liquids and semi-solids on a bound naked female model, in his studio.¹⁴ [Fig. 2.3] Two issues intertwine in this work: the ritual destruction of an ideal body, used as material in an action-oriented (not object-oriented) art, and symbolic re-enactment of conflict with public order, embodied by the police. “14 days of arrest,” Weibel writes in the *Bildkompendium* regarding the results of the action, and adds: “since then, limitless hatred against the Republic of Austria.”¹⁵

The degradation of the ideal body as direct political confrontation with a state which the avant-garde found worthy of “limitless hatred,” came to be interpreted as self-sufficient political action in the cultural climate of the period. In the 1970s, journalist Michael Siegert stated that, “At the time of the starkest cultural Austro-Fascism, the Actionists confronted this system with predominant scorn. They simply let their pants down, and deflated the authorities.”¹⁶ The themes of bodily pain, destruction, self-mutilation, and the like, do invite readings of a self-exposure of the degraded body in pain as the longing for a cathartic overcoming of Fascist trauma, a breaking open of silence. Should we then see Actionism as the direct answer to ‘Herr Karl mentality,’ a kind of performed *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*

¹² Klocker, vol. 2, 270 [the translation is taken from the catalogue].

¹³ Klocker (quoting from the poster), vol. 2, 189.

¹⁴ Decisively, Muehl invited a documentary photographer to the event in the studio. Klocker claimed that the studio action *Degradation of a Venus* was the first action of the group documented by Ludwig Hoffenreich, but photographs of the 1963 festival are already included in the *Bildkompendium* from 1970 (Ludwig Hoffenreich). Also, Hanno Millesi, in his study of photography in Actionism, prints photos of the 1963 police intervention during the festival, shot by Hoffenreich according to the photo credits. Cf. Klocker, vol. 2, 189; Hanno Millesi, *Zur Fotografie im Wiener Aktionismus* (Wolkersdorf: Fluss, 1998), 39.

¹⁵ “14 tage arrest. seither grenzenloser hass gegen die republik österreich.” Weibel, *Bildkompendium*, 280 [my translation].

¹⁶ “...die Zeit des ödesten kulturellen Austrofaschismus...Die Aktionisten traten diesem System mit überlegenem Hohn gegenüber, sie ließen einfach die Hosen herunter und den Autoritäten ging die Luft aus.” Michael Siegert, *Neues Forum* (1974), quoted in Josef Dvorak, “Aus den Anfängen des Wiener Aktionismus,” *Wiener* (special issue *Wiener Aktionismus*), 1981, 4 [my translation]. Siegert is citing the dictatorial regime preceding the *Anschluss*, which combined nationalism with ties to the Catholic Church. Retrospectively, Weibel noted that most Actionists were “post-catholic,” while he was “post-fascist,” Roussel, 131.

(literally, “overcoming the past”), an aggressive and mind-refreshing desublimation?¹⁷ This view, first voiced in response to hostile press against the Actionists, really began to resonate later, in the 1980s and ‘90s, when public commemoration became the driving issue for ambitious artists coming to terms with Fascism.¹⁸ Certainly, the Actionists railed against a society built on hypocritical claims to innocence; and yet, as *products* themselves of the postwar Austrian cultural silence concerning Fascism, they stood for a generation that wanted to free itself from the burden of Fascist history, and thought it best to do so violently. As such, they remained bound to a bodily rebellion in the present, in a manner that remained vague about its own historical formation.

Explicit reference to Fascist history, then, enters Actionism at a remove, less in their own actions than in a critical debate. First, through a press scandal which determined the reception of their most notorious action. Invited by the Socialist Student Association, Muehl, Brus, Weibel, Oswald Wiener, among others, held the action *Art and Revolution* in a lecture hall at Vienna University on June 7th, 1968.¹⁹ [Fig. 2.4, 2.5] EXPORT did not perform, but was present—fittingly to the explicit maleness of the group—operating the lights.²⁰ Under the headline “Unprecedented Scandal before 500 People Friday Night at Vienna University,” a daily newspaper described the event as follows:

¹⁷ *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, “coping with the past” is a persistent term of postwar Germany and Austrian memory debates; the word *bewältigen* suggests that once the past is sufficiently dealt with, no obstacle is left.

¹⁸ Hubert Klocker, a leading specialist on Actionism, interprets the work as response to National Socialism and the destruction of the war period in his English-language publications, notably “Gesture as Object: Liberation as Aktion. A European Component of Performance Art,” in Schimmel (ed.), *Out of Actions*, 1998. Klocker’s books and articles published in Austria (e.g. *Viennese Actionism 1960-71*) are more circumspect. Peter Gorsen finds in Actionist destruction a “cathartic, healing, and even therapeutic effect,” meant to assuage a longing caused by direct (in Muehl’s case), or indirect war experience. Peter Gorsen, “Viennese Actionism and the Celebration of Psychophysical Naturalism,” in Julius Hummel (ed.), *Wiener Aktionismus. Sammlung Hummel* (Milano: Mazzotta, 2005), 92. Danièle Roussel takes up the therapeutic theme in her 1995 book of interviews, *Die Wiener Aktionisten und die Österreicher*.

¹⁹ Hermann Nitsch was not in Vienna at the time and thus did not participate.

At the beginning, they speak: The first comrade attacks the shot Robert Kennedy, calls him a disgusting, dead—thank god!—capitalist pig in disguise.... two other ‘speakers’ indulge in wild, anarchist rhetoric, knowingly shading into the sexual, becoming more and more vulgar.... [A] stark-naked student positions himself on the lectern, and cuts himself on the breast with a razor blade. This must have been the signal for the entry of five other protagonists, who—quick, quick—hop into the scene, all naked, and jump onto the podium. Meanwhile, ‘the bloody one’ has turned around and urinated on the desk. The other five follow...the bloody one lies on the desk and masturbates....and on: general satisfaction of bodily needs—urination and defecation, singing of the National Anthem and of the ‘Gaudeamus Igitur’, Oswald Wiener draws and speaks. The masturbator gets up and vomits.²¹

Several of the participants were sentenced to prison terms for what became known as the “University Pigsty” (*Uniferkelei*).²² The heaviest sentence went to Brus, who had sung the National Anthem while masturbating (the “stark-naked masturbator,” the “bloody vomiter”): six months of “heavy prison” for “degrading the state symbols.”²³ Peter Weibel reacted quickly to the attacks in the press, and to the subsequent sentencing: he produced a leaflet entitled “The fascist annihilation of the insurrection,” prophesying a new fascist regime.

The one who masturbates unconsciously is the public, the population! The one who does not understand that there is a bloody continuity between “Jewish pig” and

²⁰ Of course this is significant for the Actionists as “boys’ club.” See Hildegard Fraueneder, *Körperrituale: Die Entmachtung des Repräsentativen in der Kunst VALIE EXPORTs und Friederike Pezolds* (Ph. dissertation, University of Salzburg. 1988), 69.

²¹ “Im Anfang reden sie: Der erste Genosse fällt über den erschossenen Robert Kennedy her, nennt ihn ein verkapptes, widerliches, Gott sei Dank totes Kapitalistenschwein....Zwei weitere ‘Redner’ ergehen sich in wüsten, anarchistischen Phrasen, leiten gekonnt zum Sexuellen über, werden ordinärer und ordinärer....Hat sich doch mittlerweile ein splitterner Student am Hörpult postiert und mit einer Rasierklinge die Brust blutig geschnitten. Das muß das Einsatzzeichen für weitere fünf Protagonisten gewesen sein, die—husch, husch—hereinspringen, allesamt nackt, ebenfalls auf das Pult hüpfen. Inzwischen hat ‘der Blutige’ sich umgedreht und seine Notdurft verrichtet. Auf das Pult. Auch die fünf. ...der Blutige hat sich auf das Pult gelegt und befriedigt sich selbst...weiter geht’s. Allgemeines Notdurftverrichten—groß und klein—Absingen der Bundeshymne und des ‘Gaudeamus Igitur.’ Oswald Wiener spricht und zeichnet. Der Selbstbefriediger steht auf und erbricht sich.” The headline reads: “Beispielloser Skandal vor 500 Personen Freitag Abend an Wiener Uni.” Michael Jeanee, “Sex-Orgien radikaler Studenten,” *Express* (June 9, 1968), 3. The image caption reads: “In lecture hall 1 of the new institute building of the Vienna University, scenes occurred that are known only from Swedish porn films.” [my translation]. Otto Muehl later called the evening a “a real ‘Theatre of Cruelty.’”

<http://www.archivesmuehl.org/akttxt.html>, no date [online document, accessed August 1, 2008].

²² Cover story: “Trial against University-pigs over fast.” *Unabhängige Kronen Zeitung* (June 28, 1968), [my translation].

²³ Klocker, II: 139.

“University pig” prepares his own liquidation. Once he himself becomes the victim of State power, he will understand that he stuck up for the wrong side.²⁴

Weibel, who would soon break away from Actionism, brings Fascism into the discussion, but as a rather twisted piece of identity politics. What emerges is a personal dilemma in Weibel about formulating historical guilt as a *present* challenge to seemingly ‘fascist’ state authority—a scenario in which Actionists are the victims, made plausible by the facile equation of state power with fascism by activist groups all over Europe in 1968. The blunt self-identification of the ‘outcast’ Actionists with the Jews under National Socialism is both inappropriate and unjustified. But this awkwardness demonstrates the difficulty of dealing with brute history, of opening articulate discussion, let alone commemoration, of the Holocaust. The misplaced assimilation of Actionist with Jew shows that historical reckoning did occupy left intellectuals behind the back of the dominant confrontational discourse. Most strikingly, the *continuity of domination*, which Weibel was right to point out, however gauchely he formulated it, is made to manifest itself in the popular press. As such, Weibel moves from the action to the document (the press release), pointing to the press as reception part of the after-life of the *Art and Revolution* evening at the University. The awakening to history is formed in the media, and it is by grasping the politics of media that artists emerging from Actionism would reach a public beyond the university auditorium.

This interest in media might seem at odds with stated Actionist aims: the insistence on the present tense, shock value, and of course the importance of smell, taste, and touch in their art all make the case for a kind of performance that cannot be transmitted by

²⁴ “...wer ohnmächtig onaniert, ist die öffentlichkeit, die bevölkerung! wer nicht begreift, daß zwischen ‘Saujude’ und ‘uni-ferkel’ eine blutige kontinuierität besteht, bereitet seine eigene liquidation vor. wenn er selbst ein opfer der staatsgewalt geworden ist, wird er begreifen, daß er sich heute auf die falsche seite geschlagen hat.” Reprinted in Peter Weibel, *Das offene Werk. 1964-79* (Ostfildern: Hatje/Cantz, 2006), 429 [my translation].

documentation. Actionist photographs and films, however, are numerous, and on examining the footage, it becomes obvious that the actions were imaginatively and professionally documented, often with the cooperation of the performers themselves. Did these documents serve simply to avoid persecution, allowing the Actionists to perform in private homes and studios and yet reach a public? Perhaps, in some instances. But many Actionist films are independent artworks by experimental filmmakers. Kurt Kren and Ernst Schmidt used live performances as raw material for further modifications such as color inversion, montage, and the disconnection of audio from visuals.²⁵ These films seldom aim at straightforward documentation of the action. In case of the photographs, in contrast, art historians tend to consider them auxiliary to the actions, and often they are subsumed to the oeuvre of the performers, even when photo credits are clearly recorded.²⁶ The photographs were regarded as secondary, decoupled from their producers, and ascribed to their subjects. How to explain this distinction between (auteur) films and (auxiliary) photos in the reception of Actionism? Let us take another look at Siegfried Klein's work from the *Art and Revolution* event [Fig.2.4]. This is a balanced, vivid print, the composition is classically pyramidal, with a documentary looseness of framing. One gets the force of the action, but none of the sophomoric confusion suggested in the *Express* article. The Actionists had persuasive, dramatic images made to underscore the coherence of their live acts. It is no contradiction

²⁵ The films are credited to the filmmakers, not the performers. For instance: Kurt Kren, *Ana—Action Brus*, or Ernst Schmidt, *Kunst und Revolution*.

²⁶ Peter Gorsen argues that individual photographers submitted to the aesthetic ideals of the Actionists: "The published photos approved by the Actionist for their documentation give an insight into how they saw their work and how they wanted it to be perceived, but say little about the personality of the photographers." Gorsen, "Viennese Actionism and Photography," in Hummel (ed.), 2005, 120. Hanno Millesi, who acknowledges the photographs as the necessary visual tool for a younger generation of viewers, insists that even the films were considered a tool to capture the performance (and mentions several conflicts between filmmakers and Actionists): "in contrast to the actual performance...film and photo always remain secondary." Millesi, 7 [my translation].

that a carefully composed photograph should convey spontaneity of action: documents were used to capture the present act, to highlight and focus on details or gestures.

Particularly interesting in this respect is the practice of Günter Brus: even as his artistic development aimed more and more towards a violent bodily presence, he at all times carefully planned their photographic documentation.²⁷ His *Wiener Spaziergang (Vienna Walk)* of 1965, photographed by Ludwig Hoffenreich, may well be the most self-conscious production of a performative document of an Actionist event in photographs. [Fig. 2.6-2.17] The performance was classic Actionism—with an urban twist. Dressed in formal attire and soaked in white paint, with a black stripe painted down the middle of his body, Brus planned to walk through the tourist center of Vienna:

The preparations of this action were accompanied by more or less intense nervousness on my part. Otto Muehl helped paint me from head to toe. Ludwig Hoffenreich sighed from time to time: ‘Oh goodness, this will end in prison or the madhouse.’ ...I decided to walk as living picture through the inner city of Vienna, past numerous historically significant buildings. The starting point for my stroll was the *Heldenplatz*. My route was to take me...finally to St. Stephan’s Square.²⁸

In another version of the story, Brus is quoted ending with the sentence: “I was quite nervous, but I knew I was making art history.”²⁹ An actionist who intends to make art history—as a “living picture”—might sound puzzling, even more so if we learn that this action was staged at the evening before an opening of his work at the Viennese gallery Junge

²⁷ In an 1993 interview, Brus commented on the practical need for documentation: “Out of necessity, but at the same time quite desired, many actions were composed for photo or film...Had we had customers, we would have liked to multiply the photo series and narrow-gauge films, in order to be able to finance new actions or to carry them out under more ideal conditions.” “Günter Brus,” Roussel, 20 [my translation].

²⁸ Günter Brus, “Remarks on Vienna Walk.” In *Writings of the Vienna Actionists edited and translated by Malcolm Green in collaboration with the Artists* (London: Atlas Press, 1999), 33.

²⁹ “Ich wusste, ich mache Kunstgeschichte.” E. Znaymer, “Das Denken ist ein Unfall,” *Datum: Seiten der Zeit* (May, 2005) [online document, <http://www.datum.at/0505/stories/782980/>, accessed September 18, 2008].

Generation.³⁰ What can we gather from the photographs of the action? The Museum of Modern Art in Vienna (MUMOK) holds thirty-four photographs of the event taken by Hoffenreich, purchased from Brus, and signed by him on the verso.³¹ In the first photo in the sequence we see Brus exiting a private car in the middle of the *Heldenplatz*, still notorious as the site of Hitler's speech that had so impressed Herr Karl.³² [Fig. 2.6] In the center of the first image, we see the statue of Archduke Charles; behind, the Neo-Gothic towers of the City Hall loom over the trees of the Volksgarten (People's Garden). The next few photos (nr. 2-11) [Fig. 2.7] show the artist walking through the Hofburg (imperial palace complex), photographed from the front and rear.³³ In nr. 15 [Fig.2.8], Brus crosses a street, while on the other side a policeman regards him with benign puzzlement. A conversation ensues (nr. 16) [Fig. 2.9], Brus identifies himself (nr. 17) [Fig. 2.10] and the policeman takes notes (nr. 18, 19) [Fig. 2.11]. The two walk side by side until they reach a police station (nr. 20-22) [Fig. 2.12]. Brus is seen inside (nr. 23) [Fig. 2.13], and onlookers wait anxiously in the next picture (nr. 25) [Fig. 2.14]. A taxi arrives, a passenger gets out (suggesting that the taxi was flagged by the policeman), and Brus gets in (nr. 26-33) [Fig. 2.15, 2.16], laughing. The last

³⁰ Brus voiced discontent about the exhibition; he had intended to only show photographic documentation of his actions, but, according to Dieter Schwarz, was talked into including paintings. He thus considered his action as a counter-pole to the "art" exhibition. See Schwarz 69. Clearly, though, representational factors are taken into account.

³¹ The photographer did not sign the prints—he is only credited in the museum files. The prints are not numbered or marked as an edition. According to the MUMOK registrar, Dr. Haase, Brus owns the reproduction rights. She knows of other prints in circulation, in different sizes, some differently cropped. Interview with the author, August 21, 2008, Vienna. Schwarzkogler also took photographs, and Otto Muehl filmed the action. There is a clear narrative legible in the photographs, but Brus gave permission for the photographs to be exhibited in any order and in any selection, according to MUMOK curator Matthias Michalka. In addition, MUMOK owns many more contact prints of the action by Hoffenreich, which cannot be shown in public. Interview with the author, August 28, 2008.

³² The force of this association persists. Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard called his reckoning with fascist tendencies *Heldenplatz* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988). The play met with outraged reactions, notably the pouring of liquid manure in front of the Burgtheater during the premiere on November 4, 1988, by conservative citizens to illustrate that Bernhard was "fouling his own nest."

³³ In some images, we can identify Muehl filming (nr. 2, 8, 9), and Schwarzkogler photographing (nr. 2, 6). This means that the Actionists *themselves* produced some of their mediated images.

picture (nr. 34) [Fig. 2.17] shows two policemen, apparently discussing the proceedings. All in all, a coherent narrative is concluded.

It is important to recall that the projected endpoint of Brus's action was the cathedral: this would have invited the audience to draw an allegorical link between church and oppressive state.³⁴ In the action as it occurred, the policeman becomes the crucial element in the political "scenery" of the city. Not that the images reveal a particularly violent police intervention. It seems Brus approached the policeman rather than the other way around. In this way, the documents read against the handed-down understanding of the work. Nevertheless, Brus was fined for "disturbing public order," and the mythical arrest persists as the confrontational core of the piece to this day.³⁵ In a recent reading of Viennese Actionism from photographs, Philip Ursprung declared that the police must be regarded as the "ideal audience," which "'saw' and 'reacted' to the transgression" of the Actionists.³⁶ I do not intend to downplay the actual conflicts and the unjust arrests of individual Actionists: and the situation toughened, understandably, around 1968. Yet, in the *Wiener Spaziergang*, it is evident that the police is not only an audience, but also *collaborates*, however unwillingly, in the performance. In concert with this collaboration, the images produce a performative event, grounding the action in the realm of visual coherence: i.e., the photographs provide a "situation" that is readable to the later audience. First, the State is exemplified in the choice

³⁴ At the end of *Art and Revolution*, someone yelled: "Now, let us go to St. Stephen's Cathedral and do the same thing again!" This sentence was made much of in the newspapers, and in several anonymous hate letters sent to participants. See Michael Jeanne, "Sex-Orgien radikaler Studenten," 3, and Günter Brus, *Unter dem Ladentisch*, self-published, 1969. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Vienna.

³⁵ Schwarz, 69; in honor of Brus's seventieth birthday, the newspaper *Der Standard* wrote that Brus was stopped after "a few meters": "Völlig weiss bemalt und nur durch einen schwarzen Strich quasi zweigeteilt, so wollte er, einem lebenden Bild gleich, vom Heldenplatz zum Stephansplatz gehen, wurde allerdings nach wenigen Metern von einem Polizisten wegen Störung der öffentlichen Ordnung zu einer Geldbuße verdonnert." Andrea Schurian, "Wilde Striche und Streiche," *Der Standard* (September 26, 2008), 32.

of sites; monumental architecture with fascist connotations (Heldenplatz), yet it is then pushed out of kilter by the painted Brus on his promenade.³⁷ Secondly, the photographs with the policeman make explicit that the *total speech act*, in this case the action and the on-site audience in the surrounding, becomes visual *proof* of the event.³⁸ This confrontation guaranteed that we as belated audience understand the act with all its consequences: even those which did not take place, or only in our imagination. But to a certain extent the document also undercuts the mythic confrontation: it did take place, this is what the photographs show us, but how hostile was it? Do the photographs not point towards a comic aspect of this particular piece? Brus's passive, retrospective phrasing in his account of the violence done to him—that Hoffmann had “warned” him that “it” would be jail or madhouse—confirms to the conventions of outlaw existence, but it does not quite match the visual documents. Brus situates police intervention as the conventional response to unconventional behavior, in (hardly liberal) circumstances we should all understand.

Wiener Spaziergang is exceptional Actionism only for its clarity in the use of performative documents. No doubt, bodily presence came first for the Actionists, but their photographs produce our own retrospective view not only of the Actionists, but of the Austrian postwar society that opposed them. Brus's “living picture” becomes a ‘genre

³⁶ Philip Ursprung, “Catholic Tastes: Hurting and Healing the Body in Viennese Actionism in the 1960s,” in Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (eds.), *Performing the Body, Performing the Text* (London / New York: Routledge, 1999), 137.

³⁷ Given Brus's carefully chosen backdrop of the imperial palace, his figure also serves as the counterimage to a hero (on *Heldenplatz*, *Heroes' Square*), an absurd alternative statue, ephemeral, defaced by the black stripe, and persecuted rather than venerated by officialdom. The white suit might be read as an uniform: yearly military parades, and the swearing in of new soldiers take place on *Heldenplatz*. Brus is then a soldier without an army—but he is also a celebrity turning heads and being avidly photographed (nr. 8,9).

³⁸ In Chapter One I explained Austin's concept of “total speech act” as one including the actual act and its public reception: under ideal circumstances, all of what take part in making the performative action work.

picture' of the time through its documentation.³⁹ Brus inserted himself as living picture not only into public space, but also into the photographic record. I have shown in the first chapter that the simple act of documenting performances with the camera can add up—together with mnemohistorical accounts—to monumentalization over time.⁴⁰ In the case of the Actionists, the mnemonic narrative tells of a confrontation between bodily presence and the state. It is this bodily presence that their photographs seek to capture. But in doing so, the photographs must, at least discursively, be denied their autonomy as objects. Brus could ultimately not solve the discrepancy between a longing for an 'anarchic' presence and its sober documentation, his desire to get into history. He focused more and more on what he called "body analysis," performances concentrating on bodily fluids and the intrusion into the body through cutting and injuries of various kinds, ending his career as performer in 1970 with the perilous *Zerreiβprobe* (*Breaking Test*) in Munich [Fig. 2.18]—after which "a continuation of the self-mutilation theme was no longer possible...and for him himself no longer necessary."⁴¹ Muehl, on the other hand, abandoned art for the sake of 'life' in 1972: "I would like to let everything flow into life. And I have to say, it works. I want to become a magician," he declared and went on to head two commune projects, until in 1991 he was charged with seven years of prison for coercion and the sexual abuse of minors.⁴² Schwarzkogler died in 1969 after a fall from a window (probably suicide), and only Nitsch continued to develop his ritualistic form of performance, the *Orgien Mysterien Theater*,

³⁹ One hundred years earlier, Daniel Spitzer's locally famous column *Wiener Spaziergang* was published for the first time. This ironic review of the political and cultural week in Vienna appeared every Sunday in the newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*; Karl Kraus was an admirer of Spitzer's satirical attacks on authority.

⁴⁰ A mnemohistorical account would be everything that builds up or perpetuates a myth rather than the historical fact.

⁴¹ Klocker, II, 143.

⁴² The ideology of the commune, the time in prison, and Muehl's new commune project in Portugal are discussed in a recent interview with Peter Roos and Christof Siemes, "Ich bin Drunten der Dreckige," *Die Zeit* (February 26, 2004).

containing strong allusions to Catholic mystery plays and processions, and demanding full participation from the audience.

The Actionist Archive: Weibel and EXPORT's *Bildkompendium*

For the next generation of scholars and artists, the fuel of Actionist photographs, fired by narrative speculation courtesy of the boulevard papers, artist reminiscences, and art historical texts, added up to a coherent *picture* of postwar Austria in terms of authority and resistance. An early and resolute attempt to fix these performances for posterity was the encyclopedic Actionist photo compendium of 1970 edited by Weibel in collaboration with VALIE EXPORT. The *Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film* portrays the Actionists familiarly enough: as revolutionary outcasts rattling an ossified society. But the aesthetic of the book is ambiguous: it seems to stake out a position between guerilla immediacy and cool conceptual art. More than two thirds of the book (pages 1-239) consist of images without text, with only a few manifestoes, and facsimiles of newspaper clips interspersed. The photographs bear no captions, nor are authors given for the respective pieces or events.⁴³ Dispensing with parallel text, the compendium sketches in social and aesthetic context more surely through juxtapositions of images the connection to the Fluxus-oriented happenings of the Vienna Group. The actions of the core members are presented with an emphasis on the sexually explicit. Genitals of both sexes are inspected or interact in various ways, dead lambs are cut open and paint is poured, curious onlookers stand by and watch, while the police intervenes in the *Festival of Psycho-physical Naturalism* [Fig. 2.19], or interrupt Brus's *Vienna Walk* [Fig. 2.20]. The last third of the book contains texts on individual artists,

⁴³ Pages 241-267 contain captions, followed by a "synopsis" (biographies, description of groups and events on pages 269-294), and a chronology.

groups, and events, and image captions, printed in the serif typewriter font of minimalism, wielding a belligerent rhetoric. This detached, archival presentation worked to convey shock. In a sense, the formal interventions of late 1960s art is marshaled to the behavioral inventiveness of Actionist performance. The positioning of Actionism as an art movement and, we could say, as a social movement, shifted the focus to a bigger set of performative circumstances. What emerges is a peculiar vision of Austro-Actionist history, with actions taken for politics, and performatives taken for their consequences. The effect is not apolitical: rather, it is politics *displaced* in the sphere of performance, and performance displaced in the sphere of archival documentation.

The mythic mediated afterlife of Actionism constructed in the *Bildkompendium* fell into place shortly after the group splintered. Nitsch had relocated to Munich in 1967, Brus fled to Berlin to avoid imprisonment at the beginning of 1969, Schwarzkogler died on June 20th, 1969, and the book itself provoked a trial against Weibel and EXPORT for “distributing pornography,” which was broadly covered in the newspapers [Fig. 2.21].⁴⁴ In light of this disintegration of the core group, the *Bildkompendium* shaped the reception of Viennese Actionism as politically oppositional. EXPORT and Weibel’s own collaborative projects fused Actionism—their starting point—and a detached, conceptual approach that probed the historical formation of the gendered body. This conceptualism gained its working distance through layers of mediation, literal and metaphorical: photography, critical commentary, political slogans. Experimentation with reproductive media, notably film and photography, brought with it a concern with documentation, and also with the disparity between an action and its afterlife in various media. Notably, the work *Aus der Mappe der Hundigkeit* [*From the Portfolio of Doggedness*] of 1969 is comparable to Brus’s *Wiener*

Spaziergang as a transgressive act of *flânerie* through the center of Vienna, but orchestrates a gender turn towards a feminist intervention into the “order” of public space. We will also see how the positioning of the audience in this work has become explicitly self-conscious.⁴⁵ [Fig. 2.22-2.26]

The action consisted of EXPORT ‘walking’ Weibel through the center of Vienna on a leash. Photographs were taken by Josef Tendl.⁴⁶ The images show EXPORT, genteel (or feral?) in a fur coat, and Weibel, on all fours in suit and tie, on a sidewalk and then crossing a crowded street. The title (*Portfolio*) emphasizes photographs over action, and in particular, the active and critical task of selecting and assembling a sequence. In the description of the *Bildkompendium*, the portfolio is compared to a cartoon, shown is one full size photograph and then the contact sheets of the photographer [Fig. 2.27]. The text reads as follows:

What is so easy in a cartoon, namely to draw the alienation of humans in zoological forms...is being poured into all channels of communication by this action film, which is the reason they appear at the verge of striking. The real scene seems unreal...The Portfolio of Doggedness constructs reality; it reconstructs it from the repair kit of ideology.⁴⁷

Weibel and EXPORT shifted the Actionists’ brooding introspection of the body to a site for at least the negotiation of authenticity: with them it becomes an interest in the exoteric

⁴⁴ See for instance the newspaper *Kurier* (April 21, 1971).

⁴⁵ The Generali Foundation, Vienna, translates the title as *Portfolio of Doggedness*. *Hundigkeit* is not a word, but would mean literally ‘doglikeness.’ The question of authorship for this work is disputed. The explicitly feminist actions in which Weibel took part, such as *Touch Cinema* and *Portfolio of Doggedness*, are usually considered EXPORT’s, but Weibel claims co-authorship for these works in his catalogue *Das offene Werk*. I attribute *Touch Cinema* (to be discussed shortly) entirely to EXPORT, as no evidence apart from Weibel’s rather “unhappily performative” claim in *Das offene Werk* suggests his co-authorship. It was also listed as EXPORT’s in the *Bildkompendium* (297). The speeches Weibel gave at performances of *Touch Cinema* were certainly his own compositions. In a recent interview, he protests that “there is documentary proof now that *Touch Cinema* was worked out collaboratively. Back then, feminism turned it into a work by VALIE EXPORT alone. I see in regard to my own example, how history is being manipulated.” Herwig Höller and Thomas Wolkingner, “Knallhart,” *Falter* (05/2007), Online edition, <http://www.falter.at/web/print/detail.php?id=421> [my translation]. Weibel also lists EXPORT’s *Genital Panic*, *Adjunct Dislocations*, the monument *Der Ort des Menschen*, and several other works around 1970 as collaborative projects. Weibel, *Das offene Werk*, 590.

⁴⁶ Hans Scheufl filmed the action. He can be seen in the first photograph of the portfolio.

construction of the body according to gender norms, through the modular conventions of a “repair kit.” The *Portfolio* confronted (by embodying) the trope of the dominatrix with a “man on the leash.” Sadomasochism is one strand in this discourse (*Venus in Furs*), medieval misogyny another. EXPORT included Hans Baldung Grien’s 1513 print of *Phyllis and Aristotle* [Fig. 2.28] in an 1997 retrospective catalogue, next to the contact sheets of *Mappe der Hundigkeit*.⁴⁸ Against the grain of this intimate moralizing tradition, Weibel and EXPORT act in public, externalizing the imagination of gender asymmetry.

It is this public acting out (and not just the documentation of the act) that is captured by the camera. Should this surprise us? After all, the ‘plain’ action was already threaded with the density of history. What remained, after reducing the configuration of woman with man on leash to absurdity by embodying it, but to photograph the occurrence? For EXPORT and Weibel, what remains is the precise delineation of its effect on the public. The action is framed by the geography of the city, and by the ‘uninformed’ Viennese audience artfully included in the prints. There are the usual signs of curiosity, disbelief, ridicule. In 1996, EXPORT chose five images to be purchased by the Generali Foundation, Vienna, a real “portfolio” then, which has since been considered the ‘master’ selection of the piece. [Fig. 2.22-2.26] Particularly in the fifth photograph [Fig. 2.26], the camera view between the backs of the bystanders invites the belated viewer to reflect on the reaction of the live spectator—direct access to which is denied by the same framing. The portfolio finds EXPORT interested in capturing reactions to her performances: it is also a tool for producing such reactions. Reproductive media not only guarantee images for contemplation after the fact, but in EXPORT’s case, it centers on a body extended, defined, dissected by and in reproductive

⁴⁷ *Bildkompendium*, 260 [my translation] The event was also filmed by Ernst Schmidt.

⁴⁸ *Split: Reality VALIE EXPORT* (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, 1997) 65.

media, as part of a general inquiry into the representational dimensions of the body, particularly on film. An understanding of ‘real’ and ‘mediated’ as intertwined predicates of the represented body is a concern that distinguishes EXPORT, and Weibel to a certain extent, from the core group of the Actionists, while the commitment to the political significance of the body, and to its challenging use in performance, reveals a fundamental continuity.⁴⁹

The Monument in the Document: EXPORT’s *Touch Cinema*

In collaboration and by herself, EXPORT worked consistently with new media as a shuttle between act and history. Her artistic career in the late 1960s began with film and performance works collectively called “Expanded Cinema,” developed together with Weibel.⁵⁰ Most notorious among them is *Tapp- und Tastkino (Touch Cinema)*, first performed in November 1968.⁵¹ [Fig. 2.29] The artist constructed a portable small-scale

⁴⁹ EXPORT never performed with the Actionists, apart from operating the lights at *Art and Revolution*. Later, Export distanced herself distinctly from the Actionists in interviews. In Maren Lübbke, “Künstlerische Passagen zum Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Interview mit VALIE EXPORT,” *Noema Art Journal*, no. 44 (Vienna 1997), 77, EXPORT credits mainly American happenings and Body Art, while in Vienna the “sense of elation” (“Aufbruchsstimmung”) was of importance to her. I mostly agree her with Roswitha Mueller, who argued that the connection between Actionists and EXPORT must be seen in “breaking social, sexual and cultural taboos and the predilection of the human body as the principal material in her work,” but that the “use of technology” sharply distinguishes her from the Actionists. Mueller, *EXPORT*. 1994, xix.

⁵⁰ The term “Expanded Cinema” was adopted on a visit to Sweden in the late 1960s. Weibel remembers coming across it in an American magazine: “In Schweden, da haben wir diese Zeitschrift entdeckt, film culture, ist draufgestanden, expanded arts. Das war für uns eine unglaubliche Bestärkung. Und da habe ich gesagt, nennen wir unsere Sache ‘expanded cinema.’ Denn dieser Begriff war ja in Amerika schon früher da, nur haben wir ihn nicht gekannt. Wir haben ’67 schon diese Projekte gemacht, sind in Wien aufgetreten, nur haben wir nicht gewusst, wie wir das nennen sollen.” Hilde Schmölzer, “Weibel und Export.” in *Das böse Wien. Gespräche mit österreichischen Künstlern* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagsanstalt, 1973), 181. Weibel must be referring to George Maciunas, “Expanded Arts Diagram,” in *Film Culture*, “Expanded Arts Special Issue,” No. 43 (Winter 1966), reprinted in Hanns Sohm (ed.) *Happening & Fluxus. Materialien* (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970). American scholars cite Gene Youngblood’s book *Expanded Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1970), which equates the term with “expanded consciousness” (41). The connection is unlikely, given Weibel and EXPORT’s earlier use of the term, and their debt to Fluxus. Recently, Export recalled that she first encountered the book much later. Valie Export, interview with the author, audio file, New York, February 19, 2007. Other works of “Expanded Cinema” are *auf + ab + an + zu, Adjungierte Dislokationen* (1973), *Ping Pong*, (1968), *Cutting* (1967/68), and *abstract film no.1* (1967/68).

⁵¹ *Tapp- und Tastkino* literally means “Tap- and Touch/Grope Cinema.” Touch Cinema is the standard catalogue translation.

stage apparatus around her upper torso, like a puppet theatre or peepshow, with curtains concealing her naked breasts.⁵² Over a megaphone, Weibel invited spectators onstage through the ‘theatre curtain.’ For a brief duration (1/5 of a minute, i.e. 12 seconds, in later versions expanded to 30 seconds), they were allowed to put their hands inside. The skin of the woman could be experienced as the ‘screen,’ a public analogue to the erotic privacy of the dark film auditorium. But the analogy only went so far: the visitor was forced to make eye contact with EXPORT, and was attended by a crowd of onlookers. If the *Bildkompendium* turned the outraged reactions of Actionism’s first public into a narrative that was told to a later, more sympathetic, reading public, in *Touch Cinema* (which also appeared in the *Bildkompendium*), public reception constitutes the action itself—even prior to its documentation.⁵³ On the one hand, EXPORT brought up questions of male voyeurism related to those posed by her 1969 *Genital Panic*. On the other hand, she did not show the “shocking” private parts, but concealed the ‘action’ behind a proscenium curtain; touch disrupted the instantaneity of the film mechanism as tool of *visual* desire. Touch also mediated the sexual body differently to the ‘film voyeur’, who was used to handling it at the remove of a pre-recorded encounter, without embarrassment or confrontation. Weaving together the perceived dichotomy of presence (the mini-theatre, ‘live’ action) and mediation (film, the female breasts as ‘screen’ or ‘actors’), *Touch Cinema* was part popular spectacle,

⁵² The box first constructed from Styrofoam sheets, did not survive the first two actions. EXPORT had another box made out of aluminum, which was not returned to her after the exhibition *Film als Film* in Germany in 1977-1978, according to archival files at the Generali Foundation. EXPORT had a reconstruction of the aluminum box made for the exhibition *Out of Actions*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1998). Finally, a reconstruction of the first version in Styrofoam was made by Export in 1999 and purchased by the Generali Foundation. Generali Foundation, Vienna: file GF0002080.01.0-1999.

⁵³ The Actionists sometimes included documents and newspaper reactions in their publications. After *Art and Revolution*, Günter Brus printed his diagnosis by a police psychologist (declaring him a psychopath), as well as xeroxes of anonymous threatening letters in his magazine, *Unter dem Ladentisch*.

part inquiry into the body's relationship to its representation on film.⁵⁴ Touch is active, in an explicit way, where sight seems passive: when the hands move around and make contact, the subject is held responsible in a direct way, differently to the "wandering eyes" of the male gaze.

We can understand the significance of media as metaphor in *Touch Cinema* by briefly considering EXPORT's concrete activity as filmmaker. EXPORT was a pioneer of avant-garde film in Austria, and the one female founding member of the Austria Filmmakers Cooperative (1968).⁵⁵ As experimental filmmakers interested in the relation of art film to the mass media, Weibel and EXPORT could not ignore Marshall McLuhan, who had become a media icon himself for his overexposed pronouncements on the new "media society."⁵⁶ In 1967, Weibel showed *Der Mythos des 21. Jahrhunderts. Exkurse zu Marshall McLuhan (The Myth of the 21st century. Essays on Marshall McLuhan)*, which he described later as "an interactive multimedia environment, taking as the starting point of Actionism not painting but the media."⁵⁷ Part of the work consisted of an audio tape that collaged music with oratory by Weibel on McLuhan's "ahistorical" and "Nietzschean" approach to media. "McLuhan's position regarding that which comes is comparable to Nietzsche's regarding German National Socialism... they are: avant-gardists of fascism."⁵⁸ This 'critique' testifies to the

⁵⁴ One should mention, for all its obviousness, the unavailability in 1968 of feminist psychoanalytic film theory in the style of Laura Mulvey.

⁵⁵ With Kurt Kren, Hans Scheufl, Gottfried Schlemmer, Ernst Schmidt, and Peter Weibel. EXPORT's early films such as *Menstruationsfilm* and *Orgasmus* (both from 1967), can be read as feminist manifestos.

⁵⁶ McLuhan was discussed in *Newsweek* and *Partisan Review*, interviewed in *Playboy*, and played himself in films (*Annie Hall*). His stardom irritated and fascinated the New Left: "McLuhan's only move is the pop status he has inadvertently attained." Richard Meltzer, *The Aesthetics of Rock* (New York: Something Else Press, 1970), 274, note 6. See also Lewis P. Lapham, "Introduction to the MIT Press Edition," in McLuhan. *Understanding Media*, 1994, ix. He was equally prominent in the German-speaking world, e.g. as the recipient of the prestigious Carl-Einstein-Prize in 1967.

⁵⁷ Weibel, *Das offene Werk*, 366 [my translation].

⁵⁸ "mcluhans position zum kommenden ist der von nietzsche zum deutschen nationalsozialismus vergleichbar...sie sind: avantgardisten des faschismus." *Das offene Werk*, 368-73, this quote: 371-72. In the title, Weibel

significance Weibel and EXPORT attributed to McLuhan in theorizing and practicing “expanded cinema.” One famous slogan, “The content of the writing is the speech” served as ‘notation’ for Part Two of the expanded cinema work *Cutting* (1967-1968) [Fig. 2.30], in which EXPORT cut the sentence (in English) from a paper screen while projecting. When finished, EXPORT was to utter the last word, “speech,” thus performing it.⁵⁹ Crucially, McLuhan’s actual phrase, “the content of writing is speech,” was *retranslated* from a German edition of understanding media, gaining in the process two definite articles. Unintentionally perhaps, this changed a generality into the analysis of a specific *act* relating writing with speech: EXPORT’s own cutting performance. The point seems to be not that new media harbor a comforting human presence (speech), but that: “the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium.”⁶⁰

This relay theory of media is what haunted Weibel and EXPORT. For McLuhan, media—and he considered writing, language, architecture, poetry, currency, weapons, electric light, in short every technical invention and material practice a medium—were extensions of man into his environment. They did not just give man better access to that environment, or power over it—they redrew boundaries between the two, transforming man *and* his context. Thus every medium is ‘new’ and revolutionary at some moment in history. New media refurbish the identity of the individual and of society; they changed human thinking by imposing new patterns of behavior. Print culture (which McLuhan as literary historian had studied more closely than any other medium) forced Western man to think in

alludes to the notorious Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg, who in *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hoheneichen, 1930) developed the Aryan race concept as political myth to be put into aesthetic practice.

⁵⁹ Part II of *Cutting* was subtitled “hommage à marshall mcluhan.” The sentence is said to be “zitiert nach mcluhan,” and both German and (new) English are given in *Bildkompendium*, 260. This suggests use of the German edition of *Understanding Media, Die magischen Kanäle* (Düsseldorf /Vienna: Econ-Verlag, 1968).

linear terms. According to McLuhan, this made possible capitalism, modernity, nationalism. A certain crude determinism—the explicit content of a medium did not matter, only its brute material character—is tempered and complicated in McLuhan by an interest in the *conventions* governing the use of media, which apply regardless of the user’s intentions.⁶¹ If the *real* content of a medium is not the intentions of its users but another medium which shapes those intentions, then one may transfer the *force* of a stimulus from one medium to another. History proceeds by subtle displacement, as older mediums persist, fossilized, in the interstices of newer ones. For McLuhan, novels are not simply replaced by film, they make film possible by making its *viewers*:

Typographic man took readily to film just because, like books, it offers an inward world of fantasy and dreams. The film viewer sits in psychological solitude like the silent book reader.⁶²

In *Touch Cinema*, film can be interpreted as the content of the performance *and vice versa*, since the woman’s breasts are the material substrate for the *convention* of film. *Touch Cinema*’s circular construction unsettles the conventions stabilizing each medium: in bridging the dichotomy of Actionist “presence” and documentation on one hand, and of film apparatus (both camera and screen) and its erotic object on the other, it troubles the “dream” of the solitary viewer by turning him into intruder and collaborator at the moment of “touching.” The shock of the performance is thus intimately related to its mediation.

⁶⁰ McLuhan, 8. In continuation: “The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph.” Weibel’s notes on *Cutting* indicate the resonance of this line of reasoning of McLuhan’s: “die substitution führt direkt zum menschen...” *Bildkompendium*, 261.

⁶¹ There is a justly famous passage: “Suppose we were to say, ‘Apple pie is in itself neither good nor bad; it is the way it is used that determines its value.’ Or, ‘The smallpox virus is in itself neither good nor bad, it is the way it is used that determines its value.’ Again, ‘Firearms are in themselves neither good nor bad; it is the way they are used that determines their value.’ That is, if the slugs reach the right people the firearms are good. If the TV tube fires the right ammunition at the right people it is good.” McLuhan, 11.

⁶² McLuhan, 293.

With *Touch Cinema*, EXPORT moved beyond the simple 1968 rhetoric of live (=revolutionary) versus mediated (=corrupted) representation, to experiment with the concrete political effects of mediated presence. For *Touch Cinema* is not just a media metaphor; it embodies the metaphor in discrete actions and documents. The architectural construction of the box in *Touch Cinema* literalizes McLuhan's concept of medium as an "extension of man"—woman in this case, or more precisely still, of the body. This prosthetic attachment constitutes EXPORT's body as a public figure, rather than a figure among others in public. This explains the utility of McLuhan combining with speech act theory in order to chart her achievement. A text published in the *Bildkompendium*, perhaps written by Weibel and EXPORT together, articulates an ambition to use the media to intervene *directly*, with Actionist immediacy, in the everyday. In this text, *Touch Cinema* (notably called *Touch Film*) is named a "communication action" (in English), a term also applied to several of their early *Aktionen* which could be described as disruptions of the everyday flow of life, including *Mehr Verkehrstote—Weniger Staatsbürger*, 1969 (*More Traffic Deaths—Fewer Citizens*), a failed attempt to evoke a traffic accident, and *Aus der Mappe der Hundigkeit*.⁶³ Communication in a material, almost in an epidemiological sense, is also the key concept in EXPORT's text on *Touch Cinema* in the magazine *Interfunktionen* in 1970:

Expanded cinema is expansion of perception and communication. As expansion of perception it means experiments in new biomedical proceedings, as expansion of communication it means exploration of a freer society.⁶⁴

⁶³ The *Bildkompendium* lists the following "communication actions": Weibel, *Action Lecture*, 1968 (on the political uses of media); *Exit*, 1968 (part of EXPORT and Weibel's *W.A.R.—Kriegskunstfeldzug* project in Germany); EXPORT: *Ping Pong*, 1968. Weibel/EXPORT: *Das Magische Auge*, 1969 (part of *W.A.R.*); and *Publikumssprenger*, 1969 (part of *W.A.R.*; Export whips the audience in a movie theatre).

⁶⁴ "expanded cinema ist expansion der perzeption und der kommunikation. Als expansion der perzeption experimente in neuen biomedical proceedings, als expansion der kommunikation exploration einer freieren gesellschaft." *Interfunktionen*, No.4, (March 1970), 169 [my translation].

This interest in communication is contemporary with Jürgen Habermas's early formulation of his theory of *communicative action*; Habermas was to pursue the concept as a social democratic elaboration of Austin's only implicitly political theory.⁶⁵ Communication in this political context does not mean the conveyance of private intentions, but rather mutual autonomous action.⁶⁶ EXPORT's use of this terminology in calling *Touch Cinema* "expanded communication" aiming at "a freer society" strongly indicates that the work should be read as an intervention in the public sphere through the performative use of media. If McLuhan ascribed to media the ability to change political systems by technical fiat (e.g. print bringing about the French Revolution), EXPORT insisted that an equally decisive force in society was attached to the mediated *act*. In this interpretation, media is material communication and as such contains performative potential analogous to the process of "saying as doing." The media not only "say and do," they get recipients to say and do *other things*, and thus distribute the performative act beyond a narrow conception of presence in one location at a particular time.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "Communicative action" first appears in Jürgen Habermas, *Technik und Wissenschaft als „Ideologie“* (1968), *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (1968), and *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform* (1969) [all published in Frankfurt am Main by Suhrkamp]. The link with speech-act theory is fully worked out only in *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 vols. (1981), but Habermas's turn to linguistic philosophy came earlier: his 1969/1970 Frankfurt University seminar "Über Sprachtheorie. Einführende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie der Kommunikativen Kompetenz" was printed in Vienna as a pirate edition (Hundsblume Edition 4, 1970).

⁶⁶ Cf. Habermas: "There appear to be meanings that can be transposed from one medium into the other. This convertibility of the meaning of sentences into actions and of actions into sentences makes possible reciprocal interpretations. What was true of linguistic communication is also true of communicative action. In neither can the context of an individuated life history structured by ego identity be directly expressed." *Knowledge and Human Interests*, translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 165.

⁶⁷ Jacques Derrida, in his critique of speech-act theory, first given as a paper in 1971 at a communications conference in Montreal, alludes to McLuhan exactly once: "As writing, communication, if one insists on maintaining the word, is not the means of transport of sense, the exchange of intentions and meanings, the discourse and 'communication of consciousness.' We are not witnessing an end of writing which, to follow McLuhan's ideological representation, would restore a transparency or immediacy of social relations; but indeed a more and more powerful historical unfolding of a general writing of which the system of speech, consciousness, meaning, presence, truth, etc., would only be an effect, to be analyzed as such." Polemics aside, we could formulate the difference between McLuhan and Derrida by saying that one disperses consciousness into technologies and another into texts. Stating this difference in terms of the Austinian *performative*, does it not, for both McLuhan and Derrida, mean that a performative may travel unimpeded across media? Jacques

In the process of being documented, performance is thus monumentalized. In accordance with the display conventions of film, rather than those of Actionism, EXPORT performed *Touch Cinema* many times, in Vienna, Munich, Cologne, Zurich, Amsterdam, London, and elsewhere; in art institutions and at film festivals, and on the street.⁶⁸ A 1969 ‘screening’ in Munich was the subject of a short documentary film on Austrian television, broadcast as part of a series on avant-garde art; particular, this action was a re-staging exclusively for television. The film’s sympathetic voiceover narration ends on the theme of feminist iconoclasm: “The refusal of the image belongs among the emancipated art forms of a feminist aesthetic.”⁶⁹

Given this confident use of mass media in and around *Touch Cinema*, it is remarkable to read in a 2003 essay by Austrian novelist Marlene Streeruwitz that all documentation of the piece represents male efforts to “win back ancestral territory.” According to Streeruwitz, documentation amortizes the impact of real action, and ultimately erases it from history, leaving a *Geschichtslücke*, a gap in history.⁷⁰ I must then conclude my discussion of the work

Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context,” 329. The word “extension” in McLuhan’s theory is misleading. Starting with man’s literal expansion in space, McLuhan sketches an extension of “the nervous system itself in a global embrace” through “electric technology.” McLuhan, 3. This is not the anthropocentric ‘supplement’ theory as the nature of communication, which Derrida traces back to Étienne Bonnot de Condillac: “It has never occurred to General Sarnoff that any technology could do anything but *add* itself on to what we already are.” McLuhan, 11. And: “If it is asked ‘What is the content of speech?’ it is necessary to say, ‘It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal.’” McLuhan, 8. Cf. Andreas Huyssen, “In the Shadow of McLuhan: Jean Baudrillard’s Theory of Simulation, *Assemblage* 10 (Dec.1987), 7-17.

⁶⁸ I am referring to archival material in the Generali Foundation for the chronology of the piece. The first performance took place on November 11, 1968 at the award ceremony of a film festival in Vienna, where another piece of “Expanded Cinema” by EXPORT, *Ping Pong*, had won the award for the festival’s Most Political Film. Instead of a “screening” of that work (the film consisted of an invitation to shoot ping pong balls at the screen), Export performed *Touch Cinema*, supposedly under protest from the audience (Weibel, *Bildkompendium*, 261). Three days later, Export performed on Stacchus Square in the center of Munich, with Weibel on loudspeaker. A chronology of *Touch Cinema* is also published in Sylvia Szely (ed.) *Export Lexikon. Chronologie der bewegten Bilder bei VALIE EXPORT* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 2007), 138-39.

⁶⁹The documentary film *Wiener Underground* was made by Peter Hajek and Helmut Dimko for the series *Apropos Film* (ORF) and was first broadcast on September 12, 1969. The series included a visit to Andy Warhol’s Factory (1970), though the focus was on Austrian artists. *Apropos Film* premiered January 5th, 1968.

⁷⁰ Marlene Streeruwitz, “Wer sieht. Wer sagt. Was. Wie. Kann das.” In *VALIE EXPORT: Mediale Anagramme*, Cat. Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2003), 186 [my translation].

by showing that, on the contrary, EXPORT's interest in documentation secures for the ephemeral acts of *Touch Cinema* the status of a performative monument. What needs to be attended to is EXPORT's own agency in producing the documentation, and the extent to which the work's "impact" is itself a result of this documentation.

Let us look then at the fate of the action in extant documents more closely. Several widely circulated photographs of *Touch Cinema* exist apart from the documentary film, which is shown frequently in museum retrospectives. The two best-known images were taken by Werner Schulz on November 14, 1968 in Munich, on the opening day of a meeting of independent filmmakers, to which Weibel and EXPORT were invited.⁷¹ They dramatize the tension between presence and mediation in the piece: in the first, an ostensibly working-class "visitor" is seen in profile with his hands inside the box, leering at EXPORT, who seems to stare straight ahead, avoiding his eyes. [Fig. 2.29] A longhaired intellectual type in the background watches EXPORT's reaction.⁷² In the second photograph, the longhaired man is the "visitor." [Fig. 2.31] The two male figures are in fact filmmakers who took part in the festival, Ed Sommer (the "working-class type") and Werner Nekes (the "intellectual"). These men are knowing and valued collaborators in documenting the work.⁷³ The photographs,

⁷¹ Treffen unabhängiger Filmmacher, at the Künstlerhaus in Munich. See the review in the *AZ Feuilleton*, Axel Görg, "Fuchshorn und Striptease" (November 15, 1968). The photographer Werner Schulz was one of the managers of the *independent film center* in Munich, which organized the event. *Bildkompendium*, 261.

⁷² Régis Michel finds that Export's impassivity turns her into a statue, even as the box reifies the body. *VALIE EXPORT*. Cat. Centre national de la photographie, Paris (Montreuil: L'Oeil, 2003), 24, 27. The intense gaze of the long-haired man and his compositional presence has given rise to the myth that he is Peter Weibel, an assumption easily falsified by the *Bildkompendium*: he appears in various photographs on the megaphone, in a light suit, with short hair. The *Bildkompendium* affords the best impression of the action. There is one large panoramic photograph by Peter Kochenrath, with "working-class type," shot from another angle, and showing a middling crowd. On another page are grouped ten photographs, showing EXPORT walking down the street, smiling at Weibel, being touched by the "intellectual," etc.

⁷³ Ed Sommer (b.1932) is a filmmaker and photographer; Werner Nekes (b.1944) is a filmmaker and the owner of an extensive collection of visual media. Archive of the Generali Foundation, Vienna, folder on *Touch Cinema*, no index number. Werner Nekes has a homepage: <http://www.wernernekes.de>. The photograph with Sommer 'visiting' showed part of the surrounding urban setting when published in the *Bildkompendium*, but was mostly circulated cropped to the more dramatic woman-invader-voyeur triangle.

then, are staged in the sense that it is not ‘innocent spectators’ who are shown interacting with EXPORT. Yet the event took place: at least a few strangers must have worked up the courage to “visit,” and we must assume Schulz duly photographed them. There must be some good reason why these images featuring informed actor and spectator should have become canonical. Indeed, the triangle woman—invader—voyeur is at the dramatic heart of the piece. Besides an amusing anecdotal effect, the consummate performances of all three protagonists blurs the boundary between act and allegory: in the first image, Sommer *represents* the male touch, Nekes the male gaze, in the second image, the reverse.⁷⁴ Nekes’s function in the first photograph [Fig. 2.29] is crucial also, for he involves us, the later audience: his impassive gaze might seek EXPORT, but it catches us also, the absent audience assuming the place of the camera. We become aware of this gaze, as we are ourselves gazing at the documentation of the work. It seems that in order for this document to perform most effectively, EXPORT made use of collaborators who appreciated the stakes of the performance. The photographs *work* at involving us in the performance via the two collaborators, to whom we cleave because like us they are knowing ‘passers-by,’ who exemplify a range of reactions we might assume: unthinking action and critical contemplation.

Documents of *Touch Cinema* were made public through newspapers and magazines, and later, in catalogues and books. They were also used in EXPORT’s own retroactively

⁷⁴ The first photo was published in most EXPORT catalogues and many newspapers, in the German tabloid *Quick* (“Das erste Tastkino der Welt,” November 14, 1968); in *VALIE EXPORT*, Cat. Oberösterreichische Landesgalerie (Linz: 1992), 259; Cat. *Ob/De Construction*, Fig. 1 (inside of cover); Saxenhuber (ed.), 26, 27 (plus the panorama view); *Valie Export. Kritisches Lexikon der Gegenwart*, 47/18 (Munich: Weltkunst und Bruckmann, 1999) 4; *Valie Export. Gabriele Münter Preis* (Frauen Museum Bonn, 1997), n.p.; *VALIE EXPORT. Eine Werkschau*. Exhibition Folder (Vienna: Edition Sammlung Essl, 2005), fig. 6; Schimmel, *Out of Actions*, 169. The second photo was published in “Fuchshorn und Striptease,” as well as in “Der erste Tapp- und Tastfilm,” and Norbert Thomas, “Im Tastkino bis an die Brust,” both in *Stern*, 1968.

produced explanatory “script” of 1972, which rehearsed the action textually and visually.⁷⁵ [Fig. 2.32] As a public act, *Touch Cinema* aroused considerable media attention, especially in the Austrian and German illustrated press. [Fig. 2.33] Most writers were amused, calling EXPORT a “pretty girl” or punning freely on the “availability” of EXPORT’s breasts; predictable reactions to be sure, though some tried to remain ‘neutral.’⁷⁶ But dismissive press coverage cannot be conflated with the intentional visual documentation of the action. Rather, the mediation of the photographs is an attempt of the artist to direct the response of a later audience, possibly even to shape the aftermath of the tabloid furore which first met the performances.⁷⁷ Streeruwitz’s claim that all documentation must be considered part of an endeavor to compromise EXPORT’s authenticity and to mute the political impact of her work does not hold. The body in *Touch Cinema* enabled a momentary *connection*, at the level of communicative action, between desire, self, and mediated culture, with authenticity being negotiated between the event and the document. The historicity of this document allows later audiences to witness, and in an imaginative register to participate in, the social matrix of the late 1960s. Woman (EXPORT)—man (a role shared by Nekes and Sommer)—public space—this triangle makes visible sexualized power relations within the panoramic perspective of a historical construction, which amount to a performative monument captured on film.

For all its self-conscious media articulation, *Touch Cinema* is a transitional work: EXPORT took from the Actionists the insight that the bare presence of the body can be

⁷⁵ Now in the collection of Georg Fritsch.

⁷⁶ Amused, and “dateable” by expressions such as “pretty girl,” and usually dismissive, but often still positively informative are “Das erste Tastkino der Welt,” *Quick*, (November 14, 1968), Karl Stankiewicz, “Sogar das Kopierwerk streikte,” *AZ* (no. 265), “Fuchshorn und Striptease,” “Der Kasperl kommt” *Stern* (December 10, 1968), among others.

⁷⁷ The press response is discussed in Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger, *Valie Export und Elfriede Jelinek im Spiegel der Presse. Zur Rezeption der feministischen Avantgarde Österreichs* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992).

perturbing, modulated this presence on the model of commercial mass media, and made these media part of her performance. Live fact and document both seem necessary to maintain this balancing act. This explains the persistence of “presentist” interpretations in the Steeruwitz mold. As the resulting public figure, EXPORT ironically transmitted herself in place of an object. She thus fixed gender relations legibly in a performative monument; through it the public construction of gender can be engaged performatively by a belated reading audience.

Performing the Document: EXPORT's *Body Configurations*

Architecture, in the case of *Touch Cinema* a moral or symbolic architecture understood as an extension of the body, became an explicit concern in EXPORT's subsequent series of *Körperkonfigurationen (Body Configurations)*, which set actual public architecture in relation to the body. In the process EXPORT fulfilled the logic of the mediated performative, moving as far as performance can from the presuppositions of Actionism. In *Touch Cinema* the tension between haptic and visual sense-imagination was channeled into documents. These documents formed a layer of the performative encounter between artists and audiences, a performative commentary addressed to a reading audience. The *Body Configurations* relocate the performative content entirely into the document.

Begun in 1972, the series was taken up intermittently for two decades. It consists of photographs of performances, apparently, the object is to investigate psychic states through diverse configurations of body and its surrounding. A female figure (EXPORT herself, with the exception of one phase of the series in 1976) posed for the camera in architectural or 'natural' sites; developed prints were then often reworked. The physical performance is only

raw material for the photographic process, the *mise-en-scène*, a pro-filmic event.⁷⁸ What results is one of the most revealing attempts by performance and photography together to come to terms with the power ascriptions evoked by monumental architecture in urban space. The monument appears here as actual architecture, more prominently than in Brus's *Wiener Spaziergang*. Vienna is the set for this investigation, the counterpart to the female body; the chosen locations play on clichés of the city, from the claustrophobic feeling of Orson Welles's postwar classic *The Third Man* (1950), with its desolate backlots and narrow streets, to the nineteenth century grandeur of the "imperial city." Throughout, framing and graphic overlays animate the architecture, so that it seems that the woman's body is as much the "setting" for a monument's own performance, as the other way around.

The *Body Configurations* were produced in four installments: the first in 1972 [Fig. 2.34, 2.35], the second in 1974 [Fig. 2.36], the third in 1976 [Fig. 2.37, 2.38], and the fourth in 1982 [Fig. 2.39, 2.40]. The core of the series consists of subsets called by EXPORT *Body Configurations in Nature* (1972/74) and *Body Configurations in Architecture* (1972/76/82).⁷⁹ Examination of these *Body Configurations* in their chronological sequence reveals a shift in

⁷⁸ "Literally everything 'before the film,' the pro-filmic event consists of whatever is placed before the camera to be filmed...It always functions in concert with the limits, placed by framing and editing, on the spectator's access to the events that the camera records." Adrienne L. McLean, in Roberta E. Pearson and Philip Simpson (Eds.) *Critical Dictionary of Film and Television Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 343.

⁷⁹ Photos taken in Belgium by Eric Timmermann in 1974 are omitted in most catalogues. *VALIE EXPORT. Körpersplitter* (Linz: Edition Neue Texte, 1980), 39, 43. Another catalogue, *Körperkonfigurationen 1972-76* (Innsbruck: Krinzinger Gallery, 1977) adds to *Body Configurations* a series called *Körperstellungen: Nachstellungen (Body Positions: Persecutions)*, photographs by EXPORT of Monika Hubman, who poses as Madonna (after Michaelangelo's *Pieta*) with a washing machine and a sewing machine alternately, as well as drawings by EXPORT on similar themes: *Madonna on the stove (Die Madonna auf dem Kochherd)*. In the text EXPORT wrote for the catalogue, she describes the *Body Configurations in Nature* and *in Architecture* as the first step in her investigations, and the *Körperstellungen* as the second step, from actual locations into the territory of cultural imagery: "In the paintings of the past, an archive of postures has condensed without being noticed." ("In den Gemälden der Vergangenheit hat sich unbemerkt ein Archiv der Körperhaltungen niedergeschlagen.") Preface, n.p. The text is dated October 1976 [my translation]. The 1980 catalogue *Körpersplitter* includes additional drawings, photographic variations on the Madonna theme, and the wax model for a monument called *Der Ort des Menschen* (1974). Roswitha Mueller discusses the *Body Configurations* in her 1994 book (op.cit.) particularly 96-102, and 109-113.

EXPORT's aesthetic construction of woman: from woman as dominated by her environment (1972) to woman delimiting this environment physically, and in the process negotiating gender relations, and power itself. The work grapples with the ambivalence of subject and object positions in the style of a phenomenological inquiry: do I, as subject, construct the world around me, or does the world, with its history sedimented in socio-cultural conventions, form me as one of its objects? The force of a practice aimed at communicative action is not so much abandoned in this work as *bracketed* to allow a *presocial* investigation into the conditions of action for the single individual. From the vague notion of a threatening public space, EXPORT gradually developed a performative interaction of legible bodies and authoritative public spaces.

Typical of the early *Body Configurations in Nature* is *Aufhockung (Squatting)*⁸⁰ [Fig. 2.34]. EXPORT is photographed by Hermann Hendrich squatting in the middle of a country lane, hands clasped around her legs, head bent forward. Her eyes are fixed on her knees, as if she were intent on achieving a maximum of self-absorption. The strong contrast of the print makes EXPORT look solid, object-like, but the low camera angle takes away any grandeur. The body seems endangered by its position, as if a vehicle might at any moment drive over it. Furthermore, the body is identified as foreign matter through an alteration of the photograph: an open rectangle, one side longer than the other, is drawn around EXPORT in black ink. The rectangle draws the boundaries of the body, it is reproductive media that ultimately fix the body-sign in its setting, with the resulting overworked document merging body and surrounding for a reading audience. In this sense, the drawing paradoxically draws attention to the image's status as a photograph. The diagram looks impersonal, almost clinical, though

⁸⁰ *Aufhockung* is not a standard German word. While *hocken* means to squat, the usual noun form is *Hocke*, not *Aufhockung*, which perhaps suggests effort. The Generali Foundation translates this title as "Squat On."

in fact it brings EXPORT's body back into the picture as an agent, since she executed the manipulation with her own hand. This invisible body acting through the diagram assumes the role of a belated, ostensibly objective interpretation of the photograph by its producer. It is a curious result of the formal independence of photographed body and supplemental drawing that readers do not easily see them as two manifestations of the same subjectivity. The diagram amplifies "environmental forces" acting on the visible EXPORT. It is the work of the same body objectifying itself.

The body is still more aggressively objectified in a photograph from the *Body Configurations in Architecture* called *Carceri* [Fig. 2.35]. Here, a seemingly unconscious EXPORT is placed on a staircase that gives the impression of enormous, menacing prison architecture, alluding explicitly to Piranesi's *Carceri* etchings of 1745, a corpus of images that has been associated with psychic terror since the late-romantic interpretation of Thomas de Quincey.⁸¹ [Fig. 2.41] The conjunction of stairs and the railing constructs a plunging perspective with the vanishing point just above the female body lying huddled near the top of the staircase with her back to the viewer. Perspective overpowers the body, an effect emphasized by a red triangle drawn over the photograph in watercolor, positioned just above the body and touching it at one vertex. It is as if the triangle affixes the body to the staircase; at the same time, the triangle points out, makes conspicuous, a body which is otherwise hardly visible. The marked photograph acts as "evidence" in an unspecified trial, exposing a woman's 'corpse' on the staircase.

⁸¹ Thomas de Quincey, *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* [published 1821 in *London Magazine*], vol. 1 of *Works of Thomas de Quincey* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1862), 263-264: "Creeping along the sides of the walls you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself... Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld, and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labours..." De Quincey had not seen any *Carceri*: "I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account."

Carceri makes obvious an anxiety in the 1972 *Body Configurations* concerning the body's relationship with its environment, and the concomitant search for a belated stabilization of the body through drawing. Drawing emphasizes the claustrophobia in much of this work, while trying to restore agency to the body—by “drawing attention” to its plight, and through the bodily activity of drawing itself. The performative enters these photographs at the time of drawing, which only acts symbolically on the visible body but directly on the viewer: it allows us to contextualize the photograph as a document of a confrontation between body and architecture. This reading is confirmed by the artist's name, stamped in the form of her logo on the lower right.⁸² In contrast to Brus, who in the *Vienna Walk* sought to disrupt public order directly by *embodying* painting (the black line and white coat of paint), the *Body Configurations* instigate the power claims to public space at a remove. EXPORT posed for photographs in architecture and diagrammed the resulting images, exposing *and* self-consciously working out the subjective mechanisms of psychic domination one might expect to find in anonymous public architecture. The multifaceted subjectivity she deployed in the process is her own: but the effect of a gendered interaction of a body in space belongs to the performative effect of the documents.⁸³

In 1976, EXPORT resumed the *Body Configurations* as a more detached analysis of the relationship between architecture and the female body. EXPORT shot this set of photographs herself, taking as her subject Susanne Widl, the lead actress of her film *Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversaries, 1976)*. These photographs are quite different in tone from those taken by Hendrich: they are set in the public architecture of the late

⁸² In addition, the title CARCERI is written on the document. This is the case many other photographs of the series, in particular in 1972.

⁸³ The split of body and drawing is comparable to the tension of photographed woman-object and critical artist-subject (implied by the visible trigger shutter) in Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*, begun 1977.

nineteenth century, which is presented in expansive views mostly around the *Ringstrasse*.⁸⁴ Widl's body links up to architecture by submitting to its forms, and yet, the tension seems staged through theatrical poses: Widl bends, stretches, crouches, parts her legs athletically; she forcefully acts out visual analogies. This is accentuated by the even printing of the photographs, which makes them look more 'documentary' and less expressionistic than the ones in 1972. The results are elegant *evaluations* of the body in architecture, compositions in which the architecture is chosen for self-evident formal qualities: clear geometric forms and neoclassical decorations predominate. Most of these photographs show fragments of famous buildings, implied in anonymous architectural details ranging from street curbs to bases of columns, pilasters, and ashlar masonry.

Elongation [Fig.2.37], photographed before the neo-Hellenistic façade of the Austrian Parliament, is a dry commentary on the private symbolism of public power. The parliament building is suggested only through the wide staircase leading to a colonnade (the bottom of which is visible), and through the fountain in front dedicated to Pallas Athena—an opulent stage set for the confrontation between a male bearded statue attached to the fountain (the personification of the river Inn) and Widl, lying on her side on one of the steps below the fountain.⁸⁵ The implied power discrepancy between the horizontal female figure and the mostly vertical architectural elements (the columns, the pyramidal pile of the fountain), is emphasized through a black diagonal line that is drawn on the photographic print from the river god's mouth to the head of the woman. Context tells us that this connection is not one

⁸⁴ The *Ringstrasse* was built in place of the older city fortification wall, which was demolished in 1857. As part of a vast urban development plan, a new university building, the parliament, city hall, art university, several ministries, and private palaces were erected along this circular street in the late nineteenth century.

⁸⁵ The parliament building was constructed between 1873-1884 by Theophil von Hansen. The fountain is a later addition, erected between 1893 und 1902 by Carl Kundmann. Four figures (three female and one male) stand for the principal rivers of the Habsburg monarchy: the Danube, Elbe, Vlatava and Inn.

of mutual communication; the black line functions like a thunderbolt transfixing the body of the woman. The opposition between the site of legalized male authority (parliament) and displaced woman seems straightforward—the authoritarian monumentality, the adversarial confrontation heightened by drawing, and the human figure reduced to the horizontality of victimhood. Yet, there is a distinct grace to the execution. This effect is *formal* in an explicitly art historical sense. The explicitness of this formal relationship of the body to monumentality is apparent in titles such as *Anfügung* (*Addition*), and *Verfügung* (a pun on *Verfugung* /caulking and *Verfügung* / disposal) [Fig. 2.38]. In *Addition*, the alignment of body and imposing, rusticated stone block on the ground floor of an official building adds up to an acrobatic exercise. Monumental architecture here speaks about the past, to be sure, but not in concrete terms. Rather, EXPORT makes us aware that, as we are products of the past (both in political and in socio-historical terms), so is the seemingly solid furniture of the world. Just as the past acts on the world, the past also acts *on* us.

What I am arguing is that, although the individual 1976 photographs invite social, historical, and feminist readings, they do not add up to criticism of individual buildings or monuments, but must rather be seen as case studies in a confrontation with “public” architecture. The *Body Configurations* elegantly point to, without explicating, the “memory” of human and public bodies. Why is the effect so different from that in the earlier work? Perhaps because EXPORT is now explicitly staging documents, choreographing another body, fixing the performance in the photograph from behind the camera.⁸⁶ This directorial role, and the concordant detachment of the autobiographical body from the set enables

⁸⁶ Some of the photos also appear briefly, as stills occupying the whole screen, in the film *Unsichtbare Gegner* (*Invisible Adversaries*), 1976. (The credit line reads: “Director: VALIE EXPORT in co-operation with Peter Weibel, script: Peter Weibel in co-operation with VALIE EXPORT, based on an idea of VALIE EXPORT.”). The film is a feminist Lacanian variation on the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (film 1956).

EXPORT to direct the landmarks of the city as spaces for acts of bodily displacement; the *total speech act* of ‘male’ masonry and ‘female’ bodily form that results is a performative monument exclusively working in the photographic media.⁸⁷

The shift from the 1972 to the 1976 *Body Configurations* can be interpreted as an attempt on EXPORT’s part to extricate herself from the position of one submerged in the (patriarchal) architecture to one orchestrating and dissecting it through the ordering gaze of the camera.⁸⁸ In the first part of the series, the locations looked grim, anonymous, while the 1976 sites are loaded with the overlapping associations of tourism, official history, state power. The choice to perform these public monuments is in itself an act of self-empowerment, with an implicit element of feminist *flânerie*: EXPORT and Widl walking about Vienna, photographing and mocking the important “sights.” The authorial intentionality that came through in the 1972 diagrams confidently assumed the objectivity of command as EXPORT took on the role of the photographer in 1976. It is important to note what this implies about the power structures that interest EXPORT. Mechanisms of power are not *contained* in the architectural structure of the city, waiting to be unmasked, but are performed by Widl and by EXPORT’s prints and graphic overlays. The photograph as document informs us of contradictions in an alleged democratic society and its mechanisms of exclusion—by making these contradictions manifest, as in the case of the river god statue

⁸⁷ In his late book, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes declared that “Earlier societies managed so that memory, the substitute for life, was eternal, and that at least the thing which spoke Death should itself be immortal: this was the Monument. But by making the (mortal) Photograph into the general and somehow natural witness of “what has been,” modern society has renounced the Monument. A paradox: the same century invented History and Photography.”⁸⁷ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 93. The ephemerality of the photograph is not absolute, though, and it can survive much like a physical monument. In this sense, EXPORT’s performative monuments in the photographic medium are a different kind of monument, but not the “death,” in contrast to “immortality.”

⁸⁸ For Hildegard Fraueneder, the shift to Widl posing in the architecture takes away the tensions (and to some extent the political potential) conveyed in the earlier *Body Configurations*, Widl’s body “poses,” according to

“silencing” the woman. This “silencing” is a narrative effect of the manipulated photograph: it is a performance that is only completed in the construction of the performative monument, or more precisely, in its reception by a spectator–reader.

In saying that EXPORT constructs power relations in public space, we are not calling these relations fictional. The *Body Configurations* can best be put in political perspective by considering EXPORT’s contemporaneous work as activist and curator. She organized the first all-female art exhibition in Vienna in 1975, with texts by Lucy Lippard, Carolee Schneemann, and Meret Oppenheim in the catalogue. In EXPORT’s own introductory essay, she discusses the absence of women in (art) historical discourse:

Most history books are marked by a deep sexism: the woman is missing in their perspective. Woman is the missing gender in the history of our culture. The English word for *Geschichte*, “history,” is therefore a significant pun. Our history is HIS story, that of man.⁸⁹

In the early to mid-1970s, the reconstruction of a female history was a crucial part of the feminist discourse. Of course, for EXPORT, woman is not only ‘objectively’ missing in history. She is “missing in perspective” (*fehlt in der perspektive*), and must be restored by subjective intervention. Reconstruction as re-construction: this suggests the subjective active element in critique *and* in remembering. For female artists, the unearthing of mechanisms of exclusion meant the constitution in discourse of these mechanisms. We can see this reasoning in the *Body Configurations*: EXPORT went from work in which she presented herself as oppressed by boundaries that were not clearly defined, to making explicit the relation of the female body to the monument, positioning that body as critical activator rather than victim.

Fraueneder, “the discourse between architecture and body happens...not as contrast, but as similarity.” Fraueneder, 121.

⁸⁹ “die meisten geschichtsbücher sind gezeichnet von einem tiefen sexismus: die frau fehlt in der perspektive. die frau ist in der geschichte unserer kultur das fehlende geschlecht. das englische wort für geschichte, nämlich history, ist dafür ein bezeichnendes wortspiel. unsere geschichte ist die geschichte vom ER, dem mann.”

Victimhood is not denied in the later work, only bracketed in the interest of action. The ink-on-photograph drawings are more abstract in 1976 than before, and less confining than explanatory: mediations between the body and architecture, and meditations on the same subject.

In 1982, EXPORT concluded the *Body Configurations* by taking up again a direct performative engagement with monumental architecture. This final phase of her series dealt with Vienna's most ideologically charged sites. In these works, titles no longer play on physical or psychological adjustments of body to surrounding, but plainly denote their real settings with whatever political connotations they might carry: *Justizpalast (Law Courts)*, *Theseustempel* (a nineteenth-century replica of the *Theseum* in Athens), and most notably *Heldenplatz*, celebrated by *Herr Karl*, and the starting point of Brus's *Vienna Walk* [Fig. 2.39, 2.40] These are all at once sites of government, commemoration, and institutionalized aesthetics. Working once more with the photographer Hermann Hendrich, EXPORT posed for the photographs herself. As in 1972, the focus is narrow, and linear perspective is emphasized, but in 1982 these formal strategies parse the built environment as classically monumental, legible oversized fragments of the past.

In this last part of the series, EXPORT acted explicitly on the historical valence of the sites: the combination of straightforward title and recognizable landmark confirmed the weight of experience attending these buildings. In *Heldenplatz* [Fig.2.39], EXPORT lies prostrate over the stairs leading up to the war memorial, her hands spread flat on the ground almost as if she were "worshipping" the heroes, were she not facing *away* from them. In a second photograph with the same title [Fig. 2.40], EXPORT is 'bowing' with her rear facing

VALIE EXPORT, "Zur Geschichte der Frau in der Kunstgeschichte." Exh.cat. *Magna. Feminismus: Kunst und Kreativität*. Galerie St. Stephan, (Vienna, 1975), 9 [my translation].

the principal monument, a heroic flight of stairs protected by thick stone walls and an iron fence. In both images the inverted female body spread over the steps like a red carpet turns the 'solemn' act into a subversion of military values. There is a certain comic element in EXPORT's upturned buttocks and the tufts of grass growing between the flagstones of the square. But there is also a serious one in the performance. In *Heldenplatz*, EXPORT might seem to be affirming public memory. Through overplaying her posture of obeisance, the act of commemoration becomes improper, grotesque, and ultimately combative. Perhaps, because public memory is evoked with an *excess* of respect, viewers are induced to read the gesture "I worship" as forced instantiation of the gendered division of labor in nationalism. This over-acting is *not* simply insincerity, which would signify "desecration" on EXPORT's part. Overacting makes the performative inappropriate—but not unhappy in Austin's parlance, since it is done freely, so that it must be taken for the questionable act of worship it enacts.⁹⁰ Masculine domination and Fascism blend with an authoritarian architecture ridiculed by EXPORT's action, even though she seemingly accedes to their power. The precariousness of this speech act is its excess. Similarly, Helmut Qualtinger had to inhabit the 'innocent Herr Karl' to rattle Austrian self-regard, and went on to do public readings of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the enthusiasm of his diction bringing to light the absurdity in the text.⁹¹ What is new in EXPORT's late *Body Configurations* is the lucid conservation of an excessive performative in a photograph.

The 1982 photographs are generally much larger than before: 148x210cm for the *Law*

⁹⁰ Thus Austin: "However much I add up the pros and cons, if I act under the influence of a threat I do not do that act deliberately." "Three Ways of Spilling Ink," in *Philosophical Papers*, 286. Cf. Austin, *How to do things with Words*, 21.

⁹¹ Qualtinger's bellowing of Hitler's race theory is legendary: "Field mouse to field mouse, and house mouse to house mouse." Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Eine Lesung von Helmut Qualtinger* (Preiser, 1989, from a recording in 1973) [my translation]. A film of a reading was produced by Austrian State TV in 1985.

Courts, 120x181cm for *Theseustempel (Stufen)*, compared to the more intimately-sized 42x60cm of the *Carceri*, for example. There are no drawings in these last *Body Configurations*, as if EXPORT now trusted the photographic image entirely to convey the performance.⁹² Instead of making visible boundaries, she confronted monumental forms directly through the framing: sometimes a posture was photographed as a close-up, and then again from a distance, often from above.⁹³ The new interest in framing and point of view, together with the expansive dimensions of the prints, brings to the surface a concern with the spectator and the limits of subjective perceptual experience implicit in the whole series. During the 1980s EXPORT published an exegesis of the *Body Configurations* entitled *Corpus More Geometrico*.⁹⁴ The title literally means “Body according to the geometric method,” but the phrase *more geometrico* signifies deductive (as opposed to empirical) reasoning in the classic rationalist tradition of Descartes and Spinoza. The body in relation to architecture, and to the universe as a whole, is the stated theme of the text.

As plastic poses, as living images and sculptures, my photographic *Body Configurations* signify not only the double image of the (geometric and human) body: bodywriting is always also sociology and cultural history. The body-pictures deliver pictures of the cultural environment-body. [*Umgebungskörper*]⁹⁵

The body as part of cultural history becomes “writing,” a document that can bring to a reading audience an *image* of the “environment body,” not the *actual* environment body,

⁹² According to Gallery Charim in Vienna, the size of these vintage prints is 56-79cm. Email from Kurt Klädler, Galerie Charim, February 6, 2008. The 1982 photographs are singular prints, while the earlier pieces exist as vintage print editions of three pieces each. The exact date of production of these vintage prints is unclear. It is generally difficult to pin down dates and variants of the *Body Configurations* in EXPORT’s oeuvre. According to photographer Hermann Hendrich, many of the early pieces were first exhibited without drawing. Interview with the author, January 29, 2008. Audio file. Galerie Charim confirmed that early pieces without drawing are also in circulation.

⁹³ Hendrich recalls photographing from a ladder. Interview with the author, January 29, 2008. Audio file.

⁹⁴ The text was first printed in the catalogue *Self. Neue Selbstbildnisse von Frauen* (Bonn: Frauenmuseum Bonn, 1987), reprinted in *VALIE EXPORT* (1992), 86, and *VALIE EXPORT Mediale Anagramme*, 105.

⁹⁵ “Als plastische Posen, als lebende Bilder und Skulpturen signifizieren meine fotografischen Körperkonfigurationen nicht nur die Doppelbilder der (geometrischen und menschlichen) Körper, sondern die

consisting of society with all its visible bodies and invisible valuations. This environment is actively mirrored and thus made legible *in* the body as “living,” according to EXPORT, and not as a passive reflection. EXPORT’s phrase “Environment body” is a geometric term used in the plural (environmental bodies) by Edmund Husserl to describe those things which the self-aware subject organizes in space.⁹⁶ It is telling that for EXPORT the term is singular, suggesting a monolithic block of a body, almost like a hostile entity comprised of cultural forces, from which the individual “bodypictures” [*Körperbilder*] must be extracted.⁹⁷ Husserl insisted that while the self is part of the world, experiences are always directed, intentional *acts* (*intentionale Erlebnisse*). Experience is always “experience of *something*.”⁹⁸ By directing our attention to some part of the stream of consciousness, and neglecting others, we can “put out of action” (*außer Aktion setzen*) and thus reflect on our relation to these givens.⁹⁹ EXPORT’s approach, indeed phenomenological, is to point out a certain aspect of the environment, to push the reader to experience the environment as political/cultural

Körperschrift ist auch immer Soziografie und Kulturgeschichte. Die Körperbilder liefern Bilder vom kulturellen Umgebungskörper.” Ibid. [my translation].

⁹⁶ Edmund Husserl “Systematische Raumkonstitution,” *Ding und Raum. Vorlesungen 1907*, Husserliana vol.16, ed. Ulrich Claesges (Den Haag : M. Nijhoff, 1973), 301. Die *Umgebungskörper* is plural, der *Umgebungskörper* singular. In *Corpus More Geometrico* EXPORT cites Merleau-Ponty, whose *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945) [German ed. 1966] extends Husserl’s project around bodily experience. A link may be philosopher and art historian Peter Gorsen, who in 1980 published EXPORT’s “Feministischer Aktionismus.” Gorsen wrote a dissertation on phenomenology supervised by Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas: Peter Gorsen, *Zur Phänomenologie des Bewusstseinsstroms* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1966).

⁹⁷ Several other works by EXPORT set monuments, architectural and seemingly natural formations in relationship to the body, most notably *Adjunct Dislocations*, a 1973 film (made one year after the first *Body Configurations*) suggests an interest in phenomenology. With one super-8 camera mounted on her back and one on her chest, EXPORT walked from an apartment in Vienna through parts of the inner city and then on to the suburbs, filming all the while. She was filmed in turn by Hermann Hendrich with a 16mm camera. The complete installation consists of these three films projected together, with Hendrich’s view of EXPORT on the left and the two camera views on the right, one above the other.

⁹⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. vol. I: *Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie* [first pub. 1913] (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1980), 64-65.

⁹⁹ Husserl, *Ideen*, I: 53-56, on the varieties of bracketing, among them *außer Aktion setzen*. The parallels with speech-act theory are many. Austin himself called his enterprise “linguistic phenomenology” in “A Plea for Excuses,” *Philosophical Papers*, 182. Austin’s notion of intentionality as “a miner’s lamp on our forehead which always illuminates just as far ahead as we go along”—informed by a background of semi-conscious circumstances—is quite Husserlian. “Three Ways of Spilling Ink,” *Philosophical Papers*, 284.

intention (“sociography and cultural history”), while adding that this environment, the body, and gender as part of this environment, are not givens but constructs of subjectivity. Set ‘out of action’ is what EXPORT values most: communicative action between *multiple* subjects. In its place, there is an alienated but illuminating exchange with the built environment. Thus in *Heldenplatz*, male, female, public, and private become legible to the reader as subjective constructions by the pointed gender play of the protagonist: the woman worshipping the heroes.¹⁰⁰

I introduced the *Body Configurations* by noting the externalization of bodily affect in the 1972 images, and ended by charting the depth at which EXPORT locates subjectivity in public space. A comparison with a contemporary work by Peter Weibel will illustrate the irreducibility of this subjective dimension in EXPORT’s project. A photographic series of 1970/71 entitled *Anschläge* [*Anschlag* is a pun: it means both “assault”, and “wall post”] shows Weibel “changing” the public signs of police stations, courts, and lawyers’ offices by alteration of a few letters, which are scrawled on a sheet of paper held before the camera. *Polizei*, with the addition of *lügt* reads, “the police lies.” [Fig.2.42] The sign of the Vienna High Court (*Oberlandesgericht*), is changed to “Oh, High Shame Court” (*O schandesgericht*) [Fig.2.43] and a lawyer’s sign (*Rechtsanwalt*) is made to read “legal violence” (*Rechtsgewalt*). [Fig.2.44] Weibel openly plays with the performative potential and signage of language by using words and their congealment in the photograph to “make it so.” Yet these transformations have a different effect. The effect on the reader is not a factual disclosure that the police are lying, but rather that Weibel is taking on the police with a rude

¹⁰⁰ Some years later, Judith Butler worked out the Austinian performative in relation to gender formation. Her claim that gender stereotypes are performatively enacted on and by subjects, bringing them into being, is confirmed in the course of *Body Configurations* as aesthetic investigation. Judith Butler, “Performative Acts

rejoinder.¹⁰¹ The relationship between individual and state here is quite different from *Heldenplatz*. In EXPORT the body with its acts is in part autonomous, but ambiguous as concerns intention: it outlined options for subjective identification within an asymmetrical world of political authority. Weibel on the other hand has no doubt about the political *Umwelt* and his role in it. He believes in the force of the gesture to bring about change: perhaps not massive political change, but atomic changes in daily order insofar as signs are part of the real world, and vulnerable to performative modification. In Duchampian fashion, he manipulates conventions by giving *himself* authority to change them. Weibel cannot consider himself a product of the same conventions; he is outside state discourse, a typical enough avantgardist presumption, unavailable to EXPORT once she opened her work to the difficulty of object/subject construction from a feminist point of view informed by phenomenology.

To sum up, the *Body Configurations* developed in stages. From the performance of victimization through abject bodies and aggressive drawing in 1972; through the bodily ‘evaluations’ of architecture in 1976 with their studied objectivity of drawing, printing, and performance; to photographs which, unmodified, function as political speech acts in 1982. All along, but most dramatically in the last stage, the performativity of the *Body Configurations* is contained fully in the photographs.

It is worth recalling how this mediated performativity became possible. EXPORT started out performing in close proximity to the Actionists, for whom disconcerting live presence was preserved and propagated through documents. EXPORT and Weibel

and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, No.4 (December 1988), 519-531.

¹⁰¹ Austin thinks the lack of a convention for insults reflects a reluctance to give this speech act institutional regularity; hence insults must always be interpreted. “Performative Utterances,” *Philosophical Papers*, 245.

historicized Actionism by constructing a media archive of it in the 1970 *Bildkompendium*, whose total effect depends on an obsessive compilation of documents: photographs, manifestoes, newspaper clippings, a sedimentation that itself already brings about a monument of discourse.¹⁰² The self-awareness of this new paradigm of mediated performance is demonstrated by *Touch Cinema*, which made the mass media and sensory mediation of gendered bodies the *subject* of performance, using performance as an occasion for documentation which ultimately stands as a performative monument in itself. In the *Body Configurations*, performance took place *only* for the photograph, and thus comes into force as a speech act only in the mind of readers, who imagine the act and thus re-perform it.

In the early 1980s, EXPORT had fully developed a concept of performance no longer bound to medium specificity. Her performance practice extended the use of performative documents, which are invested with the binding power of Austin's contract. This extension is crucial, for it overturns the dichotomy of presence and mediation. In a thought borrowed from elementary legal theory, Austin points out that one need not be corporeally present to perform speech acts; documents bearing proof of one's intention to perform speech acts should suffice. In this way "written utterances" can be *made* performative by "appending a signature," binding to them the legal authority to initiate actions. The permeability of media to performative acts, whose force is conserved in the process of mediation—a theme we have found at the root of expanded cinema—is there to be found in the very formulation of the performative.¹⁰³ In the *Body Configurations*, a viewer is needed to consummate the

¹⁰² One could compare the *Bildkompendium* with Robert Smithson's drawing *A Heap of Language* from 1966. See Gary Shapiro, *Earthwards. Robert Smithson and Art after Babel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 157.

¹⁰³ "In written utterances (or inscriptions), [the person doing the uttering will be registered] by his appending his signature." Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, 60. Derrida tries to disprove Austin by including his own (fake, printed) signature at the end of "Signature, Event, Context," 330. But this signature could itself be

performance, just as a public is needed for the spoken utterance, or a reader/witness for the written one. Having a reader, or a public, is a presupposition of the monument. Whether it comes into being as film, act, or durable object in public space is a matter of detail.

After the *Body Configurations*, EXPORT fused body and architecture—or more specifically, the *public face* of building and individual—in photomontages like *Selbstporträt mit Stiege und Hochhaus* (*Self-portrait with staircase and skyscraper*) [Fig. 2.45], and *Selbstporträt mit zwei Hochhäusern* (*Self-portrait with two skyscrapers*) [Fig. 2.46] of 1989. If performance in these works subsided in favor of more explicit constructions of subjectivity through anonymous public architecture, its force was not forgotten. When EXPORT turned to producing real architecture in the 1990s, she applied insights gained from this earlier period into the performativity of media.

Public Experience: EXPORT's Proposed *Passage of Remembrance*

For various politico-historical reasons, including the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the German *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Dispute), Holocaust commemoration became the most challenging task for public art in central Europe of the '80s and '90s.¹⁰⁴ For Austrians, Alfred Hrdlicka's *Mahnmal gegen Krieg und Faschismus* (*Memorial against War and Fascism*),

interpreted as photographic speech act, being added to the reproduced text by a photostatic element printed with the typography. Of course, one could argue that by authorizing this signature, it essentially becomes "authentic." From the different starting point of psycho-analysis, Kathy O'Dell developed performance art as a live encounter between artist and audience based on a contract. Even though I take this argument into the realm of mediation (and in the sense of a performative, not Freudian contract), her thoughts were inspiring for my thinking about performance art. Kathy O'Dell, *Contract With the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970's* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁴ For the *Historikerstreit* see Chapter Three. For Austria, the "Waldheim Affair" during the campaign for the presidential elections of 1986 was significant: candidate Kurt Waldheim's *Wehrmacht* membership during World War II and his possible involvement in the deportation of 40,000 Jews from Greece to Auschwitz were made public, and raised broad questions about individual responsibility under Fascism. Nevertheless, Waldheim won the election by a landslide. An international commission was appointed, which found that Waldheim was not personally involved in war crimes, but that he most likely knew about the deportations. See International

erected on the *Albertinaplatz* in the center of Vienna in 1988, became the first catalyst for a long-overdue debate about National Socialism.¹⁰⁵ [Fig.2.47] The public controversy about its commission by the city of Vienna and about Hrdlicka's crude realism led to calls for a different kind of memorial, one specifically dedicated to the Jewish victims of Fascism.¹⁰⁶

In 1995, EXPORT and eight other entrants were invited to submit proposals for a new competition to construct a *Monument and Memorial Site for the Jewish Victims of the Nazi Regime in Austria* [Mahnmal], a project suggested by Holocaust survivor and "Nazi hunter" Simon Wiesenthal, and taken on by the city of Vienna.¹⁰⁷ The new site for the monument, Judenplatz, was the center of Jewish life in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the name stems from the 15th century, the time after the Jews had been banned from the city after

Commission of Historians, Hans Rudolf Kurz (ed.). *The Waldheim Report* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ The most hostile reactions came—not surprisingly—not from intellectuals finding the design and the designation problematic, but from conservative citizens who did not want to be "yet again" reminded of the past. The biggest boulevard paper, *Kronenzeitung*, supported a campaign against the monument. Hrdlicka's work is often discussed inaccurately as a Holocaust memorial.

¹⁰⁶ Holger Thünemann, *Holocaust-Rezeption und Geschichtskultur. Zentrale Holocaust-Denkmäler in der Kontroverse. Ein deutsch-österreichischer Vergleich* (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner 2005), 180ff. The issue of remembering Jewish victims in Austria centered on Hrdlicka's problematic visualization: a bronze statue of a Jew kneeling on the pavement, scrubbing it with a brush (a humiliation forced on Viennese Jews). James E. Young, in *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 112, praises "Hrdlicka's real achievement...the unveiling of these sore feelings, repressed memories, anger, and controversy." There is no mention of the multiples of the Jew sold by Hrdlicka's gallery. On the scandal of these 'paperweights,' see *Die Zeit* (Feb.10, 1989), 62.

¹⁰⁷ That both monuments used the term Mahnmal in German, is significant for the time. While a *Denkmal* [literally a mark to make one think] is dedicated to the remembrance of the past, the *Mahnmal* [a mark for admonition, the word *mahnen*, to admonish, stems from the Latin *monere*, which is in fact related to monument] is directed towards the future. The term *Mahnmal* gained specific importance after 1945, and became to stand for a monument "which calls for repentance instead of emulation." Hans Ernst Mittag, "Das Denkmal," in Werner Busch (ed.), *Funkkolleg Kunst. Eine Geschichte der Kunst im Wandel ihrer Funktionen* (Munich: Piper, 1987), 556. The term Mittag uses for repentance is *Umkehr* [my translation].

The other participants: Clegg & Guttmann, Peter Eisenman, Zvi Hecker, Ilja Kabakov, Karl Prantl/Peter Waldbauer, Zbynek Sekal/Eduard Ebner, Rachel Whiteread, Heimo Zobernig. On the jury were the mayor of Vienna, architect Hans Hollein, curators Harald Szeemann and Robert Storr, Simon Wiesenthal, and members of the Jewish Community Vienna. See Lucas Gehrman (ed.) *Judenplatz Wien 1996. Competition Monument and Memorial Site dedicated to the Jewish victims of the Nazi Regime in Austria 1938-1945* (Bolzano/Vienna: Folio, 1996); Simon Wiesenthal (ed.) *Projekt: Judenplatz Wien* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2000); special issues of the *Wiener Journal* (205/1997) and *Wiener Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte, Kultur & Museumswesen*, vol. 3 (1998), and Thünemann, *Holocaust-Rezeption*.

the Vienna Gesera (pogrom) in 1421.¹⁰⁸ The medieval synagogue had been demolished soon after. This means that in a sense the *Judenplatz* project was the first aesthetic forum in Austria for coming to terms with a persecution of Jews which includes but extends beyond the Holocaust, and the first to reverse publicly the attitude of moral amnesty that Austrians had granted themselves after World War II.

Though presumably invited for her long-standing engagement with Viennese urban space, EXPORT was not as strange a candidate for a Holocaust memorial as one might think. She had planned a war memorial—not built, and rarely exhibited—as early as 1974. *Der Ort des Menschen (The Place of the Human Being)* [Fig. 2.48] was a non-commissioned model for a monument meant to consist of a giant female hand with arched fingers, each of whose tips is pierced by metal nails. “The monument is memory of pain and protection against pain alike,” EXPORT explained in a 1980 catalogue which also contained the *Body Configurations*; the identification of a hand as bearer of pain *and* memory suggests that the body is not merely object of history but witness to it as well.¹⁰⁹ The project sits uncomfortably between expressionism, pop gigantism, Christian references (crucifixion, stigmata) and an attempt to materialize the inner psychic experiences of those members of the population who suffered invisibly during the war—exemplified in the cast of a female hand. EXPORT addressed not herself or any other body in particular, but a social body and its memory of pain. The model recapitulates the difficulty encountered by an avowedly anti-fascist generation in putting its experiences of wartime suffering into a historical perspective

¹⁰⁸ On the Wiener Gesera, see Eveline Brugger, Martha Keil, Albert Lichtblau, Christoph Lind, Barbara Staudinger (eds.): *Österreichische Geschichte. Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2006), vol. 15.

¹⁰⁹ “Das Monument ist Erinnerung an Schmerz wie Schutz vor Schmerz gleicherweise.” *Körpersplitter*, 96 [my translation]. The model is owned by the Austrian Gallery Belvedere, Vienna. One might assume the project is in part autobiographical: EXPORT’s father died in the war, and she and her two sisters were brought up by a single mother in Linz.

broad enough to embrace what seemed to them distant—the Holocaust. Formally, the fragmented female body was made to displace the authoritarian monument, substituting that which is oppressed for that which oppresses. The result is diffuse in its figurative symbolism.

Twenty years later, EXPORT's *Judenplatz* proposal, *Passage of Remembrance* [Fig. 2.49, 2.50, 2.51] returned to the idea of commemoration as bodily experience, but now resolutely on the part of the visitor. In 1995, EXPORT connected this spectatorial experience explicitly to performance, a performance of history that needed to be acted out.

Architecturally, she contrasted the heaviness of traditional memorial architecture with the lightness of glass, using a structure modeled on the density of funerary architecture and the transparencies of media culture at the same time:

The '*Passage of Remembrance*' is a passage leading through a commemorative event. It will not unfold its meaning to the passive beholder, but requires active participation. Two walls inclined towards each other, one of dark stone, one of opaque glass, form a passage whose spatial impact is like a physical experience of the monument. When a person walks through the passage sensors activate tape texts transmitted through vertical sound-joints in the stone wall...In the wide, open part of the passage a laser integrated in the stone projects text in the opaque glass wall.¹¹⁰

Memory was to enter the memorial project in the form of mediation: the sound installation inside the passage was planned to include readings, music and audio collages of material from Jewish oral history; the texts projected by laser installation onto the glass wall were to be evidence of "human suffering" in general, and the stone wall was to stand specifically for

¹¹⁰ "Proposal by VALIE EXPORT," Gehrman, 52-54 (Bilingual text). EXPORT explored the performative dimension of transparency elsewhere, notably in *Transparent Cube* (1999-2001), a glass cube used for exhibitions and feminist events, built under the tracks of Otto Wagner's Wiener Stadtbahn (1894-1901). The neighborhood was and is marked by prostitution. EXPORT wanted to make women visible in this space as active and autonomous participants. *Transparent Cube* thus exemplifies EXPORT's notion of political architecture. See Magistrat der Stadt Wien (ed.), *Der transparente Raum* (Vienna: MA 57 - Frauenförderung und Koordinierung von Frauenangelegenheiten, 2000). EXPORT's Altensteig memorial (1998) to the population deported by the National Socialists to make room for a military base is also made of glass. See Rudi Palla (ed.), *Erinnerungsstätte Allentsteig—eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Triton, 1999).

“pain suffered by the Jewish people.”¹¹¹ The plausibility of the symbolism depends on the performative effect of an architecture animated by the play of digital and analog media. A media monument may seem appropriate as a gesture for the future, but would it bear the weight of the past?

EXPORT sought to individualize the experience produced by the disparate media composing her memorial through the random permutation of text and sound fragments: a computer was arbitrarily to choose from a library of texts to project, exposing every visitor to a unique sensory collage.¹¹² The construction of individual acts of remembering from generic, publicly available documents is consistent with the photographic work EXPORT had produced earlier. In entering the monument, the visitor was to be made aware of history as a generic syntax to be individualized. The performance of the visitor, walking and taking in historical documents, is suggestively relayed to a non-participating public: visitors were to be visible to passing pedestrians on the *Judenplatz* through the semi-transparent surface of the glass panel. Performing memory while being seen changes the significance of the act; for one thing, the social environment enforces a behavior or remembrance. Private contemplation is not abolished, but brought to public attention as a visual spectacle. The glass surface serves as a screen and frame containing the performers of memory. In being thus assimilated to the

¹¹¹ Gehrman, 54.

¹¹² In the 1993 Venice Biennale, Weibel showed a multimedia monument dealing with the ‘exodus’ of Jewish intellectuals from Austria. *Die Vertreibung der Vernunft. Der kulturelle Exodus aus Österreich (The Exodus of Reason. Austria’s Cultural Depletion.* Weibel’s English title, not equivalent to the German), consisted of more than 40 monitors, on which the names and short biographies of thousands of Austrians (mostly Jewish) that were killed or exiled appeared in the form of end credits. A recorded voice also read these names. Weibel’s play with the metaphor of end credits consciously constrains the viewer’s imaginary space. One can only watch, without intervening or acting; possibly Weibel was alluding to the impossibility of altering the past. The stoically recited losses make powerlessness a topic of commemoration. A handwritten letter by Weibel states that the installation “is variable in dimension and number [of monitors]...also, the sound can be used or not, depending on the conditions.” Archive of the Museum of Modern Art, Vienna [my translation].

memorial and to the social injunction to remember, the spectator's bodily historicity is made a silent (but eloquent) substrate of commemoration.

One might think of Antonio Canova's inclusion of marble mourners in his 1805 tomb of Archduchess Marie-Christine in the Augustiner Church in Vienna, which disturbed Adolf Hildebrand, who saw in these mourners built-in spectators [Fig. 2.52]. Similarly, EXPORT wished to use spectators' bodies to become part of the monument complex. Canova's achievement is a theatrical example of appropriate funerary respects to be paid to a noblewoman: whether the quiet acts of perception of visitors to the *Passage of Remembrance* can have any appreciable effect on an outside spectator is not so clear. For the task has grown in complexity: to make history and not just grief visible through the body. EXPORT herself described the desired effect on the visitor as the "memory of remembering," a nice metaphor of the indirect way memory approaches the documentary. In *Passage of Remembrance* commemoration was opened to a wider public, one which posed the danger of refusing to commemorate. If passers-by of the *Portfolio of Doggedness* were crucial in conveying the performative content to an audience of belated readers, in *Passage of Remembrance* the performance of a visitor was meant to be read "aloud" by witnesses happening to be present, who in turn should pick up the thread of a long-neglected past. We can only speculate to what extent this elaborate calibration would have resulted in a legible—or usable—monument. EXPORT did not win the competition.¹¹³

The Document as Monument: Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial

The winning project of the *Judenplatz* competition was submitted by British sculptor Rachel Whiteread (born 1963), and substantiates the victory of the document *as* self-sufficient monument. At first sight, Whiteread's project might appear as a return to very traditional forms and materials. [Fig. 2.53, 2.54, 2.55] The abstract elegance of the reinforced concrete cube is accentuated by a texture resembling the rustication on the lower story of a Renaissance palazzo. At closer quarters this surface resolves into rows of books cast in concrete, their spines invisible, their closed pages turned outward towards the viewer. Each of the four walls of the memorial consist of eleven such shelves, capped by a flat roof. On the south-west side of the memorial, the negative cast of a double door without handles denies the visitor access to the interior of the memorial. "The 'anonymous library' will not be accessible," the jury report reads, lending authority to Whiteread's design decision. But the jury made its own demands, taking up the issue of the medieval synagogue, remains of which had been found under the proposed location of the memorial.¹¹⁴

The Jury unanimously recommended Rachel Whiteread's entry for implementation, but asked the artist to make some changes: The two inscriptions indicating the theme of the monument are to include the places where the Jews were exterminated. Of the archaeological finds...at least the bimah [raised platform with reading desk from which the torah is read] should be accessible or visible.¹¹⁵

An inscription with the names of the concentration camps had been part of the closed call, which also voiced "provisos against a figurative design." Initially Whiteread envisioned the cube without any base, and without visual or physical access to the archaeological site underneath. She objected immediately when asked to open the cube for passage to the

¹¹³ The two projects considered in the last round of discussion were a concrete sculpture "inspired by gothic flying buttresses and the roof timbering of Polish synagogues" by Zvi Hecker, and the winning project by Rachel Whiteread. Gehrman, 33, 58.

¹¹⁴ "Verfahrensregeln und Aufgabenstellung zum Wettbewerb (gekürzte Fassung)". In Gehrman, 31.

synagogue: “Ms. Whiteread considers it incompatible with her concept, to add any openings to the building,” according to the protocol of the debriefing after the decision of the Jury.¹¹⁶ In the midst of ongoing archaeological discoveries, Whiteread was asked again by city officials to replace the concrete of the floor with glass in order to make visible the excavation underneath, or else to make the doors functional as an entrance to the site. The artist never compromised concerning the object, which remained opaque and impassable. It was built with minor modifications: the footprint of the structure moved a meter, and a base was added to prevent pedestrians from walking on the inscriptions.¹¹⁷

Through this intransigence, the unreadable book at the center of Whiteread’s allegorical memory took on the added significance of a moral principle. At stake in the debate is the documentary accessibility of the past, and the possibility to performatively interact in the present. Whiteread’s refusal to make a monument that is open, transparent, or narrative arguably prevents the visitor from “coming to terms” with the past. The changes demanded by the city suggest a very different view of the documentary in contemporary public discourse. Whiteread had in mind a ghost library, the simulacra of books which do not in fact exist, print documents sealed by their mediation in concrete. The city officials might have hoped for an explanatory text, imparting much-needed knowledge about the past. Understandably: there is much to learn from the site, as the excavation of the medieval synagogue showed. Whiteread’s refusal to make her monument a real archive or to open up

¹¹⁵ “Evaluation by the Jury,” in Gehrman, 82-83.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Daniela Koweindl, *Ein Mahnmal für die Ermordeten Österreichischen Juden* (Master Thesis, Institute of Art History, University of Vienna, 2003), 80. The excavation site is now accessible through a house on the square, the Misrachi-Haus, not connected to the memorial. See “Protokoll des Juryverfahrens (Auszug). Anhang.” in Gehrman, 35, and Koweindl, 77. Koweindl interviewed the project manager of the work, Andrea Schlieker, in 2001. Tellingly for contemporary memorial culture, the idea of using only the remains of the synagogue a memorial was voiced by various parties. Cf. Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) [*Allégorie du patrimoine*, 1992].

to any kind of obvious interaction is not a failure on her part to appreciate the intrinsic and political value of this knowledge. It is however an aesthetic decision fraught with moral normativity. Whiteread's approach could be seen as pointing to Foucault's remark in *Archaeology of Knowledge* that we cannot simply reconstruct historical knowledge as presence through documents of the past—they are part of their own “discourse,” of which only monumental ruins remain.¹¹⁸ Equally, Whiteread does not give the audience an easy “entrance” into the past, very obviously shutting them out instead of inviting them. By bracketing out the historical as information or accessible through bodily investigation, Whiteread hoped to secure attention to (failure of) the historical as a discipline of remembering. It is not that history itself is rejected in Whiteread's project. Rather, she carves out a space for contemplation, clearing away a documentary richness which is—after all—the result of unspeakable acts. What kind of performance is bound to such a discipline? I conclude by seeking an answer to this question.

First, we should note that the impassivity of Whiteread's library confronting the beholder is the opposite of the interaction and interpenetration EXPORT had in mind with *Passage of Remembrance*. Commemoration through participation is actively switched off in Whiteread's project by the refusal to admit the spectator to the experiential sanctum of the monument. This refusal is graphically reinforced—*enacted*, in fact—through the false double doors. Maintaining distance between reader and book is, so to speak, the performative effect of Whiteread's work. Also, in contrast to other artists in the competition, she did not give the project a particular title; another clue that Whiteread seeks to point towards the problem of

¹¹⁸ See the end of Chapter One.

officially constructing history through legible monuments.¹¹⁹ A different kind of performative moment is conveyed by the material, as is often the case in Whiteread's oeuvre: the dimensions of the library were determined by the "very human measurements of an interior, a living-room from which the Jewish culture that had made Austria an intellectual power has been expelled," as Harald Szeemann put it.¹²⁰

There is of course no way to perceive this correspondence *in situ*. Unlike Whiteread's famous *House* (1993), the concrete cast of the interior of a working-class London house that had been demolished, the library in Vienna is *almost* entirely a positive cast.¹²¹ Only the doors and a rosette on the roof of the Vienna memorial—a rosette typical of nineteenth-century Viennese interiors—are negative casts.¹²² The rosette is emblematic of Whiteread's relation to the spectator: what was visible ceiling decoration in the 'model' becomes inaccessible when relocated to the roof. It is as if Whiteread inverted the emphatic demand for commemoration by giving viewers both more and less than they bargained for. The same programmatic "turning out" of the library presents us with books whose covers are illegible because what faces us is not the familiar spines, but mute, closely packed pages.¹²³ The frequent confusion in the literature between inverted books and negative casting speaks to the subtle aggression in this gesture—an aggression which maintains respectful decorum toward

¹¹⁹ Locals refer to the project as the nameless library (*die namenlose Bibliothek*). For James E. Young, the library represents "the literal space between the book and us" while alluding to the "people of the book." James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 107-113.

¹²⁰ Harald Szeemann, "The Quiet and Powerful Sculptural Presence of Inverted Everyday Volumes as Sculpture and Memorial," in Gehrman, 110.

¹²¹ In contrast, Whiteread's *Untitled (Paperbacks)*, 1997 is the negative cast of a library interior (MOMA, New York).

¹²² Whiteread's negative casting process in *House* (1993) is linked to labor and working-class memory in Charity Scribner, *Requiem for Communism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 89-109. Cf. Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 95-97.

¹²³ Young reads it wrongly as "the positive cast of the space around books in an anonymous library" (*At Memory's Edge*, 107), and an "outer surface... consist[ing] entirely of the roughly textured negative space next to the edges of book leaves," 108.

the subject of remembrance. We can formulate the subtle shock to the spectator by recalling a neoclassical precursor: in Syon House in Middlesex, refurbished in the eighteenth century by British architect Robert Adam, one of the doors leading out of the library consisted of mimic volumes, inscribed with the titles of lost works from antiquity. [Fig. 2.56]¹²⁴ The performative call to touch is similar, even though the history of the “lost books” is quite different—one may not be able to page through these volumes, but one could at least read their covers. In Whiteread’s case, curiosity is not aroused, or satisfied, by the enumeration of a lost canon. That we cannot read these books, the monument tells us, is as much a consequence of catastrophic history as of Whiteread’s meditative design.

EXPORT’s and Whiteread’s proposals both rethought classical monumental forms. Whiteread alluded to the classical forms more openly (inviting misreading), but subtly dismantled their authority by not letting them function as a classical monument. One might say that Whiteread disputes the deep presupposition of the monument as a document requiring a reader. In this way, the historical metaphor of the document has become self-conscious in her work. Whiteread has *frozen* the document; it is rendered illegible in concrete. Yet this is an extreme form of the museal drive to *fix* and memorialize the performative, to conserve it for future readers. The visitor wishing to experience a historical fact, learn a moral, receive an explanation, take comfort that official recognition has been elicited, is thrown back by the mute concreteness of the object. Whiteread plays on the “silence” of the traditional monument and makes it the synonym of that which cannot be explained. This refusal to integrate the specific (local) history (apart from the engraved names of the concentration camps—a concession by Whiteread rather than her own

¹²⁴ See Vicky Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique: Neoclassicism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 197. The false bookshelf is an elaborate joke on bookishness: it opens onto the garden.

objective) can lead to a misreading of the memorial as apolitical. Perhaps this is why EXPORT's proposal failed: she exposed the visitor to history *and* to a general public, an act very forceful in its ambition to overcome the silence that had ruled Austria for so many decades. But of course, Whiteread is not an easily consumed commemorative project either. Thirty-five years—a long generation—after Helmut Qualtinger first performed *Herr Karl*, causing outrage by not being able to keep apart the official story and his own 'personal' memories, Whiteread does not offer any redemption. In the anxious solicitation of dialogue in the public discourse of the early twenty-first century, the cube performs a most austere act of mourning. It is conceivable that with the inevitable change of discourse, Whiteread's library might become the elegant neoclassical crypt it resembles.

Chapter 3: Germany I: Redemptive Myth and Ritual Performance

The memorial on Steinplatz in Charlottenburg, a central location in West Berlin, is both a sculpture and a relic: erected in 1953, the mostly white limestone blocks form a monolith abstaining from figuration. [Fig. 3.1] A dedication in golden letters on a dark stone reads: “Den Opfern des Nationalsozialismus” (to the victims of National Socialism), and the dates “1933-1945,” with a triangle, the sign worn by concentration camp prisoners, and above it the hardly decipherable letters “KZ” (concentration camp). This is the first memorial dedicated to the Jews killed under National Socialism in West Berlin, but this putative purpose is at first hard to detect, since it rests in the material. The stone blocks are reclaimed from the nearby synagogue in Fasanenstrasse, which was partially burned down in 1938 and further damaged during the war. The last remains of the ruin were ultimately cleared as late as 1956/57, after the private association *Bund der Verfolgten des Nationalsozialismus* had reclaimed some stones for the memorial.¹ We might wonder if the difficulty encountered by the Charlottenburg visitor in unearthing this information is of particular significance.² The uncertainty over the political meaning of the memorial increases once we realize that it faces a counterpart erected on the same square two years earlier: a memorial to the victims of

¹ The memorial was initiated by the *Bund der Verfolgten des Naziregimes* (Association of the Persecuted of the Nazi Regime), which was founded in 1946. The association’s magazine *Die Mahnung* (Admonition) is published monthly. The memorial landscape in both parts of Berlin is discussed by Eberhard Elfert, “Denkmalspraxis in Ost- und West-Berlin,” in *Erhalten, Zerstören, Verändern? Denkmäler der DDR in Ost-Berlin. Eine dokumentarische Ausstellung* (Berlin: Cat. Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1990), 23. The idea of the ruin as monument was also used in the GDR, most notably in the ruins of the baroque Frauenkirche in Dresden used as monument against war. The church had burnt down in February 1945 after devastating bombing by the allies, and was re-erected in 1995-2005. In the center of West Berlin, the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, a historicist building (erected 1891-95) bombed in 1943, served a similar purpose. See Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis* (Munich: Beck, 2007), 119.

² In his article on the problem of “generality” of the monument dedications and in particular in respect to the planned *Monument to the Murdered Jews in Berlin*, Eberhard Jäckel mentions the Steinplatz monument as a negative example of a “general,” “vegetating” dedication. “An alle und jeden erinnern?” *Die Zeit* (April 7, 1989), reprinted in Michael Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte. Eine Kontroverse* (Cologne: Dumont, 1999), 58.

Stalinism, initiated by the private *Vereinigung der Opfer des Stalinismus* (Association of the Victims of Stalinism), founded in 1950.³ [Fig. 3.2]

The competitive equation of Communist and National Socialist terror captures the West German attitude at the beginning of the 1950s precisely. Both memorials are simple; the anti-Stalinist one is in fact only a memorial stone, while the memorial to the victims of National Socialism consists of different layers of stones that amount to a visually more prominent abstract sculpture. Both resemble grave stones. The formal abstractions point towards the anxiety in *representing* the recent terrors of history, in particular the Holocaust, if not a complete breakdown of representation as such, comparable to Adorno's announcement from 1951 that "writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric."⁴ Yet if representation refused the past, it is more peculiar how quickly Cold War politics took hold of the process of making sense of the Holocaust (and we might remember here that Stalin was still in power in 1953). In West Germany, the commemoration of the victims of National Socialism served as warning against Communism, almost as if they were two sides of the same coin. What surfaces here, maybe subconsciously, will become the core argument of the German *Historikerstreit* (Historian's Dispute) in the 1980s, when historian Ernst Nolte

³ Elfert, "Denkmalspraxis in Ost- und West-Berlin," 23. The Anti-Stalinist monument served as the end-point of a symbolic march led by Willy Brandt to protest the suppression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956. See Dominik Geppert, *The Postwar Challenge: Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press / Studies of the German Historical Institute, London, 2003), 358.

⁴ The whole sentence reads as follows: "Kulturkritik findet sich der letzten Stufe der Dialektik von Kultur und Barbarei gegenüber: nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frisst auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben." The article was written in 1949 and first published in 1951. Theodor W. Adorno: *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1963), 26. As the abbreviated half-sentence is a simplification of the main idea, Adorno later clarified the case: "Der Satz, nach Auschwitz lasse kein Gedicht mehr sich schreiben, gilt nicht blank, gewiß aber, daß danach, weil es möglich war und bis ins Unabsehbare möglich bleibt, keine heitere Kunst mehr vorgestellt werden kann." ["...no cheerful art can be imagined anymore..."] *Noten zur Literatur IV*, vol.11 of *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 603. Of course, during the late 1940s and '50s there was much representation of the Holocaust, foremost the educational films shot by the Allies at the liberation of the camps, which German citizens were forced to watch in cinemas, as well as other means of distributing the images of the camps through reproductive media as part of "re-education," as the Americans called it.

denied the Holocaust's particularity in comparison to the Gulag, inciting a heated debate that was played out in German newspapers, public fora, and political circles in the following years.⁵ This particular view of the past set up a consistent attitude towards Stalinism from the Western perspective, with Fascism as its silent historical counterpart, abstracted from the personal experience of guilt. The two memorials on Steinplatz stand for the attitude of the time, in which the evils of the past were overshadowed by the ones still present. In contrast, in the immediate aftermath of the war, the question of individual responsibility had still been very concretely addressed as the starting point for political and moral emancipation from Nazi crimes proposed by philosopher Karl Jaspers.

Silence and Avowal: Jasper's Guilt Question and Beuys's Auschwitz Proposal

Jaspers raised the issue of personal responsibility through the insistence that without personal introspection, democracy—with the individual as its political unit—would not be able to take hold in Germany. Jaspers's 1946 book *Die Schuldfrage* (literally: The Guilt Question), carefully distinguished between criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical guilt, all of which he attributed to German citizens, arguing for individual responsibility beyond the legal proceedings addressing "criminal" guilt.⁶ For all his efforts, which were extended in his editorship of the journal *Die Wandlung* (*The Change*), the split of Germany into East and West in May 1949 offered a welcomed excuse for both of the country's governments (however different their political strategies) to push the Holocaust as formative moment in

⁵ Ernst Nolte "Die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 6, 1986), in which the noted historian of Fascism suggested that Auschwitz was ultimately Hitler's reaction to the communist terror in Russia. Nolte's main opponent became Jürgen Habermas, who demanded that the younger generation of Germans take responsibility for their parents' actions. I discuss the *Historikerstreit* in more detail in Chapter Four.

⁶ Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt* [*Die Schuldfrage*], translated by E.B. Ashton (New York, Dial Press, 1947 [1946]).

German history out of public discussion. The focus became capitalism or communist totalitarianism. The governments' dealing with the recent past thus split off from the problem Jaspers bequeathed to each citizen of Germany to work through individually. This personal stratum of historical consciousness would not disappear, though. Rather, it surfaced unofficially.

As I will argue in this chapter, the postwar avant-garde sought out historical consciousness through art forms at the border between personal mourning and public commemoration. Body and monument would become the two poles between which these artistic strategies were tested. They would come together in attempts to show the tension between body and monument, or in monuments that involved the body in a performance. This chapter focuses on the first three decades after the war. Often, the art works discussed work through history from an individual point of view. The artist (or his work) stands in for this personal endeavor, often driven by personal discomfort; the question is whether the resulting works have any public political effect. When history is directly addressed, as in some works by Joseph Beuys, it is usually also percolated with personal symbolism. Eventually, in the long German search for adequate commemoration of the past, the performative will come in as an important factor: in the best cases as a complex strategy to build responsibility, in others as a simple way to submit the body to unease as suggestive of the horrors of the past. There is a significant shift in the attitude towards commemoration during the 1980s, with local and state governments becoming more and more interested in commemorative projects, which I will address in Chapter Four.

As my introduction indicates, Jochen Gerz plays a crucial role in the development of a new strategy of commemorating Fascism that is based on making visible exactly this

commitment to remember. In his work since the 1980s, he aims at building social consensus to this task. The issues he had to work through before arriving at his most famous “anti-monuments,” as he called them, will be discussed in this chapter, and his later work in the following one. All my examples have to be evaluated against the background of an ongoing political debate and the question Germany had to face: how to commemorate and to what end; how long this process should last, who should commission such works, and who should execute them. We will see that these strategies are closely connected to the political discussions of the past. They will never illustrate this discussion, but must be seen as parallel strands of postwar German identity built on the disasters of Fascism and the Holocaust.

In the *Bundesrepublik* (West Germany) in general, anti-communist policies mingled with the view into the recent past: with the Second World War as the political and historical caesura of a new German political landscape, “Auschwitz” (until the 1980s the synonym for the Holocaust in German-speaking countries) did not feature as a concrete historical event but rather was mythified as the “end” of civilization.⁷ This was accompanied by the call for a “closing line” (*Schlussstrich*) across the political spectrum (meaning an amnesty for former National Socialists) and a resistance against imputing any kind of “collective guilt” to the German people, as soon as the allies left the country in 1949.⁸ Aleida Assmann described the

⁷ Even Theodor Adorno’s essay, “Was bedeutet Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit”? (1959), in *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), 1970 quickly shifts attention to the “system” responsible for the Holocaust. For the terminology, see Norbert Frei: “Auschwitz und Holocaust. Begriff und Historiographie.” In: Hanno Loewy (ed.), *Holocaust: Die Grenzen des Verstehens. Eine Debatte über die Besetzung der Geschichte* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992), 101-109.

⁸ Norbert Frei, “From Policy to Memory: How the Federal Republic of Germany Dealt with the Nazi Legacy,” in Borejsza / Ziemer (eds.), *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe*, 2006, 483. Frei distinguishes several phases of denazification, and describes the early 1950s as a time of “minimization, denial, and misrepresentation of guilt played out in order to attain freedom for even the most hardened of those criminals.” *ibid.*, 484. The other phases according to Frei are, “political purge (1945-49) ... *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (resolving of the past, 1960s and ‘70s) ... *Vergangenheitsbewahrung* (maintenance of the past since the 1980s).” *Ibid.*, 490. Frei doubts that the refutation of collective guilt was in fact based on any real accusations. Rather, he argues, the theory of collective guilt was a preventive invention of the Germans to shake off moral responsibility. Norbert Frei, “Die Kollektivschuldthese in der Nachkriegszeit,” *Rechtshistorisches Journal*, 16

1950s in Western Germany as a “societal pragmatic of silence,” within which a “limit of communication” privatized dealings with the past, not in the sense of Jasperian self-examination, but as taboo.⁹ In East Germany, communist political opposition to National Socialism became the formative myth of the new State, which would culminate in the cynical naming of the Berlin Wall as “antifascist barrier” by the East German government. East German commemorative sculpture revels in the celebration of resistance fighters, affirmatively stressing the role of the Red Army in freeing the country in 1945.¹⁰ Persecution and resistance were closely aligned in the GDR, and imagination often merged them in the official commemorative monuments. The individual citizen of the GDR—no matter what his alliances were or had been—could push away the uncomfortable issue of guilt by public rituals, such as marching in the (mandatory) anti-fascist parades organized by the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party of Germany). Jewish victims had no place in this narrative of class war that declared the West German government to be the continuation of Hitler’s system.¹¹

(1997), 621-634. See also Eric Voegelin on the “cliché of collective guilt,” in the famous lectures on National Socialism given in 1964 at the Munich University, published under the title *Hitler and the Germans*, vol. 31 of *The Collective Works of Eric Voegelin* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 75-78.

⁹ “...wieweich einer gesellschaftlichen Pragmatik des Schweigens, die—von Ausnahmen abgesehen—mit Werten wie Distanz, Takt oder Tabu den Rückzug aus der Öffentlichkeit privilegierte und die Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit zur Privatsache herabstufte.” [my translation]. Aleida Assmann, “Der blinde Fleck der deutschen Erinnerungsgeschichte,” in Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit—Geschichtsversessenheit* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 112. Assmann describes this turn as the return to a “culture of shame” (Schamkultur), which the individual would mask, instead of a culture in which blame and liability force the individual to work through his or her own responsibility.

¹⁰ See Fritz Jacobi, “Trauer als Widerspruch. Leidmetaphern der Kunst in der DDR.” In Eugen Blume, Roland März, *Kunst in der DDR. Eine Retrospektive der Nationalgalerie* (Berlin: G + H, 2003), 64f. An early cenotaph to the Soviets is the enormous complex in Treptow Park in East Berlin, planned by a Soviet “collective” and opened in 1949. See “Sowjetische Ehrenmäler,” in *Erhalten, Zerstören, Verändern*, 1990, 67f.

¹¹ The handling of the Holocaust and the problematic call for the Jews to jettison their Jewish identity as “precondition for a total emancipation, but also integration of the Jews in Germany” (233) in the GDR is discussed in Olaf Groehler, “Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust in der DDR,” in Rolf Steininger (ed.), *Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust. Europa—USA—Israel* (Vienna / Cologne / Weimar: Böhlau, 1994), 233-245. See also “Stätten der Verfolgung, Vernichtung und des antifaschistischen Widerstandes,” in *Erhalten, Zerstören, Verändern?*, 51-60.

In the midst of these various strategies to deal with the past, ranging from privatization to efforts by theorists to understand the human condition and callow political efforts to “move ahead,” survivors of Auschwitz launched an open, international competition for a memorial in Auschwitz-Birkenau (Polish: Brzezinka) in 1957.¹² The jury was headed by British sculptor Henry Moore. 426 entries were received, with German artists forming the second-largest group of contributors.¹³ Seven artists (for three projects) from Italy and Poland were asked to adapt their proposals for a second stage, together with the only German on the shortlist, Helmut Wolff, who had submitted an abstract design.¹⁴ Ultimately, none of the single projects was chosen, and in 1967, a collaborative project of several teams from the second stage was unveiled as a compromise between survivors, politics, and the artistic jury.¹⁵ [Fig. 3.3]

Mostly unnoticed at the time, German artist Joseph Beuys, born in 1921, later the most controversial artist to incorporate his own experience under Fascism into a multi-faceted art, was one of the artists to submit a proposal in March 1958.¹⁶ Beuys’s entry consisted of three gates made of concrete—asymmetrical quadrangles on stilts—positioned on the train tracks leading to the crematorium. [Fig. 3.4, 3.5] Their height should have been

¹² Auschwitz-Birkenau, or Auschwitz II, was the main extermination camp of the Auschwitz complex, which consisted of three camps (I, II, and III).

¹³ See Katarzyna Murwaska-Muthesius, “Oskar Hansen, Henry Moore, and the Auschwitz Memorial Debates in Poland, 1958-59,” in Charlotte Benton, *Figuration/Abstraction. Strategies for Public Sculpture, 1945-68* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), 196; James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 133ff; Young, “Die Zeitgeschichte der Gedenkstätten und Denkmäler des Holocausts,” in Young (ed.), *Mahnmale des Holocausts* (Munich: Prestel, 1994), 25-26.

¹⁴ According to the British *Observer*, the competition was anonymous. Constantine Fitzgibbon, “A Memorial to Mass Murder,” *Observer* (May 4, 1958), 13, and Jochen Spielmann, “Auschwitz is debated in Oswiecim,” in James E. Young (ed.) *The Art of Memory. Holocaust Memorials in History*, (Munich: Prestel, 1994), 169-173.

¹⁵ According to Murwaska-Muthesius, the jury favored the design by a young Polish artist, Oskar Hansen, but the representatives of the survivors did not accept his design. Ultimately, a design that combined entries by Pietro Cascella, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Julian Palka, Giorgia Simoncini, Tomaso Valle, and Maurizio Vitale was concocted.

¹⁶ Franz Joseph van der Grinten, “Beuys Beitrag zum Wettbewerb für das Auschwitzmonument,” in Inge Lorenz (ed.), *Joseph Beuys Symposium Kranenburg* (Basel: Weise, 1995), 199.

five, nine, and twenty-five meters respectively, the distance between them 375 meters each, as if to play against perspective recession. The gates were to lead the visitor to a sculpture resembling a silver bowl at the center of the concentration camp.¹⁷ In the 1979 exhibition catalogue that introduced Beuys to a wider American audience, Caroline Tisdall wrote that in the Auschwitz memorial Beuys emphasized the “way the victims were brought to Auschwitz on the railway line which entered the gates,” and described the gates as “‘signal’ sculptures,” without mentioning the silver bowl, which Beuys himself had explained as “chandelier, plate, crystal, flower, monstrance. The morning sun should reflect in it in a manifold way, because of the gloss of the polished silver.”¹⁸ The list of possible symbolisms uneasily comes to rest on the Christian reference to a monstrance (the container holding the Eucharistic Bread, i.e. Christ’s body), and the inherent connotation of a possibly natural circle of death and redemption. This religious undertone, wisely played down by Tisdall, comes across as mismatched for the occasion from today’s point of view. And yet, the argument of redemption was an inherent part of period rhetoric—perhaps inevitably so.

Karl Jaspers, who tirelessly advocated the examination of one’s own guilt and the need for individual change, referred to God as the ultimate institution that would judge this individual endeavor.¹⁹ He distinguished between accusations from outside (for actual crimes committed) and accusations from inside that refer to the guilt of non-resistance to the rise of

¹⁷ See Mario Kramer, “Joseph Beuys: ‘Auschwitz Demonstration’ 1956-1964,” in Eckhart Gillen (ed.) *Deutschlandbilder. Kunst aus einem geteilten Land* (Cologne: DuMont, 1997), 293-307, and van der Grinten, “Beuys Beitrag zum Wettbewerb für das Auschwitzmonument,” 199-203. Kramer mentions sketches, wood models, and reworked photographs as preparatory work for the competition. Grinten describes the bowl as approximately 6,50 meters wide and 2,30 meters high, positioned on the floor without base, and similar to Beuys’s earlier sculpture of a crystal. Grinten, 199-201.

¹⁸ Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (Cat. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1979), 21. Beuys, quoted in Kramer, 294 [my translation]. Kramer also points out that the various sketches and objects related to the Auschwitz memorial appear in different contexts in Beuys’s oeuvre. Kramer, 295.

¹⁹ “Instanz ist Gott allein.” Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Frage* (Zürich: Artemis, 1947 [1946]), 11. He is speaking of metaphysical guilt, insisting that the Germans cannot forgive themselves.

Fascism. This guilt was to be overcome through “purification” [*Reinigung*] of the individual. While crimes were to be punished and states could be held liable for political guilt, moral guilt required penitence. It is precisely the feeling of guiltiness that can lead both to individual and political renewal, according to Jaspers.²⁰ In the middle of the “silence” of the 1950s, any proposal by a German artist has to be considered an engaged act, and yet, there is a crucial difference between Jaspers’ introspective call in book form, and Beuys’s gesture to be presented as public art in Auschwitz. Jaspers explicitly addresses the German individual at the moment of reconstruction. Beuys addresses all visitors to Auschwitz, and presents them with a proposal in which Beuys’s later interest in ritual is already prefigured by the “Catholic” symbolism.²¹ Most evident is Beuys’s evasive abstraction of the concrete historical context of Auschwitz into a drama reminiscent of the Stations of the Cross. This evasiveness (if not the particularly Catholic component) is indicative of a general attitude in Germany during that time, in which the transcendence of Fascism in a debate about the ordinary condition of humankind could be seen across the political spectrum.²² The serene neutrality of Beuys’s proposal, its silence, we might say, turns Auschwitz into a cathedral, and paradoxically (surely unintentionally) also points to Catholic complicity in the Holocaust. The work speaks of premature transcendence, as if problems could be solved which had not even been clearly posed.

²⁰ “Die metaphysische Schuld hat zur Folge eine *Verwandlung des menschlichen Selbstbewußtseins vor Gott*. Der Stolz wird gebrochen. Diese Selbstverwandlung durch inneres Handeln kann zu einem neuen Ursprung aktiven Lebens führen, aber verbunden mit einem untilgbaren Schuldbewußtsein in der Demut, die sich vor Gott bescheidet und alles Tun in eine Atmosphäre taucht, in der Übermut unmöglich wird.” Jaspers [1946], 15, his italics.

²¹ Beuys was brought up a Roman Catholic, and went to a Catholic primary school from 1927 to 1932.

²² Of course, transcendence is also a feature specific to Beuys’s work. That Beuys’s project of mourning has to be connected to the sublime is Gene Ray’s argument in his essay “Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime,” in Gene Ray (ed.): *Joseph Beuys. Mapping the Legacy* (New York: D.A.P., 2001).

The dilemma inherent in Beuys's design, namely the presentation of a public catharsis to a diffuse audience—the survivors, Poles, Germans—is not unique to the late 1950s. In Beuys's case there was no way to address this mixed audience through a religious symbol, however suggestive. I will show that the way to commemoration, which we can define in the context of this German history as an act of public commitment, the recognition of responsibility for the past, and the honoring of the victims of Fascism, was long and slow. Commemorative art touches upon political and aesthetic questions, and is (as long as the genre has existed), always connected to political intentions in the present. It is the “acting by saying something” that we have come to identify with the performative, which is at the heart of commemoration if we want to understand it as a democratic practice. Commemoration is always an act, or a call to remembrance, a public gesture asserted, not argued. It is not memory as a remembering (however much influenced by social circumstances), which can be a private act. Rather, it is this public nature of commemoration that makes it politically relevant. Commemoration *shows* that you remember to a broader public. We will see that the distinction between commemoration and personal catharsis is often vague, in particular in the decades after the war, when a language to commemorate had yet to be found. This was even harder, given the overall commitment of society to *not* remember the past, in part because the “conventional” rituals to do this did not exist.

The Monument and the German Public Sphere

In the 1960s and '70s, scandals about former Nazis in official positions in the West, and the trial of Eichmann in Jerusalem, facilitated a slow process of rapprochement by the German

generation formed in the decades after the war.²³ Too many corporations that had profited from National Socialism were never held accountable for slave labor and war profiteering; too many involved individuals had managed to obtain a “Persilschein” or “clean bill” (the reference is to the popular detergent brand) testifying to their innocence. For the population at large, the “Auschwitz Trials” held in Frankfurt from 1963-65 against concentration camp officials were particularly disturbing, as they made public for the first time in great detail the procedures of the Holocaust.²⁴

At the same time, the new generation of Germans born during or after the war started to question the relationship of the individual to a fatalistic notion of political authority which had been their parents understanding of the past (and their alibi). This new approach had affinities to the countercultural discourse of the 1960s. In the search for less hierarchical social structures, the aesthetics of the monument appeared mostly as the negative marker of an “old” authoritative system that should be dismantled, not surprisingly, given the obsession with monumentality in Fascist architecture (and the cynical instrumentalization of official commemoration in the East-West conflict). Yet the revolutionary discourse of public space could not quite dispense with the monument. In Jürgen Habermas’s influential historical account of the development of a liberal bourgeois public realm, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), architecture is not discussed in itself, but enters the analysis through a significant detail: Habermas stresses the development of a democratic print culture in the eighteenth century in the space of London coffee houses. In order to enable an ongoing

²³ A significant moment of political acknowledgment is Willy Brandt’s prostration at the memorial of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1970. See Christoph Schneider, *Der Warschauer Kniefall. Ritual, Ereignis und Erzählung* (Konstanz: UVK-Verlag, 2006). For a broad perspective on artists dealing with the Holocaust and Fascism, see Gillen (ed.) *Deutschlandbilder...*, 1997.

²⁴ The Auschwitz trials (sometimes called “Second Auschwitz trials”) prosecuted officials and commanders at the Auschwitz concentration camp. See Devin O. Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963–65: Genocide, History and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

discussion through anonymous contributions, one particular coffee house mounted “a lion’s head ... through whose jaws the reader threw his letter.” Excerpts were then published under the title “Roaring of the Lion.”²⁵ Habermas points out the dialogue form and “proximity to the spoken word” in this process—to which I would add that the speech acts *already* take on the coloring of the architectural monument that invites them, being the irate pronouncements of the ‘roaring lion.’ In this performative discussion between equal partners enabled through an architectural element (and decorative one at that), the performative monument surfaces *avant la lettre*.²⁶ Is it already proposed as a desideratum for contemporary monuments?

The expansion and radicalization of Habermas’s project into contemporary politics by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience* (1972), devotes an entire appendix to “The public sphere of monuments. Public sphere and historical consciousness.”²⁷ The motive for this interest in the actual space of commemoration can be found in Negt and Kluge’s investment in experience, announced in the title of their book. In a departure from Habermas’s work, Negt and Kluge call for considerations of class structure (gender is not discussed) that as *experience* forms social groups within their operational spaces in public.²⁸ To understand Negt and Kluge’s interest in the monument, we can begin from their assertion

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas’s *Habilitationsschrift*, called *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (published in 1962 in Neuwied by Luchterhand), analyzes the emergence of a (bourgeois) public connected to the development of capitalist society based on free market. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Oskar Negt (Habermas’s former research assistant in Frankfurt), and Alexander Kluge’s collaborative publication *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung. Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972, English: *Public Sphere and Experience*) stressed the different experience of proletarians. Uwe Hohendahl, in an article concerned with the changes of the public sphere after 1989, points out that the debate in Germany after the war was broader than just Habermas contra Negt/Kluge. Uwe Hohendahl, “Recasting the Public Sphere.” *October*, 73 (Summer 1995), 27-54.

²⁸ The German word for ‘experience’ used by Negt and Kluge, “Erfahrung,” has a long philosophical lineage in Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. But in understanding its resonance in 1970s revolutionary discourse, another tradition should be stressed: the notion of *lived* experience coming out of British empiricism, which was decisively modified in a subjective direction by the psychology of Ernst Mach, William James, and Henri Bergson, and lived on in the counterculture in such projects as ‘expanded consciousness’ and ‘expanded media.’

that experience binds the individual to the social matrix and even to the historical structure of society.²⁹ An obvious means of mediating individual political experience is the monument.

The traditional monument of class society had nothing to offer to the democratic present:

Essentially, the monuments we can find in the Federal Republic are meant as tribute for the dead, for heroic acts, but most of all, they are depictions of authoritarian personalities [*Herrscherpersönlichkeiten*] or bearers of spiritual or material power, who represent the past on horses, as whole figures or as heads. If this were history, no present would be able to gain experiences from it... The monument embodies an authoritative claim of a man or a thing to be remembered.³⁰

Negt and Kluge, unlike their Frankfurt School predecessors, merged utopian Marxism with a belief in the revolutionary potential of mass media—Kluge was a filmmaker committed to changing the role of film and television production in the Federal Republic. Monuments were synonymous with coercive and class-divided space, imposing history authoritatively, as argued in one of Alexander Kluge's first short films—a documentary on National Socialist Architecture entitled *Brutality in Stone*.³¹ Significantly, in formulating the alternative, no contemporary example seemed to hand, for Negt and Kluge had to reach back to the golden age of Russian Constructivism. Their goal, *proletarische Denkmalsöffentlichkeit* (proletarian

²⁹ The experience Negt and Kluge have in mind is a historical category allowing them to represent the proletariat and bourgeoisie as lived positions, rather than relying on received class stereotypes. This appealed to a New Left and student movement unsatisfied with the Stalinist idealization of the proletariat.

³⁰ "Im Wesentlichen gelten die Denkmäler, die wir in der Bundesrepublik vorfinden, der Totenehrung, der Darstellung von Heldentaten, vor allem aber sind sie Darstellungen von Herrscherpersönlichkeiten oder Trägern geistiger oder materieller Macht, die zu Pferde, in ganzer Gestalt oder als Köpfe die Vergangenheit repräsentieren. Wäre dies die Geschichte, so könnte keine Gegenwart aus ihr Erfahrungen ziehen... Das Denkmal verkörpert einen autoritativen Anspruch eines Mannes oder einer Sache, erinnert zu werden." Negt/Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 448 [my translation].

³¹ *Brutalität in Stein* (1959), together with Peter Schamoni. In 1987, Kluge founded the DCTP (Development Company for Television Program) that produces various news programs for German private TV channels. French critical theory had its own ambivalences towards the monument at the time: for Henri Lefebvre, the monument serves as a "collective mirror." Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [French 1974] (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 220. Nietzsche already uses the term "monumental history" as inspiring but necessarily partial history of great heroes in *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, 1874). Nietzsche distinguishes between the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical history. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006), (12). The often quoted sentence "away with the monuments," is also taken from this book (13). The Tel Quel group considered monumental history the history of fragmented strata, disconnected remains, which are not linear, and use it in a positive way. Cf. *Tel Quel*, no. 52 (1972), 16.

public sphere of the monument), is represented by Vladimir Tatlin's model for the unbuilt *Monument to the Third International*.³² [Fig. 3.6]

Tatlin's project, as Negt and Kluge understood it, embodied "an important perspective of the sensual implementation of historical consciousness."³³ The tower should have housed the legislative and the propaganda ministry inside a swiveling metal structure vaguely resembling a torqued Eiffel Tower. Negt and Kluge saw in mass media a potentially democratic institution—and in a way Tatlin's tower must be considered a new media monument. And yet, a mass monument with the ministry of propaganda above the "people" hardly gives up the "authoritative claim to be remembered." Negt and Kluge rightly insisted that a monument be anchored in the present, and engage its audience sensually. However, making "experience" the master category of commemoration is a risky proposition: if one could, with some charity, imagine a homogenous proletarian public celebrating itself through Tatlin's monument, this model of a ritual is clearly *not* appropriate in the case of Holocaust commemoration, as we have seen already in Beuys's Auschwitz proposal. While Negt and Kluge called for reinventing the mass monument, artists asked individual audience members for acts of commemoration.

³² The Third International or Communist International was founded in Moscow in 1919 with the goal of overthrowing all bourgeois regimes. On Russian Constructivism, see Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and Maria Gough, *The Artist as Producer. Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Los Angeles / Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). On Tatlin, John Millner, *Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Larissa A. Zhadova (ed.) *Tatlin* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988); Jürgen Harten (ed.), *Tatlin: Leben, Werk, Wirkung. Ein internationales Symposium* (Cologne: Dumont, 1993); Margit Rowell, "Vladimir Tatlin. Form/Faktura," *October* 7 (winter 1978), 83-108, who sees the monument as a utopian socialist culmination of a formalist project initiated in the wartime reliefs. Negt and Kluge quote mainly from René Fülöp-Miller, *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus*, Vienna, 1926, which was republished under the title *Fantasie und Alltag in Sowjet-Russland. Ein Augenzeugenbericht* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1978). Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky is often quoted as having considered Tatlin's project as the first monument "without beards."

³³ "Er zeigt aber eine wichtige Perspektive der sinnlichen Umsetzung von geschichtlichen Bewusstsein." Negt/Kluge, 452.

Posing as the Monument: Kiefer's *Occupations*

In strict contrast both to the tendency to downplay the individual's involvement in Fascism or relativizing commemorative efforts as abstract comparisons of totalitarian systems, German artist Anselm Kiefer, who would become famous for his massive allegories of German history and the Holocaust, acted out the conflict of experience and the monument in several of his early works, such as the book *Heroische Sinnbilder* (*Heroic Symbols*, 1969), *Für Genet* (1969), and *Montpellier* (1969), carried out in watercolors, photographs, and collages.³⁴ [Fig. 3.7] Some of the photographs from these books were reused for his project *Besetzungen* (*Occupations*), which first reached a small audience in 1969, when Kiefer tried to submit it as his final exam project at the art academy in Karlsruhe.³⁵ In 1975, Kiefer published *Occupations* in the German art journal *Interfunktionen*.³⁶ The photographs showed Kiefer in Roman ruins, public squares, his own studio, and romantic seascapes with his hand lifted in a Nazi salute, wearing knee-breeches and sometimes boots vaguely resembling a Nazi uniform. His disorderly hair and the untidy clothes stand in clear contrast to the martial gesture and upright posture. Of course, experience here has nothing to do with Negt and Kluge's ideal proletarian experience, but was played out as a compulsive comment on the

³⁴ *Heroic Symbols* included various techniques such as watercolor on paper, graphite, original and magazine photographs, postcards, and linen strips, mounted on cardboard. Matthew Biro, *Anselm Kiefer and the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25-31. See also Anselm Kiefer, *Heroische Sinnbilder* (Munich: Schirmer / Mosel, 2008). Another project at the time, *Für Genet* is on one hand a monument to the writer, connected to memory and mourning, and to Genet's confessions about the erotic appeal of the Fascist male in *Funeral Rites* (1953). On Genet, see Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism." In *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1972), 73-105, Pascale Gattet, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Jean Genet's Erotic Reconfiguration of the Occupation," *SubStance* 87: Special Issue on the Occupation, vol. 27 (no. 3/1998), 73-84, and Lionel Abel, *Important Nonsense* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1987), 171-8.

³⁵ Sabine Schütz, *Anselm Kiefer—Geschichte als Material. Arbeiten 1969-1983* (Cologne: Dumont, 1999), 122f. Götz Adriani (ed.) *Anselm Kiefer. Bücher 1969-1990* (Stuttgart: Cantz, 1990), 13. Supposedly most professors were outraged about a work they considered affirmative of Fascism.

³⁶ See Lisa Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz* (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56. Saltzman rightly argues that the *Occupations* marked "the beginning of an artistic career that would be defined by the repetitive negotiations of a historically compromised national identity." Saltzman, 1; see also 54f.

suppression of Fascism in German society. This project shares with Beuys (under whom Kiefer studied, among others) a seemingly romantic notion of the artist as heroic outcast pointing towards society's wounds, but, on a closer look, the two artists must be considered antithetical. Seventeen photographs were designed on twelve pages. The publication caused widespread indignation, and may have accelerated the demise of the journal altogether.³⁷

Kiefer himself had conceived the photographs under a textual rubric: "Anselm Kiefer.

Between summer and fall 1969, I occupied Switzerland, France and Italy. A couple of photos," as we can read on the first page of his *Occupations*.³⁸ [Fig. 3.8]

The German word *Besetzung* has three obvious meanings: military occupation, the Freudian *cathexis* (attachment), and theatrical casting (the occupation of a role). Kiefer left all possible references open to the viewer—while the military use of the term is at first sight the evident association, the desolation of the scenes (apart from two images, there are no other people in the photographs) hints at a psychic compulsiveness. Yet the clothing and the

³⁷ See Christine Mehring, "Continental Schrift: the Story of Interfunktionen," *Artforum* (May 2004). The article has no footnotes. According to Mehring, the source of her information was an interview with Benjamin Buchloh, former editor of *Interfunktionen*, in New York City, February 24, 2004, and a telephone interview with founding editor Friedrich Heubach on February 29, 2004. Email from Christine Mehring to the author (December 13, 2007). Buchloh confirmed at my request that Marcel Broodthaers, visited by Buchloh in the hospital, withdrew his offer to help the magazine with an edition of his work with the words "Who is this fascist, claiming to be an anti-fascist?" causing *Interfunktionen* to be discontinued soon after. Interview with the author, October 30, 2008. See also Saltzman, 58, and note 22. For the different reception given Anselm Kiefer's work in Germany and the United States, see Frank Trommler, "Germany's Past as an Artifact," *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 61, 4 (December 1989), 724-35, and of course Andreas Huyssen, "Anselm Kiefer: The Terror of History, the Temptation of Myth," *October* 48 (Spring 1989), 25-45. Kiefer is put in a broad but interesting comparison with filmic and literary products of the time by Eric L. Santner, "The Trouble with Hitler: Postwar German Aesthetics and the Legacy of Hitler," *New German Critique* 57 (fall 1992), 5-25.

³⁸ "Anselm Kiefer. Zwischen Sommer und Herbst 1969 habe ich die Schweiz, Frankreich und Italien besetzt. Ein paar Fotos." Inscription on the cover. The sites as published in *Interfunktionen* are: 1) ("no location"), 2, 3 studio of the artist, 4, Küßnacht, 5 Bellinzona, 6 Montpellier, 7,8 Arles, 9, 10 Sète, 11 Forum Romanum, 12 Paestum, 13, 14 Colosseum, 15 Pompeii, 16 Vesuvius, 17 Caprarola, 18 (no location). In fact, the relationship to (German) mass tourism might be more obvious than the one to specific maneuvers during World War II. The connection to tourism is brought forward by Schütz, 117; and Andrea Lauterwein, *Anselm Kiefer / Paul Celan. Myth, Mourning and Memory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 32. Lauterwein compares the *Occupations* with Charlie Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator*, 31, and also to Jochen Gerz's countermonuments of the 1980s (34). Sabine Schütz, who carefully tracked down the locations, points out that none of these places were occupied by Nazi Germany. Schütz, note 6, 148. See also Mark Rosenthal, *Anselm Kiefer* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1987), 14ff.

hair seem such a rough fit, that we are reminded of the distancing conventions of Brechtian theatre. The military term is obviously abrogated: while it serves as the initial pretext for the photographs, the subtler options (psychic and theatrical) are Kiefer's means of overcoming a flat interpretation of the piece as pure political reenactment.³⁹

Perhaps some of the ambiguity in Kiefer's gesture is resolved when we consider that Kiefer's performative interaction took place solely for the photograph, to be shown and published for a later audience. Photography here shows its potential of acting as quasi-legal document of the performative act and at the same time as perpetual re-enactment. In Kiefer's case, the performative action bore the possibility of real legal consequences, a trial for *Wiederbetätigung*, "re-activation," or literally "re-committing" the crime of using signs or symbols of "unconstitutional organizations," such as "flags, emblems, uniforms, rallying cries, salutations."⁴⁰ This danger was of course contingent upon the work's publication—which had a legal dimension—and thus the scandal it produced first at the art academy, then in the pages of *Interfunktionen*, and in later exhibitions of the work.⁴¹ For the performative needs a public in order to function, the speech act an auditor to complete its quasi-legal trajectory, which in fact could point towards a possible suppressed fascination of Fascism.

Andreas Huyssen phrased this aspect in the following way:

What if Kiefer, here too, intended to confront us with our own repressions of the fascist image-sphere? Perhaps his project was precisely to counter the by now often hollow litany about the fascist aesthetization of politics, to counter the merely rational explanations of fascist terror by recreating the aesthetic lure of fascism for the present and thus forcing us to confront the possibility that we ourselves are not immune to what we so rationally condemn and dismiss.⁴²

³⁹ Of course, the word "Besetzung" was widely used in the jargon of the time around the student's protests. Universities were "occupied," and students traveled to Paris to become part of "revolutionary" activities. This might be an ironic subtext of Kiefer traveling to "occupy" these countries.

⁴⁰ According to §86a of the German Penal Code (Deutsches Strafgesetzbuch), "Dissemination of Means of Propaganda of Unconstitutional Organizations."

⁴¹ See Adriani, 13f.

⁴² Huyssen, "The Terror of History...", 1989, 38-39.

The “lure” of Fascism does not simply lie in the possible reading of the staging as romantic. In fact, German Romanticism is implied already by the composition of the images: Kiefer, as small figure, in the midst of overwhelming monumental architecture or nature. It is openly quoted in the image of Kiefer on the beach in Sète [Fig. 3.9], and in particular one in which no location is given [3.10], which resembles both Caspar David Friedrich’s *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*, circa 1817, [3.11] and *Mondaufgang über dem Meer*, 1822.⁴³ Romanticism is here an amplification of Fascist pathos, but also a comic undercutting of Fascist mass politics through the ineffectual solitude of the romantic hero. The discomfort for the viewer lies rather in the way the performative interaction operates in the triangle: action—document—audience. It is the viewers’ position that is left open. The audience witnesses the forbidden gesture, with the photograph as “proof” of its occurrence. But the difficulty of identification begins just then. Because the audience is not represented in Kiefer’s photos, what we might call the ‘witness function’ of the audience is not explicitly anchored in a narrative. Is Kiefer saluting a *Führer*, who is somewhere outside the reach of the camera? Or does he impersonate the *Führer* himself? Is the camera lens, and thus the audience, the receiver of Kiefer’s greeting? It is we, the viewers of the photograph, who make the gesture functional. We imagine ourselves as *Führer*, receiving Kiefer’s obeisance, or as the audience for a *Führer* of our own, returning his gesture. The back view, which invites us to empathize with the gesture, and the front view, seemingly greeting us, force on the belated audience the witness function of the speech act: the Hitler salute occurs in the moment that we view it. This complicity is the real scandal of the piece, achieved less through Kiefer’s historical

⁴³ In Kiefer’s book *Jean Genet* on page 17, Caspar David Friedrich, Richard Wagner, Adolf Hitler, and others (Jean d’Arc, for example) are mentioned by name next to the photograph of Kiefer wearing a flowery hippie-dress in his studio. See Adriani, 108-09.

action, whether sincere or simulated, than through the publication of the action as a photograph.

In 1969, when Kiefer began the series, most Germans between thirty and forty could have recalled having performed the Hitler salute themselves as children in the Hitler Youth. If Beuys, with his Auschwitz proposal, dealt with the possibility of overcoming the Fascist past through sublime monumental ritual, Kiefer ironically stages the monumental ritual as a provocation to reenact. There is an intimate component to Kiefer's attitude, as if he were pointing out that the performative interaction did not take place in the real-time encounter between himself and the setting, but between the image and the individual members of a later, reading audience.⁴⁴ This becomes most apparent in the two photographs of Kiefer in his own studio [*Walking on Water*, Fig. 3.12], with the figure of the artist silhouetted against a window. Kiefer iconographically takes up the episode of Jesus walking on water (John, 6:16-21), and the suggestion of the *Führer* as redeemer. In an almost personal encounter between the document and the viewer, stripped of all geopolitical picturesque, it is the reading audience that keeps the gesture and its historical implications alive.

Kiefer does not seek catharsis, but lays bare the political dimension of the work at the moment in which the symbolic act slides into the historical. To assist this process, Kiefer the actor adopts the impassive attitude of a statue. Indeed, in some of the photographs he stages a direct confrontation between his body and existing monuments, particularly in *Montpellier*

⁴⁴ The photographer is unknown. Bazon Brock claims that Kiefer waited in the settings with raised arm "until bystanders noticed the gesture and captured it on camera," a hardly plausible sequence. "Besetzung und Bilderkrieg als affirmative Strategien - Anselm Kiefer," in Susanne Häni (ed.) *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk: europ. Utopien seit 1800* (Frankfurt am Main: Sauerländer, 1983) [my translation]. The text is reprinted on Brock's Website: http://www.bazonbrock.de/werke/werkansicht_text.php?wid=281&cid=769 [online document, accessed June 14, 2009].

[Fig. 3.13], which places Kiefer in front of an equestrian statue of Louis XIV.⁴⁵ In this opposition of the human figure and the monument, one issue comes to the forefront: the relationship of the individual's physical or moral actions to a historical past in the visual conjunction of Kiefer and the statue of the king.⁴⁶ The ironic attempt to “overpower” the historical setting by the virile gesture of the Hitler salute (which is at the same time a pathetic gesture of mimicry), pictorializes the power struggle of competing historical narratives. The similarity of the King's gesture implies that at bottom, political authority surfaces in invariant symbols of power. In this early work Kiefer sets aside the concept of mourning and performatively instantiates commemoration as a public act in a provocative undertaking of ‘activism’ that pushes the viewer to take a conscious stance towards the Nazi past.

Monument Language: Gerz's *EXIT* Project

In Kiefer we witness a first performative coming to terms with the German Fascist past through photographs. Performative documentation is also the strategy in the early work of Jochen Gerz, who, starting in the 1980s, would become famous for memorials that he defined as anti-monuments. In contrast to Kiefer, he does not himself perform, and stays away from personal myth (however ironical). In this sense, he will become part of a different trajectory of performative monuments playing towards a personal responsibility of the audience. If J.L. Austin had shown the social force of language, Gerz would harness the political force of language in his monument projects.

His first work dealing with Fascism, *EXIT—The Dachau Project*, set its sight on the bureaucratic language in the museum of the former concentration camp. *EXIT*, shown in

⁴⁵ Schütz, 121.

⁴⁶ Marina Abramović, on the other hand, *impersonates* an equestrian monument in her video *Hero* (2001), dedicated to her father, presenting herself on a white horse with a white flag in her hand. See Chapter Five.

Berlin in 1974, is an installation consisting of twenty desks with twenty chairs in untreated wood with a dim light bulb above each desk. [Fig. 3.14] In the middle of each desk a black portfolio was affixed for the visitors. Additionally, speakers faintly emitted the gasping of a running person and the noise of a type-writer. The portfolio contained black and white photographs taken by Gerz in the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site near Munich.⁴⁷ There is nothing for the visitor to do but to sit down and look through the portfolio. The photographs do not document the camp, but focus on the details of its new configuration as museum: the first image shows the sign “Museum” placed at the entrance. [Fig. 3.15] The “Gedenkstätten-Ordnung” (memorial regulations) can be seen in the next few pictures: “it is not permitted to,” and a list follows: “bring in dogs... litter...” and so on.

In the context of the museum’s purpose, the photographs strive to show an uneasy continuity of rules and organization of human behavior, “please do not write on the walls,” we read on a handwritten sign mounted on a bunk bed. Gerz shows bus schedules to and from Dachau main station, the “emergency exit” sign on a window, the fire alarm box on the wall, and the questionnaires given out to the visitors: “Do you find the documentation of this museum instructive?” In their presentation in the portfolio, these photographs alone show rich associations with the history of the concentration camp, converting the banality of a Dachau train station in the 1970s, a fire extinguisher, and the unimpressive museum regulations into sinister perpetuations of bureaucratic genocide. In order to underline this interest in bureaucracy, Gerz stamped and numbered each of the photographs, as if simulating an archival source. All bear the same archival number: “Exit—Materialien zum

⁴⁷ The Dachau concentration camp was opened in 1933. Of the approximately 200,000 prisoners held there until 1945, approximately 43,000 were murdered. The Museum Dachau was opened in 1965. See Ute Frevert, “KZ-Mahnmale und Gedenkstätten.” In Assmann/Frevert, 207. It became a private foundation in 2003.

Dachau Projekt, 1972/Dok. Nr. 1ff.”⁴⁸ The photographs seem unprofessional, and are sometimes imperfectly in focus, which shifts the center of attention from form to content. They become visual tools, marked as “evidence” through the stamp, which stands for yet another trace of bureaucratic action, this time attributed to Gerz’s own hand. Gerz thus identifies himself as part of the bureaucratic structure, pushing the viewer to draw the obvious conclusions.

In *EXIT*, Gerz, who began as a writer of concrete poetry before becoming a performance artist, seemed to hint at an almost unconscious eruption of language’s performative potential. The “situation” makes the performative, and Gerz’s provocative staging insisted that language had much to tell us about the continuity of behavioral and political structures, in this case, in the language of the museum and its fascist predecessors. What was new in *EXIT* was the use of photography to frame these historical continuities in language: this framing, which Gerz ostentatiously signed with his archival stamp, was represented by the artist as no less neutral, and threatening, than the impersonal commands of bureaucratic domination. The sound installation filling the room with the vague notion of exhaustion and distanced authority (gasping and typewriter), must almost be seen in contrast to the photographs: victim and perpetrator are evoked on the level of sensual experience.

Gerz had confronted canonical milieus of another kind early on, most explicitly in his action “Attention, Art Corrupts,” (*Attenzione, l’Arte Corrompe*, 1968, see Introduction).⁴⁹ He had also looked into the intersection of language and body, for example in *Schreiben mit der Hand* (*Writing by Hand*, 1973), in which he spelled the sentence, “these words are my flesh

⁴⁸ A facsimile of this portfolio was printed in 1998 in an edition of 300. Jochen Gerz, *EXIT* (Zurich: Howeg, 1998). An interesting commentary is Armin Zweite, “Jochen Gerz ‘Exit’—Materialien zum Dachau Projekt (1972/74),” In Gillen (ed.), *Deutschlandbilder...*, 442-444.

⁴⁹ James E. Young points to Gerz’s early work as performer in “Memory Against Itself,” and rightly connects the ephemerality of performance to Gerz’s later ephemeral monuments.

and blood” on the façade of a house with his bare fingers, until the fingertips started to leave blood traces. [Fig. 3.16] In the context of National Socialism, Gerz necessarily needed to become more didactic and less ironic than in *Attention, Art Corrupts*. But in both cases the photograph becomes the “objectifying” tool to produce performative documents.

EXIT is interesting in its refusal to represent the terror of the Holocaust, its flight to the meta-level of language, and in turning the past into an act of responsibility in the present. Gerz’s project was critical in that it found problems even where there was the will to remember. This was a remarkable step, no doubt, but it stayed within the framework of criticism of the present “state” of the Holocaust. This would become decisive for Gerz in later projects: *EXIT* pushed commemoration from a retrospective act to one reflecting the presence of the past and its consequences. If Beuys and Kiefer tried to address the past, Gerz’s interest lies in shaping the future through lessons from the past. According to American scholar James E. Young *EXIT* “challenges the capacity of all museums to dictate the terms by which we remember.”⁵⁰ No doubt, Gerz deals eloquently with the didactic project of mediating the past, and he is, of course, aware of his own complicity in this project, as can be gathered from the formal resemblance of his installation to a classroom. And yet, could we not also see a certain complacency in his unwillingness to take a concrete stance toward history? Gerz’s framework in which language and action come together remains ambiguous: we cannot criticize German Holocaust politics purely through linguistic analysis in the present.

⁵⁰ For Young the project is significant for the shift in the attitude towards commemoration in Germany. James E. Young, “Memory Against Itself in Germany Today. Jochen Gerz’s Countermonuments,” in *At Memory’s Edge. After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 124.

Perhaps recognizing these limitations, Gerz would later become famous for the crucial step that is still foreclosed here: the stimulation of social action in the present as a consequence of history. Ultimately, *EXIT* stays concerned with the signifier, the description in the museum setting—leaving the “blame” within language, void of historical facts or individual actions. Not surprisingly, the organizers of the Dachau museum felt obliged to respond; they pointed out that the museum was initiated by the survivors of the camp and that authoritative language had been an issue for *them* as well:

The collaborators on the erection and formation of the memorial site tried particularly to avoid bureaucratic language (*Amtsdeutsch*) on the signs and labels... (the word ‘forbidden,’ was for instance consciously avoided). The accusation ‘language of museum = language of concentration camp,’ is therefore leveled at an unfit target.⁵¹

The crucial difference between considering language as carefully modulated information, as the officials of the Dachau museum did, and deciphering it as action of the extension of fascist ideology, as was Gerz’s intention, marks the discrepancy between the two parties, both of whom, and this is important, are trying to act against silencing the history of National Socialism. This difference was already the starting point of Austin’s speech-act theory: is language merely informative (hence true/false), or does it actually do more?

Gerz’s interest in an ongoing dialogue—and possibly a controversial one—comes into sight in the 1978 publication of the *EXIT* project, in which Gerz incorporated press clips, a selection of responses from the visitor’s book, and the letter just cited.⁵² On one hand, this act of *inclusion* after the concentrated selectivity of the photographs opens a debate about

⁵¹ “...die am Aufbau und der Errichtung der Gedenkstätte Beteiligten haben sich besonders darum bemüht, Hinweistafeln und Beschriftungen von bürokratischem *Amtsdeutsch* freizuhalten... (das Wort “verboten” wurde z.B. bewußt vermieden). Der Vorwurf “Sprache Museum = Sprache KZ” trifft deshalb hier auf ein ungeeignetes Objekt.” Barbara Distel, “Memorial of the Concentration Camp Dachau,” in Jochen Gerz and Francis Lévy, *EXIT. Das Dachau Projekt* (Frankfurt am Main: Roter Stern, 1978), 164.

⁵² Gerz / Lévy, *EXIT*, 1978.

Holocaust memorialization that stands in contrast to the forceful demonstration of the 1974 installation. On the other hand, by including visitor responses *and* the museum statement, Gerz opens up his claim about bureaucratic language to embrace his own public as well as the institutional claim to be responsible to a past which, in its factual and moral enormity, refuses to go away. The turn, and the controversy, lies here in the directionality of the speech act: while the museum wishes to inform us about the past, Gerz insists that the present must take responsibility. His dismantling of official language, however just in the specific case, touches more on the responsibility of Germans to take a conscious stance toward the past than on the political implications of the past itself. Gerz will incorporate this strategy in his later, more historically engaged work.

EXIT also conveys discomfort with German handling of the past, and we might say Gerz seeks a solution by exposing the pure immanence of domination. This has its own dilemma, namely the ambiguous status of Gerz between German collaborator and impartial critic. The problem of situating oneself as German must be seen as the other side of the coin of public commemoration: are “Germans” allowed to commemorate the victims, and if so, how? Answers that left behind traditional means of commemoration and shifted responsibility for the present and the future to the audience could only be attempted simultaneously with the question of national identity. German artists representing their country internationally offered an excellent test case.

Representing Germany: Gerz and Beuys at the Venice Biennale of 1976

For a better understanding of the dilemma of national identity and historical consciousness during the 1970s in West Germany, we turn to German participation in the Venice Biennale,

which remained the most important European art exhibition after the war, apart from the newly founded *documenta* in Kassel (beginning in 1955). With its nineteenth-century division into national pavilions, the Biennale was ruled by national commissioners. The artists were thus positioned as representatives of their respective nations. For the chosen artists of (West) Germany, the inherently problematic task was complicated by the architecture of the pavilion and its exhibition history.⁵³ Even though the building was erected at the beginning of the twentieth century, it had been adjusted to National Socialist taste in 1938 by the neoclassical architect Ernst Haiger (1874-1952). The historicist Doric columns at the entrance were exchanged for heavy rectangular piers, and the massive inscription GERMANIA was added above the front entrance on this occasion. [Fig. 3.17] Additionally, the proportions of the interior were altered: most notably, an apse was attached to the main room, the dividing wall of which was taken down again in 1964.⁵⁴

Fascist Germany put its focus on monumental sculpture and ideologically compliant paintings by artists in good standing with the party. Particularly after the architectural modifications, the works of artists celebrated by the Nazis such as Arno Breker and Josef Thorak were in harmony with the formal and political setting.⁵⁵ [Fig. 3.18] During the first decades after the war, the West German commissioners ostentatiously reversed course, presenting mainly representatives of modernism whom the Nazis had declared “degenerate.” The focus on expressionist painters from the *Brücke* or *Blaue Reiter* could be interpreted as an act of rehabilitation that nonetheless clung to a specific national tone of artistic

⁵³ The GDR started to show at the Biennale in 1982, in the former pavilion of the Applied Arts.

⁵⁴ See Annette Lagler, “Der Deutsche Pavillon,” in Christoph Becker, Annette Lagler (eds.) *Biennale Venedig. Der Deutsche Beitrag* (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1995), 81ff.

⁵⁵ Christoph Becker, “Die Biennale und die Deutschen Beiträge von 1895 bis 1942.” In Becker/Lagler, 30-31. The 1940 Biennale featured Arno Breker even more prominently. Breker was also politically influential as commissioner for sculpture for the “Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung” starting in 1937.

production—after all, as late as in 1938, (‘degenerate’) expressionist Emil Nolde was convinced of the superiority of “Germanic art.”⁵⁶ It was not until the 1960s that a new generation of post-war artists were invited to contribute and contemporary art became the rule.

Of particular interest in this development was the Biennale of 1976. A new structure of commissioning had been put in place, following a political crisis (the 1974 exhibition did not take place as planned).⁵⁷ 1976 marked a “rebirth,” as the main commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana phrased it, of “an open, permanent and constantly evolving Biennale.”⁵⁸ Despite an overall theme—*Environment, Participation, Cultural Structures*—that was to connect the national pavilions and the additional exhibitions that were scheduled, the German contribution addressed retrospective issues evoked by the history of the pavilion itself. We saw in the last chapter how for artists dealing with Fascism the past often surfaced as latent grappling with formal issues of architecture: the history that surfaced in monumental architecture was counteracted or accentuated by performative actions. In the German Pavilion in Venice in 1976, the monument featured prominently as object of fascination and contempt alike. And it was once again performance—the seemingly antithesis to the

⁵⁶ In fact, Nolde protested his inclusion in the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition in 1937 with a letter to Joseph Goebbels: “my art is German, strong, sincere.” See Russell Berman, “German Primitivism/Primitive German. The case of Emil Nolde,” Chapter 6 in *Cultural Studies of Modern Germany: History, Representation and Nationhood* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 113f. For the exhibitions after the war, see Peter Joch, “Die Ära der Retrospektiven 1948-1962.” In Becker/Lagler, 35-49.

⁵⁷ See Becker/Lagler, 58. The causes were multifaceted: protest against the restrictive structure the pavilions’ monographic orientation and the neglect of women artists led to a general crisis of the Biennale; the restructuring of the organization led to problems during the preparations, and ultimately to the cancellation of the main exhibitions at the Giardini. The military putsch in Chile provoked several protest exhibitions in various alternative spaces in Venice, scheduled during the time the Biennale should have taken place. The brochures printed on the occasion of the 1974 Biennale show mostly theatrical and filmic activity: film festivals dedicated e.g. to Dziga Vertov and Luis Buñuel, a “Filmic chronicle of Fascism,” or a retrospective of Chilean films. See *La Biennale di Venezia: Per Una Cultura Democratica Antifascista* (Venice: La Biennale, 1974).

⁵⁸ Simon Wilson, “The Venice Biennale,” *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 118, 882 (October 1976), 723.

monument—that opened up the threatening presence of the monumental object to an experience of doubt.

The commissioner for the German pavilion, Klaus Gallwitz, invited three artists: Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), the single international figure in German art at the time, and his younger colleagues Jochen Gerz (born 1940), and Reiner Ruthenbeck (born 1937, a former student of Beuys). For the first time in the pavilion's history, artists made a joint visit to the location (in November 1975): the resulting works thus all reacted to the location. The most conspicuous shared feature of the three contributions was the inclusion of the pavilion itself as formal expression of a burdened past. This did not directly lead to a confrontation with political issues. Rather, such concerns were deflected into an examination of monumentality. The introduction to the catalogue by Klaus Gallwitz gives us a sense of how present history must have been for the participants, and how indirectly it was approached:

The catalogue is a book of memory. As the Biennale 76 closes in Venice, it will come out of print [i.e. it will come out in print, MW] and give information on the German pavilion....In Venice, the term, "Conservation of historical monuments" takes on a strange double meaning. The German contribution to the 76 Biennale has shown this quite clearly beyond its duration.⁵⁹

Gallwitz insists that parts of Beuys's installation would only be "detectable some day by archaeologists," while the site of Gerz's installation "is recorded solely by photographs."⁶⁰

This points towards the reading in the realm of presence and ephemerality that we have come to know as a general claim around that time. Beuys and Gerz handled openly and with formal complexity the issues of monumentality, while Ruthenbeck's installation *Doorway* is a very economical critique of the architecture: it consisted of black rubber ropes, stretched through

⁵⁹ Klaus Gallwitz, "Journal." In Klaus Gallwitz (ed.), *Biennale 76 Venedig. Deutscher Pavillon. Beuys. Gerz. Ruthenbeck* (Stuttgart: Cantz, 1976), 3. [Translation in the catalogue]

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the door connecting the two rooms at his disposal. [Fig. 3.19] The rubber ropes served as a barrier preventing free movement between the rooms by means of elastic material regulating the passage and the views of the visitors and temporarily changing the proportions of the space.⁶¹

In contrast, the works by Beuys and Gerz are circuitous, literary, and personal acts of coming to terms with Fascism. We will see them ultimately embark on very different interpretations of historical consciousness. Beuys must have been struck by the provisional, frequently modified nature of the pavilion, and how it nevertheless managed to convey monumentality in the present. His *Strassenbahnhaltestelle (Tramstop)* in the main room of the pavilion took as its departure a war monument—sometimes interpreted as a monument to peace—in Kleve, the city where Beuys grew up. [Fig. 3.20, 3.21] Erected in the mid-seventeenth century, this object “probably brought me to sculpture,” Beuys declared in a May 1976 interview, expressly linking the childhood experience of the monument to his adult aesthetic activity (Beuys was a professor of monumental sculpture in Düsseldorf from 1961 to 1972).⁶² The Kleve monument had once consisted of a small, dragon-headed cannon (called a culverin), posed upright as a column, with military mortars deployed around it in the manner of buttresses, and a cupid on top representing the victory of Venus over Mars.⁶³ The monument had been in a fragmentary state since the nineteenth century (the cupid

⁶¹ See Klaus Gallwitz, “Journal,” in *Biennale 76 Venedig*, 11, and the extensive photographic documentation, *ibid.*, 117-141. See also, Becker/Lagler, 183.

⁶² Guido de Werd, “Strassenbahnhaltestelle—Tramstop—Fermate del Tram,” in *Freundeskreis des Kurhauses und Koekkoek-Haus Kleve* (ed.), *Joseph Beuys. Strassenbahnhaltestelle. Ein Monument für die Zukunft* (Kleve, 2000), 9. A similar quote can be found in a contemporary review: “Ich wäre ohne diese rätselhafte Erscheinung wohl nicht Bildhauer geworden.” Werner Spies, “Die Schwierigkeiten des Zentauren. Ruthenbeck, Gerz und Beuys auf der Biennale in Venedig,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 31, 1976), 19.

⁶³ A lost drawing from 1654 by Hendrik Feldman shows the column with a cannonball on top standing on a hillock decorated with a mosaic of an eight-pointed star, with eight cannonballs around it. Image 2 in *Strassenbahnhaltestelle*. See also Simone Scholten, “Ausgehen muss man ja von dem, was Gegenwärtig ist,” In *Strassenbahnhaltestelle*, 34.

disappeared), and was moved from its original position on a public boulevard to an unassuming grass island next to a tramway stop that Beuys frequented on his way to school. For the Venice pavilion, Beuys had the remaining parts of the monument—the culverin—cast from the original. While these casts form the main body of his piece, there are considerable additions. Beuys welded another cast sculpture on the culverin’s muzzle, an expressionist head with an open mouth, and positioned a single tramway track on the ground perpendicular to the column.⁶⁴ In addition, Beuys decided to drill into the floor of the pavilion in order to “ground” the installation (supposedly, the mainland was reached 21 meters below the surface). The excavated material from the drilling (the rubble turned out to be from the old Venice Campanile that had collapsed in 1902) was also used in the installation, as was the handle of a tramway crank that was mounted into the floor of the pavilion.⁶⁵ [Fig. 3.22] The installation took great care with the positioning and possible movement of the visitor: the face of the cast head was directed towards the entrance to be seen from afar, well in line with the traditional functioning of a monument. The piece in Venice, then, consisted of column with head, mortars, excavation material, the handle, and the track, interweaving disparate geographical and temporal strata. What did it all amount to?

Most literally, *Tramstop* connected baroque Kleve and the industrial Kleve Beuys had encountered as a schoolboy with the history of Venice and particularly the “archeology” of the German pavilion, both connoting decay and fragmentation.⁶⁶ The emphasis on historical layering was clear in Beuys’s decision to use the room as he found it on his first visit, with

⁶⁴ The head was designed by Beuys’s student Beatrix Sassen in the 1960s. Beuys changed the mouth and several details when recasting it. See Scholten, 26-67; for the reuse of the head see specifically 47. In the Biennale catalogue text by Caroline Tisdall, the head is described as having been “modeled by Beuys in 1961.” Caroline Tisdall, “Tram Stop,” In Gallwitz, *Biennale*, 25.

⁶⁵ See Scholten, 42.

⁶⁶ Venice connotes decay and decadence in a German context since Thomas Mann’s classic *Der Tod in Venedig*, 1907. The tradition, somewhat popularized, continues today in the crime novels of Donna Leon.

flaking paint and some labeling from Gerhard Richter's 1972 installation, a series of portraits of important Germans with its own connotations of mourning and commemoration.⁶⁷ Despite the historical complexity of the accumulated materials, Beuys imagined the whole to function straightforwardly on the basis of his personal memories, communicating the experience of the young Beuys waiting at the tram stop. Contemporary reviews differed in their valuations: the German magazine *Der Spiegel* praised the "immediate impact" of the monument, while the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* complained about the visitor's dependency on the catalogue entry.⁶⁸ The *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung* also lamented that art needed a "manual" (an explanatory handout about *Strassenbahnhaltestelle* was available in the pavilion).⁶⁹ In some respects, we can see how the focus on Beuys's biography in combination with local German history, transposed to Venice, must have disappointed expectations of a publicly transparent "monument." The subtitle, "Monument for the Future," which might not have been given by Beuys himself, gives the work a temporal direction analogous to Tatlin's tower, while conserving privacy in the piece itself.⁷⁰ In proposing the "future" as possible space of commemoration, Beuys leaves unanswered the question whether the future belongs to war (the cannon), peace (the missing cupid), or the continuing adventures of the biographical subject Joseph Beuys.

By paying explicit attention to the temporality of the monument, Beuys brings up the problem of commemoration as an attempt to bridge the past with the future via the present.

⁶⁷ Gerhard Richter's work was based on black and white photographs from a dictionary. This pantheon of Germans points to the pavilion as projector of national identity. See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning," *October*, vol. 75 (Winter, 1996), 60-82. Buchloh finds Richter the principal German artist after the war to "engage in the labor of mourning and the symbolic work of memory." (69)

⁶⁸ "Loch zur Lagune," *Der Spiegel*, vol. 30 (July 19, 1976), 100; Gottfried Sello, "Kunst. Es gibt wieder eine Biennale. Das Wunder von Venedig," *Die Zeit*, (July 23, 1976), 40.

⁶⁹ Rudolf Lange, "Kunst mit Gebrauchsanweisung. Die Wiedergeburt der Biennale ist Geglückt," *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 31, 1976), reprinted in Beuys, *Strassenbahnhaltestelle*, 213.

⁷⁰ According to Scholten, it was Caroline Tisdall's article in the Biennale catalogue that first mentioned the subtitle. Tisdall was present at the installation in Venice. Scholten, 61.

Beuys grounded *Tramstop* in the present tense by implying for it a trajectory to action art.⁷¹ This was done in two ways: first, through the production and mediation of photographs, which focus on Beuys's body in the erection of the monument. [Fig. 3.23, 3.24] These are confident examples of the then decade-old tradition of performance photography and the earlier process photography of "the artist at work" in the manner of Hans Namuth's 1951 series of Pollock painting. In these photos, the impressive and characteristic figure of the artist is not only taking part in the mounting of the piece; Beuys becomes the director of a performance encompassing the other actors in the photographs, consisting of Venetian workers, students, and friends.⁷² [Fig. 3.25] One particularly striking photograph by Buby Durini shows the cannon-column, with Beuys standing behind it, only his arms visible. [Fig. 3.26] This completes the impression of the column as anthropomorphic, with the welded bronze head high up, a long torso (the column), Beuys's arms, and the mortars as base resembling oversized hooves. Beuys has photographically merged with the monument. The artist can be identified by his tools, the hands, and the white shirt which he often wore underneath his characteristic vest. This image was silk-screened in 1977 and also used for a poster shown in Bologna, with Beuys's signature above the welded head [Fig. 3.27].⁷³ The photograph came to stand for the monument as the monument stands for Beuys. These images of the installation in progress pointed towards the event-character of the piece,

⁷¹ Gallwitz notes that Beuys thought of the erection of *Tramstop* as an action related to memory: "The work on the 'Tram Stop' was not only the preparation of an environment, it was also an action. In any case, Beuys interpreted it like this, since the aim was to re-establish and to restore history. 'The hard work of remembrance' had to be performed on a project with widely ramified roots and which had to prove its actuality in this predestinated place at Venice." Klaus Gallwitz, "Journal," *Biennale*, 16.

⁷² In the exhibition catalogue, most of the images in the photographic essay are by Herbert Schwöbel (30-54). Schwöbel also photographed Gerz's and Ruthenbeck's work extensively for the catalogue. Gallwitz, *Biennale*. Similar photographic essays were published in *Strassenbahnhaltestelle*, 70-89 (by Schwöbel), and 94-111 (by Gerald Domenig).

⁷³ *Strassenbahnhaltestelle*, 196. The exhibition took place at the Galleria Ferruccio Fate, Bologna. The multiple was produced and co-edited by the Edizione Lucrezia de Domizio in Pescara (co-editor Kreisverwaltung Kleve) in 1977. This photograph was not included in the Biennale catalogue. See also Scholten, 60.

ultimately cemented by the decision to only display the cannon horizontally after the Biennale. [Fig. 3.28] This decision was made even before the show opened, when the much-discussed piece was sold to the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, under Beuys's condition of a new display regime. This choice dramatically changed the way *Tramstop* has to be interpreted. Beuys emphasized the connection to action art with this decision:

I wanted the erection only once—for Venice. I wanted to conduct it as an action. I wanted to do the thing once, but considering the whole thing in the context of an action, and not like a sculpture that can be rebuilt here and there afterwards.⁷⁴

With the piece installed horizontally, its past function as a monument in Venice is underlined. It did *act*, but only there, and the later installation becomes the referent to this performance of the monument. The horizontal column reminds us that the performance of the monument is over, that the action is concluded (in the past), and cannot be repeated. The horizontally displayed column and the photographs are part of the after-life of the piece, which also changes its content: the 'monument to the future' becomes the monument to a future past.⁷⁵

The work thus becomes less an invitation to action than to historical reconstruction. While the photographs incite the audience to re-instantiate a performative interaction, the horizontal column counteracts this possibility: this object must be considered the remains of an action, just like other relics of performances, a relic that points to an experience in the past that cannot be had again.⁷⁶ Apart from and above these contradictory forces, it is Beuys, the man and the historical myth, who becomes the privileged device of meaning as is confirmed

⁷⁴ Scholten, 64. See also Werner Spies, "Die Schwierigkeiten des Zentauren," 19. Spies asks skeptically: "Is Beuys alluding to the revolutionary Courbet, who had the Vendôme column demolished?" [My translation].

⁷⁵ In Reinhart Koselleck's *Futures Past* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), originally published in German as *Vergangene Zukunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979; the contents were published separately between 1969 and 1977), obsolete futures become an index to the historical and political imagination of various *pasts*.

⁷⁶ One could think of the relics of Chris Burden's work, such as the nails from *Trans-Fixed*, 1974, which point to an experience which is not to be repeated. Burden refused to give permission to Abramović to re-perform this particular piece.

by the multiple of Beuys merging with the column. Very importantly, this affects the conventions he is working with: the syntax of the piece, being enormously personal, belongs entirely to Beuys.⁷⁷ In this sense, *Tramstop* remains in the realm of performance—despite the heterogeneous material Beuys employs, as it does not convey the historical discontinuities implicit in the components, but unites them in the narrative continuity of Beuys, refracted doubly as the remembered child and the working adult.

Once we leave this biographical register, things are less clear. The relationship of *Tramstop* to German history has been interpreted in various ways. Caroline Tisdall denied any connection to World War II in her contribution to the Biennale catalogue:

Beuys's intention has certainly nothing to do with physical war... The intention of this head is to suggest an inner battle, a war of ideas in which one idea struggles constructively with another towards a future [of] freedom of the total individual and the totality of individuals.⁷⁸

Three years later, in the catalogue Tisdall edited for Beuys's comprehensive show at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the war experience had been adopted as the formative myth for Beuys's whole oeuvre.⁷⁹ Under *Tramstop*, the Venice article was reprinted, so we cannot trace a changed attitude towards this particular piece. Benjamin Buchloh reacted to the show with his infamous negative review in *Artforum*, displeased in particular with Beuys's privatization of avant-garde conventions and his self-promotion as a healer. He ascribed to Beuys not only ignorance of political theory, history, and art historical tradition, but in particular of his own psychological (in Buchloh's words "infantile") attempt to reject

⁷⁷ This also explains the cliché (emphasized by Beuys himself) of Beuys as "shaman," i.e. someone working with ritualistic conventions we are not familiar with.

⁷⁸ Tisdall, *Tram Stop*, In *Biennale 76 Venedig*, 27.

⁷⁹ Tisdall, *Cat. Guggenheim*.

responsibility for the war.⁸⁰ In the wake of this account, several authors have suggested that *Tramstop* must be seen as covertly commemorating the horrors of the Holocaust. This point of view has gained ascendancy since the 1990s, when commemoration and memory had become one of the most debated issue of contemporary art. In a history of the German pavilion since the 1960s, art historian Annette Lagler allegorizes *Tramstop* thus: “Canon and body melted to a scrawny figure, which—inside the NS architecture—also expressed the tragedy of the most recent German history.”⁸¹ While the sculpture itself cannot confirm or disprove such a forthright interpretation, it is important that the changed framework of reception was able to reanimate it as anti-Fascist monument.

It is difficult to put aside the many polemics and speculations about Beuys and his participation in the Second World War: Beuys’s biography and his youth as pilot in the *Luftwaffe* had become a defining cue to the interpretation of his work. The famous story of his bomber plane being shot down over the Crimean during the war, and his supposed rescue by Tartars, invites interpretations in terms of the Fascist period, albeit not always flattering ones.⁸² The story that so upset scholars in its (now obvious) fabrication of myth and its lack

⁸⁰ Buchloh describes in detail Beuys’s problematic claim of ahistoricity, while tracing various connections to the historical avant-gardes and to Beuys’s contemporaries: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol,” *Artforum*, vol.5, no.18 (January 1980), 35-43.

⁸¹ Annette Lagler, “Museum—Historischer Ort—Medium der Inspiration. Die deutschen Beiträge zur Biennale ab 1964 und die Rolle des Pavillons.” In Becker/Lagler, 58.

⁸² His “German-ness was ... an issue and some writers even drew brutal, extended parallels between Beuys’s practice and Nazi ideology,” as Joan Rothfuss sums up Beuys’s reception in the US after his Guggenheim show in 1979. Joan Rothfuss, “Joseph Beuys: Echoes in America.” Ray (ed.): *Beuys. Mapping the Legacy*, 2001, 51. The impression that Beuys was indifferent to the Nazi period, or worse, capitalized on it to initiate his own personal myth, has lingered. An excellent discussion of Beuys’s war story is Peter Nisbet: “‘Crash Course’—Remarks on a Beuys Story,” in Ray (ed.): *Beuys. Mapping the Legacy*, 2001, 5-17. This interesting essay collection (from a symposium at the John and Mable Ringling Museum) includes a reevaluation by Buchloh, “Reconsidering Joseph Beuys, Once Again,” (75-90) in response to Gene Ray’s revisionist article “Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime,” in which Ray writes: “Evoking and avowing the Holocaust through various strategies, Beuys’s pieces and actions can also be read as objects and gestures of mourning.” Gene Ray, “Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime,” In Ray (ed.), *Beuys. Mapping the Legacy*, 2001, 56. It is significant that Buchloh, although he remains skeptical about Beuys the artist, accepts most of Ray’s conclusions about Beuys’s historical resonance.

of historical accuracy, was successful in a way in its performative quality of providing Beuys's oeuvre with the necessary "framework." In this sense, Beuys anticipated the revisionist interpretation by some decades. The problem of introspection and personal mythology is persistent in Beuys's oeuvre, even in those works in which he tackles the Holocaust as history.

In 1968, Beuys reused some of the material of the competition for the Auschwitz memorial in his *Auschwitz Demonstration*, a showcase displaying a collection of modest objects—a folded panorama of the Auschwitz site, the drawing of a nude, dried sausages, a hotplate, among others—some of them relics or leftover parts from other actions or works he produced between 1956 to 1964.⁸³ [Fig. 3.29, 3.30] The single items in this project have been interpreted in various ways, most recently in a very direct connection to images from Auschwitz available in Germany at the time.⁸⁴ In 1982, Beuys retrospectively explained the *Auschwitz Demonstration* as "Aktionskunst" (action art). Action was construed by Beuys as counter-project to any possible depiction of the Holocaust. When asked whether Auschwitz can be depicted, he replied:

No, one cannot. Of course not. This is, even in this case, as I said, the attempt to prepare a medicine. To remind of it, and in connection to the ongoing actions. In any case one must say that the whole thing belongs to action art, also this.⁸⁵

On one hand, Beuys tried to avoid representation and considered a performative approach the

⁸³ See Mario Kramer, Joseph Beuys: 'Auschwitz Demonstration' 1956-1964. Gillen (ed.) *Deutschlandbilder...*, 1997), 293-307, 294. According to Kramer, Beuys produced approximately "two dozens thematically related drawings and overworked photographs" for the Auschwitz competition, 293. For Kramer, "Beuys's entire early work can be described as some kind of catharsis," Kramer, 293 [my translation]. The *Auschwitz-Demonstration* is now part of the *Beuys Block* in the Hessische Landesmuseum Darmstadt.

⁸⁴ Ray, "Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime," passim.

⁸⁵ Beuys, asked by Max Reithmann: "Nein, das kann man nicht. Natürlich nicht. Das ist also auch da nur, wie gesagt, der Versuch, eine Medizin aufzubereiten. Daran zu erinnern und in Zusammenhang mit den weitergehenden Aktionen. Man muss sowieso sagen, das Ganze gehört zur Aktionskunst, auch das." Cited in Kramer, 303 [my translation].

only possible one towards the Holocaust. On the other, the problem of the private nature of the conventions deployed persists in this very public work. For Beuys, history and experience might come together in his memories, but the audience is presented with an end product that is meant to stand poetically for shared experience, a shared experience that cannot be stated because it is supposedly too traumatic.

That the “speech act” does not come off and the social consequences of the performance stifle rather than provoke historical thought, is due to the publicly proclaimed private nature of Beuys’s rituals and signs. The healing aspect Beuys sought so often in his works, and that was so longed for in Germany, remains, in my opinion, directed to himself, the artist and former fighter pilot, and cannot take on the role of social action without the trappings of shamanism: and these do not heal Fascism but evade it altogether in a prehistoric fantasy of the harmonious community. If we look at Beuys’s oeuvre as a whole, one could argue that the evasion of a public responsibility is part of his success. But it would be premature to simply identify a general unwillingness of “the Germans” to deal with the past as the cause of his immense reputation. Let us return to *Tramstop* now. The “innocence” of the child’s experience in Kleve that Beuys might desire to have restored at the Venice Biennial becomes an explosive screen for projections, particularly in its context as German contribution. In which ways, if at all, can such a highly individualized work succeed as an act of public mourning?

Can we see Beuys in the line of a development, which I have already established, from performance, through mourning, to the performative monument? Beuys’s interest in performance and monumental sculpture (his field of studies after the war, and his master class at the Academy), and his own classification of his works as action art certainly suggest

so. The main obstacle is that Beuys works through history *for* the audience, instead of asking them to work through history themselves. Personal experiences play an important role in Beuys's projects, but it is transmitted to the audience only as his (mental) "image" of the Holocaust (and here it becomes depictive), as in the case of the *Auschwitz Vitrine*. There might be a certain participatory quality in the shamanistic stance of the audience in their engagement with the piece. The dilemma lies in the claim, advanced performatively, of "solving" the problem. Beuys's projects seem to process the guilt *too* successfully, and do not offer an entry to the work of mourning, much less a public commitment to commemoration. In the *Besetzungen*, Kiefer similarly used poetic references and his own experience as starting point. But he undercut the salvation through the performative gesture to the audience. Beuys offers the redemption *after* the cathartic experience, the finished produce of a supposedly collective process.⁸⁶ This might partially explain his success, and at the same time the skepticism he faced from critics in the Frankfurt School tradition. The idea of personal responsibility that theorists such as Jaspers called for after the war becomes inappropriate once the *result* of its process is transferred into art objects, precluding sober historical discussion and the individual process itself. If the *Monument to the Future* is a performative monument, it is the monument to a failed act of remembering. Ultimately, in Beuys's work, the focus is 'too much' in the future, in which redemption already occurred.

In saying that Beuys's is a monument to failure, I do not mean to trivialize his achievement. We can gain perspective on Beuys's efforts by returning to the site of performance. The task of performing as "German" in Venice did not prove any simpler for the younger artist Jochen Gerz. *EXIT* had been clear in its critical stance, but in Venice, Gerz

⁸⁶ I have the Auschwitz projects and the Biennale contribution in mind. The same might not be true of his more pragmatically participatory "social sculpture."

presented an installation rich with political ambiguity. His contribution, entitled *Die Schwierigkeit des Zentauren beim vom Pferd Steigen* (*The Centaur's Difficulty When Dismounting the Horse*) was installed in two adjacent rooms in the left wing of the building. [Fig. 3.31, 3.32] It consisted of a giant lumber construction of a horse parted by the dividing wall of the pavilion, twenty-four manuscript sheets displayed in three showcases, and ten monochrome images (painted in brown covering color) mounted on the walls. The horse caught in the architecture of the pavilion figured as a fragmentary object of perception, since there was no possibility of grasping the whole sculpture from any single viewing position. The belly of the horse was accessible through an opening under the back legs, leading to a space large enough for one or two people. [Fig. 3.33] The title "Centaur" is deceptive: with its horse head, its wood construction, and hollow belly, the Trojan Horse looms as the main reference. The manuscript sheets were a journal Gerz had done in preparation for the piece, with the intention of including it in the show: like Leonardo's notebooks, they were written in reverse (*Linksschreibung*).⁸⁷ Over the course of several weeks, he wrote and sketched onto this paper for several hours per day, commenting on details of the construction of the horse, Greek history and literature, memory, sculpture, and the role of art in society.⁸⁸ The allusion to classical Greek culture is firmly anchored in Gerz's oeuvre: from 1975 to 1978 he produced a series of ten *Greek Pieces* (*Griechische Stücke*), often revolving around

⁸⁷ A full bilingual transcript of the manuscript is Jochen Gerz, *Die Schwierigkeit des Zentauren beim vom Pferd Steigen. The Centaur's Difficulty When Dismounting the Horse* (Munich: Kunstraum München, 1976). "Das Pferd von Troja ist selbst eine Linksschreibung innerhalb der Rechtsschreibung von Troja. Doch im Pferd drinnen ist zur Rechtsschreibung des Pferds die Linksschreibung des Outis und seiner Leute!" Gerz's formula plays on the opposition of Leonardian *Linksschreibung* (literally, left-writing) to Trojan *Rechtsschreibung*, which in German means the proper way to write, encompassing grammar and spelling. The Trojan Horse, then, is a piece of linguistic subterfuge against the naïve (law-abiding) Trojans; it carried Odysseus, who gave his name as Oudis ("Nobody") in a later act of linguistic subterfuge. The key theme is thus violence *in* language.

⁸⁸ Gerz declared he wrote for 51 days, 247 hours. *The Centaur's Difficulty...*, 168.

performance.⁸⁹ Apart from this, the allusion to Greek culture bore its particular connections to the past of the Venice pavilion. The German fascination with Greek art, anchored in nineteenth-century philhellenism, was modeled into the aesthetic ideal of National Socialism, driven by the Nazi belief in a mythic connection between the German and the Greek race.⁹⁰ Gerz paid close attention to the political implications of the pavilion's architecture, as we can gather from one of the manuscript pages:

The pavilion is not a half way thing. Architectonic Blitzkrieg. You get the feeling the whole thing has been lying on an oak desk in Berlin and was sent down wham bang by phone. Only even measurements. Door 2:3. No details: Bunker....A hall for all purposes, built for art in the 3rd Reich....Good conditions. The pavilion with the growling sign GERMANIA could be anywhere in the world...Seen from the outside, it is a kick in the back. Inside, it conforms to art (Fascist and 'degenerate' art can be shown in the same room; that is a known fact, after all).⁹¹

Gerz's emphasis on art as a weapon (as *Blitzkrieg*) is acted out with reservation and irony in his installation. The "efficient" Fascist architecture must have seemed the perfect setting for raising suspicions about the political function of art, and in particular the role of the monument. The "Trojan Horse" plays a complex role here: The installation as such is the Trojan Horse inside the pavilion, seemingly submitting to an idealization of the Greeks, and celebrating the military ploy that ended the Trojan War. On the other hand, in the Greek story of the Trojan War, as mentioned in the *Little Iliad*, the Trojans dismantled part of their own city wall to get the horse into the city. This self-destructive element provoked by the horse is

⁸⁹ See Volker Rattemeyer, Renate Petzinger (eds.), *Jochen Gerz. Performances, Installationen und Arbeiten im öffentlichen Raum*. Oeuvre catalogue, vol. 1 (Nuremberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 1999), 10. The Centaur piece is Greek Piece # 5.

⁹⁰ Hitler's fascination with Greek classicism is discussed by Friederike Mayr, "Die Olympischen Spiele des Jahres 1936 in Berlin," *Forum Archaeologiae* (42/III/2007, online under <http://farch.net>), and Gunnar Brands, "Zwischen Island und Athen. Griechische Kunst im Spiegel des Nationalsozialismus," in: Bazon Brock, Achim Preiß (eds.), *Kunst auf Befehl? Dreiunddreißig bis Fünfundvierzig* (Munich: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1990), 103-136. See also Erwin Panofsky's book *Hercules am Scheideweg—und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1930), on the German appropriation of Greek origins.

⁹¹ *The Centaur's Difficulty...*, 123. Translation in the catalogue. Hitler intended to rename Berlin Germania. Of course, Germania is also the Italian word for Germany, but also the title of Tacitus' book about the Germans (98C.E.), which was propagated for the cause of German nationalism.

emphasized through its fragmentation (the front in one room, the back in another). Is this an imaginative invitation to dismantle the pavilion? In addition to the literary connotations of the horse, we are told that the artist inhabited it for several days, as if literally acting out the Trojan Horse function of the monument.⁹² What exactly Gerz did inside the horse is unclear. We may however attend to the consequences of the act. Did he present himself as an intruder and traitor to the German pavilion? As a murderous “Greek-German” endangering the Venetian polity that has taken him in? The ambiguity of the artist as performer is sharpened: the artist is both critic and aggressor. It is as if the genre of the monument could not offer Gerz a way out of this dilemma. It had to be not just destructive, but self-destructive, and could not—as Beuys’s—unfold its mythic potential in a positive way.

Of course, there are similarities between Gerz’s and Beuys’s piece. For both artists, history surfaced through the monument. Beuys presented his “innocent,” German childhood, an innocence that—as can be seen from the welded head, and the rubble—cannot be retrieved in the present. Gerz, rather differently, seems to “warn” his audience against the German pavilion, against its Fascist connotations, by a piece that pointed towards the history of its surrounding in many ways. If we take up the passage about the construction of the pavilion as *Blitzkrieg* once more, we can now, in light of the elaboration on the horse, attribute to his contribution a suppressed hostility against both pavilion and public artist, articulated by the hidden artist inside his sculpture, and the metaphor of the war-horse aimed at cracking the pavilion open. Beuys in contrast tried to secure the monument—for a moment—through “performance,” with all the faith (possibly misplaced) that personalization could mediate history to the viewer. The Pavilion in 1976 might be said to represent a

⁹² Gerz, Lagler, 60. According to the oeuvre catalogue, he lived in the horse for “a couple of days.” 10.

phantom Germany, neither wholly present, nor firmly anchored in the past, but revolving uneasily around a historical disaster still visible in the very exterior of the building.

Almost twenty years later, the situation of representing Germany was a different affair altogether: when Hans Haacke, born in 1936, was invited by the German commissioner to contribute to the 1993 Biennial, he smashed the marble floor of the pavilion. [Fig. 3.34] This metaphorical demolishing of that which stood for Fascism, left no doubt about his intentions. That such an open reaction against the architecture was possible (and that he was invited), exemplifies how much the public discussion about National Socialism would change during the next two decades. In addition to the smashed floor inside the pavilion, his installation included a “sculpture” of a German *Mark* in gold above the entrance where one would imagine the *Reichsadler* (eagle), and the framed photograph of Hitler visiting the Biennale in 1934.⁹³ [Fig. 3.35] With this installation, Haacke won the “Golden Lion,” the main prize of the Biennale.⁹⁴ Haacke’s installation was entitled *Germania—Bodenlos* (without foundation, or literally, bottomless). This of course points towards Fascism as the inescapable German heritage that needed to be confronted. In 1976, with both East and West Germany blaming the other side more or less openly of being a continuation of Fascism, such a coherent contribution was impossible.

Both Gerz’s and Beuys’s Biennale projects incorporated performative strategies to mobilize a contemporary monument: in Beuys’s case in the shaping of the reception of *Tramstop* as “action,” and in the decision that the erected column should be a temporally

⁹³ The Mark must of course also be read in terms of the recent reunion of the two Germanies, and the adoption of the currency of the West by East Germany.

⁹⁴ See Klaus Bussmann (ed.), *Hans Haacke. Bodenlos* (Stuttgart: Cantz, 1993). Bussmann starts his preface with a “disclaimer”: “Nobody familiar with Hans Haacke’s work would think of calling him an official artist [in fact, the German word used is *Staatskünstler*, State Artist] In this respect, the German pavilion at the Venice Biennale is the wrong place for him.” (5).; Lagler in Becker/Lagler, 71-72; Petra Kippkopf, “Bodenlos in den Gärten der Kunst,” *Die Zeit* (June 18, 1993); and Benjamin Buchloh, “Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason,” *Art in America*, v.76 (February 1988), 96-109.

bound occurrence. In Gerz's case, performative elements came in through the exhibition of his diary (the manuscript), the preparatory phase, as part of the piece itself, and through the artist's (supposed) presence in the belly of the horse, and in the implicit aggression of the whole symbolism. In both projects, the monument is transformed by the performative, but it is not clear whether much is left. Beuys's sounding of his biography and memory does not add up to an act of public commemoration, while Gerz, in a transitional phase from earlier performances from around 1970 to his later participatory monuments in the 1980s and beyond, sounds out a self-undermining direction. We can interpret Gerz's *EXIT* project with his Biennial piece as probing of alternatives: while *EXIT* questioned the tools of commemoration and drew attention to language as performative vehicle of memory, the *Centaur* undermined the material object at the center of commemoration.

The questions the two raise complement each other in their concern with individual versus authoritarian attempts to make history. Their lesson, in short, is that every claim of memory is authoritative, even personal memory. Negt and Kluge's demand for "concrete historical consciousness" without coercion remains utopian. But an awareness of the coercive character of language may lead to less coercive monuments. *EXIT* showed through photographs of imperative language that the present bears traces of the authoritarian past; the horse with the connotations of betrayal and aggression took a critical stance towards monumental sculpture, without being able to deny its own authority. These pieces are the missing link between the disavowal of the traditional monument and the production of contemporary forms of commemoration. Both ideas needed to come together in a monumental object that itself did not impose on the spectator, but recognized the monumental gesture as performative. With Gerz's increased interest in the issue of

commemoration and responsibility, he became one of the protagonists of the new memorial culture in Germany during the 1980s.

Chapter 4: Germany II: The Commemorative Turn

In the mid-1980s, the *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Dispute) in Germany put the question of personal and collective guilt and responsibility back into political focus. Newly defined restitution laws and corresponding claims from the descendants of Holocaust victims brought a new public interest in the question whether "all" Germans should be held responsible for National Socialism, and to what extent responsibility had to be taken on by a generation born during or even after the war. Conservative historians took the offensive, arguing that Nazi crimes were a response in kind to Soviet atrocities (Ernst Nolte), or that German suffering under the Red Army was conceptually on a par with the extermination of the Jews (Andreas Hillgruber).¹ Neutralizing earlier calls for pervasive moral responsibility, a relativizing methodology placed National Socialism in a broad perspective of totalitarian force, thereby reducing German political responsibility *during* the Nazi period, and decisively limiting any political liability or didactic responsibility to remember that period on the part of future generations. World War II could thus be reframed as a disaster *for* Germany, from which one should not split ethical hairs by separating victims from perpetrators.

Yet this conservative academic offensive is only one half of the story of German memory culture in the 1980s. With the debate came a boom of commemorative acts and artworks, and historical reevaluation by a new generation of historians researching Fascism.

The 1980s were the years of history... while domestic and foreign politics remained calm, apart from short gusts, the German past resurged from a Big Sleep... Hardly a self-respecting city existed that did not establish a historical museum or extend or reorganize the existing one during these years.²

¹ Andreas Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentum* (Berlin: Siedler, 1986). Nolte had leaned in this direction since his 1960s comparative work on international fascism, but his article "Die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will," published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 6, 1986), initiated the debate. See note 5 in Chapter Three.

² Michael Jeismann, "Zeichenlehre. Vom nationalen Kriegsdenken zum kulturellen Gedächtnis," in Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte*, 1999, 21 [my translation].

Questions raised after the war remained relevant: in replying to Ernst Nolte's revisionist stance, Jürgen Habermas explicitly stated his aim as the reformulation of Jaspers's question for the generation of his grandchildren. In his essay "Concerning the Public Use of History," published in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* in 1986, Habermas argued against the possibility of a younger generation disclaiming responsibility for the past. He pointed to the "historical milieu, on which the next generations build," and explained: "Our own life is linked inwardly, and not just by accidental circumstances, with that context of life in which Auschwitz was possible."³ In denying responsibility, one denied one's past altogether. National identity, for Habermas, could not be achieved if the Holocaust was excluded from German history.⁴ Germans had a "co-responsibility," and would continue to do so:

There is the obligation we in Germany have—even if no one else is prepared to take it upon themselves any longer—to keep alive the memory of the suffering of those murdered at the hand of Germans, and we must keep this memory alive *quite openly* not just in our own mind. These dead have above all a claim to the weak anamnestic power of a solidarity which those born later can now only practice through the medium of the memory, which is always being renewed, which may often be desperate, but which is, at any rate, active and circulating."⁵

In Habermas's opinion, then, history has to be kept alive *publicly*, which explains the importance of the category of public memory to achieve an involvement of following generations. But the idea of solidarity with the victims raises difficulties: if, and how this

³ Jürgen Habermas, "Vom öffentlichen Gebrauch der Historie," *Die Zeit* (November 7, 1986). Reprinted with additions in Habermas, *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987). Published in English as "Concerning the Public Use of History," *New German Critique* no. 44 (spring-summer 1988), special issue on the *Historikerstreit*, 40-50; this quote 43. Habermas's position was supported by historians Saul Friedländer and Hans Mommsen, among others. See Rudolf Augstein, 'Historikerstreit.' *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (Munich: Piper, 1987).

⁴ Habermas writes: "The Nazi period will be much less of an obstacle to us, the more calmly we are able to consider it as the filter through which the substance of our culture must be passed, insofar as this substance is adopted voluntarily and consciously," in "Public Use," 45.

⁵ "Public Use," 44 [my italics]. Interesting linguistically is Habermas's term "weak anamnestic power," which seems to transfer to present memory the "weak messianic power" that Walter Benjamin attributed to past human lives in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. See for instance the discussion of Benjamin in Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity Twelve Lectures* [1984], translated by Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 11-16.

solidarity with the dead could be achieved, and if, as Habermas assumes, this is exactly the claim the dead have over the living (Germans). Indeed, in a different context, Habermas explains how this solidarity through memory could (or should?) redeem the past:

The anamnestic redemption of an injustice, which cannot of course be undone but can at least be virtually reconciled through remembering, ties up the present with the communicative context of a universal historical solidarity.⁶

Can Auschwitz then be reconciled (virtually) through public memory? Habermas, with all his effort to counteract the conservatives' comparative approach (arguing that all dead are the same), might fall victim to his own wish for historical solidarity. This term cannot be used to differentiate memory claims, for solidarity is claimed by conservative historians with the soldiers, the civilians, all the Germans who suffered in the war, mediated through individual stories of hardship. Habermas seems to share with his conservative opponents the idea that memory is social—and we should keep in mind that the *Historikerstreit* evolved as a series of essays in German newspapers, not in academic organs.⁷ Of course, he wants to keep the memory of Auschwitz alive for a generation of Germans who were born after the war, but does this exclude the memory claims advanced by German nationalists?

There is, perhaps, a way out for the liberal conception of public memory as a social relation to the past. Habermas, surprisingly perhaps for a philosopher, argues for emotional involvement that leaves the “third person” of academic debate and switches to the “first person.” Near the beginning of the “Public Use of History,” he approvingly cites Claude Lanzmann’s documentary *Shoah*, screened on public television in Germany at the time, and based entirely on the oral accounts of surviving Holocaust victims and camp personnel. Dispensing with historical footage, *Shoah* allows us to share in an “almost physical process

⁶ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 15.

⁷ The importance of this fact is pointed out by Habermas, “Public Use,” 49.

of the work of remembering,” Habermas found.⁸ While this ‘almost physical’ process differs from Beuys’s cathartic performances, or from Kiefer’s wry complicity, we see the same problem coming to the surface: the difficulty is to explain what exactly the purpose of commemoration could be. What is at stake is Habermas’s notion of “responsibility,” and of the “claim” of the dead over the memory of the living, and how competing claims might be evaluated.

The notion of responsibility at work here is not religious, as it was ultimately for Jaspers (a responsibility toward God), but civic. The German word *Bürgerpflicht* invoked by Habermas to describe the duty of remembering, implies civic duty, from voting to acting in accordance to the law and to the human rights which legitimize the law, but which the law does not always respect.⁹ In the Nazi apologetic context, *Bürgerpflicht* was deformed to serve as the excuse for having committed crimes, and at the same time to relieve the individual of responsibility for political action (“just following orders,” in fact a refusal of *Bürgerpflicht*). The response, implicit for Habermas in the democratic constitution of the Federal Republic, is not to scrap the concept altogether, but to consciously take on political responsibility by individuals. For Germans, this responsibility had to include awareness of the “suffering of those murdered at the hands of Germans.” What was needed for the Germans was an acknowledgment that their present was formed by that past: explicit acts of taking responsibility carried out in public, which we can term commemoration. Decoding Habermas’s “weak anamnestic power,” commemoration does not merely concern one’s own memories, or the past individual experiences; rather, commemoration is the coming together

⁸ “Public Use,” 41.

⁹ It is interesting that in an early text against nuclear armament in a Frankfurt student newspaper, Habermas called “unease the first civic duty.” Jürgen Habermas, “Unruhe erste Bürgerpflicht,” *Diskus* 8, no. 5, (June 1958).

of history experienced, taught, thought-through, learned, or mediated through commemorative tools such as monumental objects, photographs, performances (as we have seen), or historical sources. The reason we need to concern ourselves with the past at all lies in the fact that it is the base of the present social order, Habermas argued. Commemoration is thus not remembrance as such, but an act in the present of making explicit the history of present society. Habermas, in calling for individual responsibility, may seem to preserve an old-fashioned individualism in the era of postmodern historical fragmentation. We have also seen that his appeal—if we take it out of the specific context of Holocaust remembrance—leaves ambiguities concerning the object of commemoration. But if we allow the moral lesson to stand, his idea of commemoration does not only mean a democratization of historical subject matter, but a call to individual citizens to be politically active through an analysis of their role in making history.

History and Commemoration

A concept of history as consisting of relations between individuals would affect the development of monuments to the core, a change that could be felt already in Gerz's raising of suspicions against monumental history in Venice, or Beuys's presentation of biographical interiority as a "monument to the future," even though it was then not played out consciously enough. We will see how artists started to directly involve the audience performatively. This performative involvement is achieved by various means, and it does not necessarily mean, as I will show, that the monument or monumentality would lose their force: the most recent project of reunited Germany, the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, inaugurated after a seventeen-year debate in 2005 in the new capital of Berlin, maybe surprisingly,

incorporates monumental forms (and sizes), while subduing the visitor to facilitate a performance of unease.

First, we need to consider the changed intersection of history and memory that form the background of the new monuments of the 1980s. On one hand, history as it developed since the Renaissance as organized knowledge of the past distinct from myth, tradition, or individual experience, and which was formalized as a social science with nationalist baggage in the nineteenth century, left no place for individual experience. On the other hand, with nationalization came the need to involve citizens in the historical drama of their nation-state. The monument and the enforcement of myths and traditions became the essential mediators between individual and public (or cultural) memory.¹⁰ With the fragmentation of history into histories in the twentieth century, personal accounts (and accounts from the overlooked parts of society: proletarians, women, ethnic minorities) entered the writing of history: individuals were considered accountable for historical change, and memory was turned into an accepted source of insight into the past.¹¹ In contemporary history, memory becomes political without losing its claim as a *witness* against political instrumentalization: that the voices of the powerless are read historically does not mean that history is a menu of choices of whom to listen to, but that politics is responsible also to these individual and collective voices. The

¹⁰ It is no coincidence that the French Revolution brought with it the re-enactments of history, festive yearly parades to celebrate the storming of the Bastille, and the permeation between citizens and actors in these events. See Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* [1976] (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

¹¹ The three-volume anthology of French historian Pierre Nora started in the 1980s (*Lieux de Mémoire / Realms of Memory*) whose aim it is to work through French history from the angle of memory was explicitly marked as an attempt to dissect national history, to counteract the tendency of a continuous narrative from above. In his afterword, Nora stated that it was during the years of compiling the different essays that the canon of commemoration had vanished. According to Nora, the last decades witnessed a “collapse of the classical model of national commemoration...and its replacement by a loosely organized system of disparate commemorative languages, which assume a different kind of relationship with the past: one that is more elective than imperative and that is plastic, alive, and subject to perpetual elaboration....There is no commemorative superego: the canon has vanished.” Pierre Nora, “The Era of Commemoration,” *Realms of Memory*. Rethinking the French Past (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 614.

commemorative turn, then, is neither identical nor opposed to the postmodern fragmentation of national history. But it is threatened by the conservative view of memory as an instrument of national cohesion. To see how both tendencies emerged from the theoretical effort to understand the social bases of memory will be the first step toward untangling them.

The expanded concept of memory has been significantly shaped by Maurice Halbwachs's sociological studies at the beginning of the twentieth century: he released memory from a definition in strictly biological terms and transferred it into the cultural realm.¹² His story of a displaced Eskimo girl in the eighteenth century that needed to be shown images of her original surrounding (seals, boats, huts) in order to remember her homeland framed his theory of memory as dependent on social interaction and mediation:

It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories....most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we suppose they could have asked us.¹³

Halbwachs was primarily interested in the mechanisms of recall and their dependency on outside groups such as family, church, class, or any sort of community. The distinction between individual memory ('experience') and collective memory ('culture') remains slippery today, as does the question of how memory is involved in a social act of constructing the specific history of a group. In Halbwachs's analysis, memory is open socially at both ends: we *make* memories in public and we *speak* (recall) them in public. We could interpret Halbwachs in two ways: first, we could argue from a relativist stance that

¹² For Halbwachs, history was still opposed to memory due to its "objectivity," while from today's point of view both memory and history are thought to be framed by social conditions. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* [*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. Paris, 1925]. Edited, translated, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). See also Aleida Assmann, "Texts, Traces, Trash. The Changing Media of Cultural Memory." *Representations*, 51, Special Issue: The New Erudition (Autumn 1996), 123-134, and Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 1995. For the German discourse, Jan and Aleida Assmann's concepts of mnemohistory and cultural history are relevant.

¹³ Halbwachs, "Preface," 38.

memory is always a myth designed to fit the social occasion of remembering. The trouble with this view is that it only allows memory to be a tool for conforming. In the worst case, it would serve much the same purpose as Greek and German myth did for fascism.¹⁴ Secondly, we could state that memory is dependent on society to become public knowledge, which in no way forces it to conform to political demand. If Halbwach's Eskimo girl *forgets* when she comes into contact with the Europeans, what she remembers is *provoked*, not *determined*, by the people who take her in. In turn, the *reception* of her memory by witnesses is a social event, which relays that memory to subjects, who did not themselves experience it. Individual memory could thus be a corrective to an instrumental use of collective memory by politics. The making public of memory, the collective effort to allow memories to speak (and they do not necessarily have to be events lived through by all participants) is the instigation for commemoration. This comes close to Habermas's view.

For readers of Habermas in the 1980s, the question remained which tools could be used for this purpose. Significantly for the history of performative monuments, in Halbwachs's story, artifacts help the girl remember. The witness, representing the past as present and mediating it through his or her memories to the next generation, is another. Both need a public in order for the process to become commemorative, and both need to be reinstated through performative means in order to "speak." I will show in the following case study how public art can involve a performative "agreement" to commemoration, how it can bring together individuals, and how the promise to remember becomes the binding force for this action as political deed.

¹⁴ The classic case of Fascist national memory formation is Rosenberg's *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Rosenbergian themes persisted in the postwar era, notably in Martin Heidegger's high valuation of the early German tribal council (*Thing*). Ernst Nolte is himself a student of Heidegger.

From Reading to Acting: Gerz's Monument against Fascism

In 1983, the Social Democratic Party of Harburg, a district of Hamburg on the southern outskirts of the city, made the submission for a “monument [Mahnmal] against war and fascism” on the square in front of the Harburg city hall, which was approved by the city council.¹⁵ The monument was to bear the inscription: “against fascism, war, violence—for peace and human rights.”¹⁶ A closed competition was launched, and in January 1984, Jochen Gerz, one of the five invited artists, submitted a proposal that would change the culture of commemoration in Germany considerably.¹⁷

“The concept is simple,” begins Gerz's first letter to the city.¹⁸ The monument presupposed its disappearance: the piece was a column, twelve meters high (initially

¹⁵ City of Hamburg, Office of Cultural Affairs (Kulturbehörde Stadt Hamburg), records on art in public space, file name “Bezirk Harburg—Mahnmal gegen Faschismus Rathausmarkt Harburg,” file number 32-075.85/14.1, document number VA 11/63.23-10. The distinction between *Denkmal* and *Mahnmal* has no literal equivalent in English. *Denkmal* is more a monument [literal: a to think], while a *Mahnmal* admonishes. The distinction in German will prove significant for the interpretation of the Berlin project. The official English translation of the Harburg project is “monument.”

¹⁶ In the file, the inscription is written in capital letters: “GEGEN FASCHISMUS, KRIEG, GEWALT—FÜR FRIEDEN UND MENSCHENRECHTE”, *ibid*.

¹⁷ The other participants (all male) in the competition were Jochen Hiltmann, professor of visual culture in Hamburg, who proposed a work by his Korean wife, taking up the Korean-German Nazi past (a rabbit, Korean symbol for peace, escaping from a bell jar). Siegfried Neuenhausen, a realist sculptor with various public space projects in Germany, proposed a column made of clay. The abstract sculptor H. D. Schrader proposed a bowl made of basalt, one half of which was supposed to be shot (possibly by the Federal Armed Forces) before the inauguration, making visible the damage of war—an inventive use of performative elements in sculpture. The documenta 6 participant and “living artwork” Timm Ulrichs, with his roots in performance art, sent several proposals. He reached the final round with the idea of researching buildings of significance during the Nazi past, and then removing single stairs, which would be mounted together in a big staircase on the square in front of the city hall. The stairs were to have borne plaques explaining their former location. Office of Culture, Hamburg, files on competition, protocol of the meeting on January 17, 1985, file number 32-075.85/14, document number VA 11/30.02-2, as well as the submitted proposals in the file “Materialband” zu 32-075.85/14.2. The proposals were exhibited at the Harburg city hall in January 1985, see the review by an author abbreviated as (wi), “Die Modelle hatten nur sehr wenig mit dem Antifaschismus zu tun. Fünf Vorschläge für Mahnmal vorgestellt,” *Harburger Anzeiger und Nachrichten* (January 31, 1985). Press clip collection, Office of Culture, City of Hamburg.

¹⁸ “Es handelt sich um ein einfaches Konzept: ein an allen Kanten abgerundetes Rechteck (Höhe 7m, Breite 4,5m, Tiefe 1,12m) mit einer überall gleichen Oberflächen Schicht aus Blei—so präsentiert sich das Mahnmal am Tag der Einweihung. Es befindet sich keine Schrift oder sonstige Bezeichnung drauf.... In einer unbekanntem Anzahl von Jahren wird das Mahnmal unter dem Erdboden verschwunden sein, nur ihr oberer Teil, wird als Aufsicht etwas über Bodenniveau herausstehen. Auf der Oberseite, die vorher unsichtbar war, steht die Inschrift, die allen, die nachher an dieser Stelle vorbeikommen, mitteilt, dass die Stadt Harburg hier ein Mahnmal gegen den Faschismus errichtete, das in ... Jahren mit ... Unterschriften bdeckt wurde, und

projected to be seven meters) with a lead surface. A text—presented in seven languages and placed on a plaque next to the column—invited the passers-by to scratch their names into the surface with an adjacent steel bolt as an act of commitment against fascism. [Fig. 4.1, 4.2]

We invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so we *commit* ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day, it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice.¹⁹

As each section was inscribed, the column would be lowered into the ground. The project won the competition, and was inaugurated in October 1986, but not in front of the city hall. The proposal was initially brought in by Gerz alone, but in the process of the competition, Gerz's wife Esther Shalev, an artist from Jerusalem, became the official co-author.²⁰ Due to technical difficulties, but also because Esther and Jochen Gerz preferred a site in the middle of the flow of traffic, the column was placed on an elevated platform with a staircase connecting two different street levels in the center of Harburg.²¹ [Fig. 4.3] Its base rests on a busy passage between the pedestrian zone and its surrounding street, serving also as entry to the regional trains to the Hamburg city center.

Vandalism occurred against the column only weeks after the inauguration, and pro-fascist sentiments, racist comments, as well as inscriptions of the swastika appeared among

sich jetzt hier in der Erde versenkt befindet. "Möge es nie mehr nötig sein." Project file: "Bezirk Harburg—Mahnmahl gegen Faschismus Rathausmarkt Harburg," file number 32-075.85/14.1, received February 1, 1984.

¹⁹ From the board next to the monument. Published in Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz, *The Harburg Monument against Fascism*, edited by Achim Könneke (Ostfildern, Ruit: Hatje, 1994), 9. The board is still in the same location, with photographs from the respective lowerings completing the text [My emphasis].

²⁰ Esther Gerz is first mentioned by Gerz as late as May 1985 in a letter to the cultural office. "Meine Frau Esther Shalev, Bildhauerin aus Jerusalem, die einen Teil ihrer Familie in Litauen in Kzs verlor, hat mir nach dieser Sitzung gesagt, dass sie die Arbeit mit mir zusammen machen will, falls es zu einer Ausführung kommen würde." letter from Gerz dated 7.5.1985. File number 30-075.85/14, document number K 42.

²¹ The technical problem concerned the depth of digging needed for the lowering. File number 30-075.85/14.

the accumulating signatures. Some of the signatures were even scratched out.²² [Fig. 4.4, 4.5.] Nevertheless, the column was lowered into the ground as planned in eight installments over the course of seven years.²³ [Fig. 4.6] Every signature, as well as every swastika that appeared on the column, served as a transcript of performances enacted on or against the column by an audience that was free for the duration of the performance to enter or reject the performative “contract” offered by the artists. The vandalism was not unexpected. In his first proposal, Gerz had already anticipated uninvited reactions:

Of course it can happen that citizens and visitors write other things on the column than their names, for example pro-fascist slogans. This does not bother me, the monument is a *Relevator* [Gerz’s coinage, presumably from Latin *relevare*, to show, MW], not a false piety, a photograph of the city as it really is, not how it imagines itself or in its Sunday best. Contemporary sculptures often provoke only graffiti, why not turn the tables and make use of the writing as testimony.²⁴

The column, imagined as a “photograph” of its social surrounding, points towards the intersection of the monument and the document that has proven so important in other chapters. Indeed, the Harburg Memorial can be regarded as a document instigated by and read by the public: from the photograph revealing the city we have learned to block out, to the modernist monolith defaced by members of the youth culture, the monument is no longer propaganda but rather a political lightning rod, making inarticulate tensions visible as responses to antifascism. It is, in this sense, not at all a neutral recording of public opinion

²² See an article signed (rav), “Harburgs Mahnmahl schon beschmiert,” *Harburger Rundschau* (October 13, 1986); “Mahnmahl geschändet,” *Morgenpost* (October 16, 1986), and Uwe Spriestersbach, “Etwas anderes erwartet?” *Harburger Rundschau* (October 23, 1986). The District administration of Harburg sent a statement to the press expressing their hope that after a while the vandalism would abate. Bezirksamt Harburg, Presseerklärung, October 15, 1986, file number 32-075.85/14 - Presse. It did not, but press reaction died down.

²³ The column was lowered by 140cm whenever a section was more or less fully marked with inscriptions up to that height. See Andreas Hapkemeyer (ed.), *Jochen Gerz. Res Publica. The Public Works* (Ostfildern, Ruit: Hatje: Cantz, 2000), 52.

²⁴ “Natürlich kann es sein, dass die Bürger und Besucher, anderes auf die Skulptur schreiben als ihren Namen, z.B. pro-faschistische Parolen. Das stört mich nicht, das Mal ist ein Relevator, keine Frömmerei, ein Foto der Stadt, wie sie wirklich ist, nicht wie sie sich vorstellt oder sonntäglich putzt. Zeitgenössische Skulpturen provozieren oft als einziges Bekritzelungen, warum nicht den Spies umdrehen, die Beschriftung als Zeugnis dienlich machen.” Project file: “Bezirk Harburg—Mahnmahl gegen Faschismus Rathausmarkt Harburg,” file number 32-075.85/14.1, received February 1, 1984 [my translation].

but a critical survey: one that, declaring its own stance, takes stock of the agreement and disagreement it provokes. This emphasis on the document function explains why part of the submerged column is still visible through a small sealed glass window at the entrance to the under-path, resembling the exhibition of a geologically interesting stratum of the earth's past. [Fig. 4.7] In addition to this "peep-hole," documentation panels were installed next to the window and on top of the platform, with the text of the invitation and photographs of the successive lowerings. [Fig. 4.8] The prominence of the documentary function, treated as provocation, connects this project to Gerz's earlier *EXIT—The Dachau Project*, ten years earlier. The one remarkable difference lies in the "making" of the document by the audience. In *EXIT*, Gerz had presented the visitors with *his* documents pointing towards an assumed continuation of "fascist" language. In Harburg, the inscribed column becomes a document of *enactments* by the audience.

Gerz subtitled the Harburg memorial *Gegendenkmal* [usually translated as "anti-monument," in fact counter-monument], in order to emphasize his dissociation from traditional celebratory monuments. For American scholar James E. Young, who first theorized the artistic practice of Gerz's anti-monument in the broader context of Holocaust commemoration in Germany, Gerz's Harburg project exemplifies the idea of the countermonument, which he defined as follows:

Its aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by passers-by but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desanctification; not to accept graciously the burden of memory, but to throw it back at the town's feet.²⁵

²⁵ James E. Young, "The Counter Monument. Memory Against Itself in Germany." Chapter 1 in *The Texture of Memory*, 30, and *Critical Inquiry*, 277.

Young is right to emphasize that the monument calls for an active response; but to say that it “invites its own violation” is tantamount to saying that it is an invitation to the drawing of swastikas. Surely this is neither what Young nor Gerz meant.²⁶ The monument, if it has any political force at all, calls for individual responsibility against fascism and for vigilance, should fascism come to power. Yet the monument is commissioned by the city. We have seen Gerz struggle with this contradiction in his Biennale entry: has he managed to solve the difficulty in this even more challenging context of directly handling the Holocaust? Young answers in the positive:

A monument against fascism, therefore, would have to be a monument against itself: against the traditionally didactic function of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate—and finally, against the authoritarian propensity in monumental spaces that reduces viewers to passive spectators.²⁷

I agree with Young about the importance of Gerz’s Harburg monument, both as art and from the practical perspective of the contemporary memorial, but I think that this importance will remain mysterious as long as we regard the countermonument as self-defeating by definition. In the particular case of the Harburg project, we should not forget that the audience was following the invitation by the artists, who had themselves been invited by the officials of the city council.

This means that the monument still has authority, but it invites counter action from the public. It is in this receptivity that we need to read the work. The public’s counter-action

²⁶ And yet, as we have seen, Gerz made the pronouncement that his project was not about showing the city as its “Sunday best.”

²⁷ James E. Young, “Memory, Countermemory, and the End of the Monument,” in *At Memory’s Edge. After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 96. Also, idem., “The Counter-Monument. Memory Against Itself in Germany Today.” *Critical Inquiry* 18, 1992, 267-296, and idem., “Memory and Monument.” In Hartman, Geoffrey (ed.) *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); idem., (ed.) *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History* (Cat. The Jewish Museum New York. Munich/New York: Prestel, 1994); idem., *The Changing Shape of Holocaust Memory* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995); idem., *The Texture of Memory*.

must thus be considered complementary. Even more, we must think of audience involvement in a contractual (and performative) sense. The Harburg monument was institutional (commissioned) and part of a debate on fascism initiated by the city. It was the built equivalent of a written declaration that phrased legal language to be enacted by the public. Everyone signing took on a witness function in “remaining vigilant” (or refusing that responsibility), thus serving as a vessel to enact commemoration publicly. So much for the signatures against Fascism.

How does this performative action change with a swastika being written on the surface? Gerz, as we could gather from his inauguration speech, would have seen this as part of the condition of society at that point, as a “photograph,” as he wrote in his first proposal. He has a solid point here. And yet, the monument does *more*. If it only neutrally visualized the pro- and anti-fascist sentiments of the polity, it would be an interesting piece of sociology, not an anti-fascist art work. One answer would be that the moral-political status of a signature or antifascist statement on the surface is implicitly different from that of a swastika. The former are responses to the invitation of the plaque: *promises* to remain vigilant against fascism, even when the column, by disappearing, no longer stands witness to these promises.²⁸ The swastika, on the other hand, is a performative contradiction: one is not being vigilant against fascism by being a fascist, and yet, there is a part in which the offer by Gerz is being taken up. One is being incoherent, or ignorant, disrespecting the contract.

I have called the swastika a performative contradiction, and I would like to expand on the history of this term as a way of fleshing out the functioning of the Harburg monument.

Performativer Widerspruch is a term used by Habermas on various occasions to bridge social

²⁸ As Gerz underlines in the plaque text, the disappearance of the column in some way constrains the spectator to *remain* vigilant. In other words, the monument as social enforcer is to transfer its force to the public.

concerns with the seemingly abstract nature of language. “I convinced A that *d* by lying” is a classic example.²⁹ There is nothing wrong with the statement as information, but as the *act* of a real speaker it is self-defeating: one has not *convinced* someone if one has deceived her. Habermas expands this syntactic insights into a set of social and moral presuppositions under which all communication should take place.³⁰ The end result for Habermas is a minimal ethics that starts with the basics of conversation and draws from it political conclusions: in particular, one can criticize a variety of self-serving political utterances for contradicting the very assumptions of free speech under which they are phrased. This abstract social theory can be made concrete in the case of Holocaust commemoration: the ideal of a ‘conciliatory memory’ for Germans is likely to run into a contradiction with the stubborn contents of memory, of the “past which won’t go away,” or even with the idea of remembering: to remember ‘conciliatory,’ is to forget.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that in calling an inscribed swastika a performative contradiction, I am trying to avoid the simple idea of vandalism against a monument. The column was shot, the glass of the viewing window was broken (and also shot once), and so on.³¹ In these cases, the performative action must be regarded as unhappy in the strict sense, for the actor has not embarked on a speech act but only an act of violence;

²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, “Diskursethik,” in *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 105; translated by Christian Lenhardt and S. W. Nichol森 as “Discourse Ethics,” *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 90. Habermas takes the term from Karl-Otto Apel, “Das Problem der philosophischen Letztbegründung im Lichte einer transzendentalen Sprachpragmatik,” in Bernulf Kanitschneider (ed.), *Sprache und Erkenntnis* (Innsbruck: Inst. für Sprachenwissenschaft d. Univ. Innsbruck, 1976), 55ff. The phenomenon itself was first described in Jaako Hintikka, “Cogito, Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?” *The Philosophical Review*, Vol.71, No.1 (January 1962), 3-32, where the utterance “I do not exist” is shown to be self-defeating. This effect is already discussed in Austin for statements like “the cat is on the mat but I don’t believe it is.” *Philosophical Papers*, 248-50.

³⁰ “Demonstrating the existence of performative contradictions helps to identify the rules necessary for any argumentation game to work; if one is to argue at all, there are no substitutes.” Habermas, “Discourse Ethics,” 95. These rules are only practically inescapable; but we cannot *justify* them without relying on them.

³¹ See the chronology in Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev Gerz, *The Harburg Monument against Fascism*, edited by Achim Kötneke (Ostfildern: Hatje, 1994), 34-35.

nonetheless the inscribed swastika or 'SS' are speech acts and thus performative contradictions, because in them the contract fails to be honored. Overall, with some people signing, and others erasing, abusing, or otherwise vandalizing the column, we can witness a struggle in the performative realm. The document (i.e. the column) does not only show the traces of this battle, it is the medium bringing it about. In my opinion, this is not simply a lived form of democracy (after all, the swastika is considered outside the pale of German democracy), or one of productive conflict. Rather, we can see how the performative contract, or a performative model of ethics in general, can only work with the consensus of the participants. When the towns citizens purpose the contract, they precisely fail to enter its terms. Thus, this does not mean they must agree politically, but that they must agree at least to the forum of discussion, as opposed to intimidation or politics of pure means. In this sense, we can understand Gerz's column almost as the counter-gesture to Kiefer's *Occupations*, with their aggressive statements of photographically performative gestures, which must be put in the framework of the (equally aggressive) silence of the 1960s.

Given the interactive reach of the Harburg monument, does it help us situate Gerz's whole oeuvre inside the broader discussion of communicative action, democracy, and historical consciousness in West German political life? In 1981, Habermas published his *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns (The Theory of Communicative Action)*.³² Habermas took up Austin's insistence on the "situations" in which speech acts work or fail and connected these to the explicit *Lebenswelten* ("life worlds," a term from Husserl's late phenomenology) of the people communicating.³³ In insisting on the need for agreement

³² Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

³³ "Erst mit der Rückwendung auf den kontextuellen Horizont der Lebenswelt, aus der heraus sich die Kommunikationsteilnehmer über etwas verständigen, verändert sich das Blickfeld so, dass die Anschlussstellen

between speakers on the conditions of the situation, Habermas acknowledged the difficulties in Austin's theory, which took the social context more or less for granted.³⁴ Habermas focused on the interactive component in the speech act, and so pushed the concept towards the rational and democratic conditions of communication. This shift to language as a social component, is met by a similar interest of artists: from the direct involvement of the body, we see a shift in Gerz's oeuvre to the linguistic subject.

In Gerz's *Monument*, history is not being remembered directly, but we have nonetheless traveled far from the *EXIT* project with its immersion in the signifier: the citizens are being asked to articulate their interest in the past as a political act in the present. In the moment of the signature, this civil society of commemoration comes into being, because the signature is a socially binding act; in the moment of vandalism, the communicative contract is broken. To try to do both, as do the swastika and hate speech in general, is performative contradiction, and it is to the monument's credit that such contradictions are starkly exposed as such. The fascist symbols on the column reinforce the anti-fascist ones, while the reverse is not true. In this sense, the *Monument against Fascism* is the classic example of a performative monument.

The question remains how the socially binding action is related to commemoration, and to what extent a symbolic act, a work of art, can bring about "real" action. This discussion is already raised in Austin, who differentiated between real and theatrical instances of the performative. This distinction has given rise to a heated debate: how do we

der Handlungstheorie für die Gesellschaftstheorie sichtbar werden: das Gesellschaftskonzept muss an ein zum Begriff des kommunikativen Handelns komplementäres Lebensweltkonzept angeknüpft werden." (German text, 452)

³⁴ Austin was not a political philosopher, but he does point to some political applications of his theory, notably the social contract. *How to do Things with Words*.

make this distinction, and is it ever validly made?³⁵ Habermas takes up this question in his essay “An Excursus on Leveling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature.”³⁶ How do we deal with the respective infiltration of the fictive and the real? What about crime stories that adapt factual cases; what about metaphorical elements in everyday speech? What about a “monument” that proposes a contract of vigilance? Habermas’s goal as political philosopher is to tell world-disclosing (poetic) speech apart from practical speech; he shows great mistrust towards the deconstructivist mixing of the two.

In our context of an artist providing a stage for engagement in a social act, we need to ask whether there is a—perhaps symbolic—accountability for the performative interaction when executed as art. Obviously, the monument in Harburg has no measurable consequences as such (legal or otherwise), but it generates the taking of an ethical, and hence political, stance of individuals. In his opening speech, Gerz talked about the contractual part of the performative interaction:

If I sign something at some time, and someone tells me, hey, you did this, then I can be made responsible for it. Apart from this, you do it in publicI see it [the monument] as some kind of public test tube.³⁷

He might as well have said public *contract*. In some ways performance—and specifically performance in public space—always sits uncomfortably between the staged and the real, the

³⁵ This was famously debated between John Searle and Jacques Derrida: a promise, Searle insists, becomes “parasitic” when said on stage or in a quotation (not binding). He insists on the distinction between everyday serious speech and its fictive, simulated, or metaphorical use. Derrida argues that there can never be a clear distinction. See Chapter Two of this dissertation for a discussion of this point.

³⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “Excursus on Leveling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature,” In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 185-209.

³⁷ “Wenn ich irgendwann einmal etwas unterschrieben habe und hier sagt mir jemand, das hast du gemacht, dann kann ich deshalb zur Verantwortung gezogen werden. Außerdem, wenn man es macht, macht man es in der Öffentlichkeit....Ich sage das als so etwas wie ein öffentliches Reagenzglas.” Jochen Gerz, inauguration speech, quoted in Press release City of Harburg, Bezirksamt Harburg, Presseerklärung, October 15, 1986, file number 32-075.85/14 - Presse.

fictive elements and what Habermas calls the “contexts of life practice.”³⁸ The performative as communicative action could ideally bring the two realms together, in the moment of instantiation. Gerz’s ideas about the creation of a functioning civil society in his art are compatible with Habermas’s language-based pragmatic philosophy of politics.³⁹ Whatever one thinks of his comprehensive philosophy, Habermas has striven to keep the individual at the center of democratic politics, and at the same time for awareness and public acceptance of responsibility for the Holocaust among Germans of all generations. I hope to have shown to some extent that this double project is no coincidence.

Speaking broadly in the terms of the public debate of the 1980s, we can also see in Gerz’s example how memory and history come together performatively in the act of signing: the performative does not bring about a personal memory, but it becomes, through the social liability of the act, an act of public *attention* paid to the past through the act of signing the monument. The Historians’ Dispute was made public property in this performative monument, which mobilized the political responsibility of historically aware individuals through acts of commemoration. Theories of therapeutic forgetting of the past, such as were proposed in the debate, were effectively contradicted by people taking up Gerz’s challenge to commemorate.

³⁸ Habermas, “Excursus...,” 203.

³⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, 1980. Habermas first developed his ideas about communicative action in the late 60s and early 70s. See “Vorbereitende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie der kommunikativen Kompetenz,” in Jürgen Habermas/Niklas Luhmann: *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie: Was leistet die Systemforschung?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971).

Berlin during the Reunion: The Competition for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*

The Historians' Dispute not only brought up issues of responsibility, but left open the question about which ways the Holocaust should be remembered by a generation born after the war. With the reunification of Germany in 1990, this question was transformed from an obstacle to a necessity for national identity. In 1996, Aleida Assmann called for historians to think through this identity, which had been "taboo" for "(left) intellectual circles," because otherwise, Assmann warned, "the vacancy would be occupied by others." (i.e. the far right).⁴⁰ Assmann employed the term of "group memory" (*Gruppendächtnis*), which she sets apart from "individual remembrance of history," and "historical research." Group memory, is for Assmann a form of preserving history by appealing to a trans-generational narration of the past.⁴¹ This desired group memory makes remembrance consist of conscious acts and bridges the precarious caesura of the extinction of personal memory by integrating older witnesses and participants with ones born after the war, via education and by binding them to a collective memory.

Why the renewed urgency to think through national identity? Could the Germans, struggling to reintegrate two states that had been separate for nearly half a century afford national memory? Assmann turned the question around: "Can Germans afford not to have it?"⁴² More than five years after the reunification, when Assmann wrote her text, the issue was at the forefront of conservative political discussion, and historians like Assmann had to

⁴⁰ Aleida Assmann, "Zwischen Pflicht und Alibi." *Die Tageszeitung* (March 20, 1996), reprinted in Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche, Horst Seferens (eds.), *Der Denkmalstreit—das Denkmal. Die Debatte um das 'Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas.'* Eine Dokumentation (Berlin: Philo, 1999), 503-507 (quote 504), and in Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte*, 1999, 157-165 [my translation].

⁴¹ Aleida Assmann, "Zwischen Pflicht und Alibi," in *Denkmalstreit*, 503 [my translation].

⁴² *Denkmalstreit*, 504.

take a stance. National identity had, as we have seen, been a difficult issue since the 1950s. During the 1980s, even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, it surfaced acutely together with the Historians' Dispute, and wishful calls for a reunification of the 'German center of Europe.'⁴³ This ideology, which increasingly saw Germany as a victim of WWII (without explicitly denying Nazi guilt), gained political currency in the attempt to build a national monument for all dead of World War II under the rationale of "not dividing into victims and perpetrators."⁴⁴ The conservative government tried to install this national monument in Bonn during the 1980s, then still the capital of the Federal Republic. Criticized among others by Habermas for this symbolic leveling of guilt, the national monument was ultimately established at the *Neue Wache* (New Guard House), a building designed by Friedrich Schinkel in the early nineteenth century at the very center of Berlin. This former royal guard house, which had served continuously as memorial place since 1931, was inaugurated as *Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Victims of War and Tyranny* in 1993.⁴⁵ [Fig. 4.9]

If it is striking that a leftist historian like Assmann should adopt the trope of using memory to build national identity, we can perceive the sea change in political facts that forced the question upon the German left: with the hurried annexation of the GDR into a

⁴³ Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang*, 74.

⁴⁴ Alfred Dregger, "Nicht in Opfer und Täter einteilen," *Das Parlament* (May 17-24, 1986). Dregger spoke of ten million Germans killed since WWI: a number with suggestive implications for commemoration.

⁴⁵ The *Neue Wache* was promoted instead of the project in Bonn after Berlin was to become the new capital. The *Neue Wache* had served as memorial place for the dead soldiers of World War I since 1931, then during the GDR as memorial place for the "victims of Fascism and Militarism." Its inscription to the "victims of war and tyranny," subsumes under the victims both soldiers, resistance fighters, victims of Stalinism and the victims of Fascist race theory alike. It was heavily debated, not only for its ambiguous inscription, but also for the decision to use the enlarged version of a small (38cm high) sculpture by Käthe Kollwitz, a mother holding a dead son (presumably dealing with the death of Kollwitz's son in WWI). Despite the controversy, the memorial was inaugurated in 1993. Thünemann, *Holocaust-Rezeption*, 34-53. See also "Streit um Pieta in der Neuen Wache. Widerstand gegen Kohls Pläne für Zentrale Gedenkstätte in Berlin." *Berliner Zeitung* (June 30, 1993). See also Jürgen Habermas's criticism in, "Eine Art Schadensabwicklung," *Die Zeit* (July, 11, 1986), republished in English under the title "A kind of settlement of damages (Apologetic Tendencies)" in *New German Critique*, op.cit., 25-39.

reunified Germany, one could not evade the national question without capitulating to a right nationalism. Thus Assmann demands an identity based on the ‘conscious act of remembrance,’ and not on reassuring myths. “Collective remembrance as nation means in this sense: a trans-generational knowledge about the crimes committed by Germans.”⁴⁶ Of course, “collective” remembrance was not so easy to install, in particular if it should not be self-serving. But ones the “nation” aimed at remembrance, individualism ran into difficulties.

All the problems internal to German postwar memory, from the contested idea of national identity to collective guilt, and in particular, how and if “mourning” or “commemoration” of the Holocaust is called for in Germany, surfaced in the debate and execution of the Berlin *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (*Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*).⁴⁷ After a fifteen-year discussion, several rounds of artistic competitions, changing juries, political interventions and public debate, the monument for the Jewish victims of National Socialism was finally inaugurated in 2005. [Fig. 4.10, 4.11] At first, the initiative had been private: in August 1988, journalist Lea Rosh called for a memorial for the murdered Jews as a as “visible signal of confession.”⁴⁸ Rosh proposed a memorial for the so-called “Prince-Albrecht-Site” close to the Berlin Wall, marked historically as the former seat of the Gestapo. After hearings, debates, and political lobbying, a development association was founded in November 1989, two days before the fall of the Berlin Wall.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Assmann, in *Denkmalstreit*, 505 [my translation].

⁴⁷ The official translation is memorial. I will use monument instead. Even in the German debate, Mahnmal was used for the project on many occasions. For the difference between Mahnmal and Denkmal, see note 14.

⁴⁸ Chronik, in *Denkmalstreit*, 27.

⁴⁹ The chronology of the project from 1988 until November 1997 as well as the official text of the competition can be found in Michael S. Cullen, *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal. Dokumentation einer Debatte* (Zurich / Munich: Pendo, 1999), which is a good summary of the difficult history of the monument. Much more extensive, with a detailed chronology is Ute Heimroff, Günter Schlusche and Horst Seferens (eds.) *Denkmalstreit*. A controversy about the exclusion of other victims, in particular Roma and Sinti, started immediately and led to several heated

With the unification of the Federal Republic and the GDR less than a year later, in October 1990, the project took on a new significance: Berlin was to be the capital, and the monument was to be seen as the first project of unified Germany dealing particularly with the Holocaust. Given the drastic changes in the cityscape, and new findings such as the ruins of Hitler's bunker underneath what became the no man's land after the erection of the Wall (the mined land between the East and West parts of the Wall), the site for the monument for the murdered Jews was reconsidered.⁵⁰ Several sites were contemplated in an area around Potsdamer Platz coveted by city developers and companies such as Mercedes-Benz, all loaded with historical references both to National Socialism and the Cold War.⁵¹ In 1994, a competition for the *Denkmal* was launched, "nationwide," open to artists and "related branches...as long as they have lived or worked in the Federal Republic for at least six months," while twelve additional participants, not all of them German or German residents, were personally invited to contribute.⁵² The limitation of the open call to entrants living

debates between the Central Consistory of Jews and the Central Consistory of Roma and Sinti in the following years. See "Roma und Sinti fordern eigene Ged nkst tte." *Der Spiegel* (July 30, 1999), <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,33498,00.html> [Online version, accessed December 22, 2008]. A monument for the Roma and Sinti was ultimately started in 2008. The commissioned artist, Dani Karavan, had also been invited to propose a project for the Jewish monument. See Rolf Lautenschl ger, "Endlich Baubeginn. Holocaustmahnmal f r Sinti und Roma." *Die Tageszeitung* (December 19, 2008), <http://www.taz.de/nc/regional/berlin/aktuell/artikel/1/endlich-noch-ein-mahnmal&src=PR> [Online version, accessed December 22, 2008]. Also in 2008, a monument to the homosexual victims of National Socialism was inaugurated in Berlin's Tiergarten park. It was designed by Ingar Dragset and Michael Elmgreen. For a comparison between the Berlin monument and Whiteread's Vienna monument, see Th nemann, *Holocaust-Rezeption*, 2005.

⁵⁰ The *F hrerbunker*, was a complex of underground buildings close to the chancellery, where Hitler and his closest allies had fled before his suicide in April 1945.

⁵¹ For the different locations, see Cullen, "Chronik," 281-282. In the next years, a boom of dedication plates, artistic projects dealing with the National Socialist past, and historical sites were planned and opened to the public in Berlin. Apart from the *Neue Wache*, the *Topography of Terror* opened close to the initially planned location of the Gestapo (a documentation center for the research on National Socialism), as did the memorial train station Grunewald (1991), a memorial for the detention camp Sonnenallee (1994), etc. See *Denkmalstreit*, Chronik, 27-33.

⁵² "K nstlerischer Wettbewerb 'Denkmal f r die ermordeten Juden Europas,'" text for the call, reprinted in Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte*, 1999, 68f, and *Denkmalstreit*, 171ff. The twelve invited artists were Magdalena Abakanowicz, Christian Boltanski, Rebecca Horn, Magdalena Jetelova, Dani Karavan, Fritz Koenig, Jannis Kounellis, Gerhard Merz, Karl Prantl, David Rabinovitch, Richard Serra, and G nther Uecker. In March 1995,

permanently in Germany (i.e. de facto almost exclusively Germans), and the strange equivocation of inviting a few (Jewish) international and some prominent German artists, reveal how unresolved the questions that were debated right after the war remained: could such a competition and the resulting monument be considered the acceptance of guilt, an attitude Jaspers had called for in order to deal with the “moral” responsibility of every German (in his terms, the “metaphysical guilt”)? We have seen how that demand was adapted to liberal democratic commemoration through the claim that Fascism was part of the “historical milieu,” with which every German grew up.⁵³ Would civic duty resonate with the former citizens of the two, politically very different Germanies? Could a monument bridge history with individual involvement, could—or should—it be the tool to bring about the “group memory” Assmann was concerned with? On one hand, the competition alone must be seen as part of a massive taking of responsibility, by private individuals and the press, by city, national, and party officials. On the other, one could claim that imposing a monument on the victims of Germany would enable Germans to “get over” the problem of guilt.⁵⁴ Was the limitation to “Germans” in the call for entries even an exclusion of an imagined international moralizing? These, and many more questions were brought up in the course of a public discussion concerning the first competition.

Characteristically, two winners were proclaimed, but ultimately, only one of the chosen projects stayed in the discussion: a group headed by Christine Jakob-Marks proposed to engrave the names of all Jewish victims on an enormous concrete plate. [Fig. 4.12] Formally we can establish a certain rapport between this proposal and Maya Lin’s

two entries received the first prize: Simon Ungers, and a group headed by Christine Jakob-Marks.

⁵³ Habermas, *Schadensabwicklung*.

⁵⁴ Such an argument was presented by Israel-born journalist Rafael Seligmann, “Genug Bemitleidet. Gegen ein deutsches Holocaust-Memorial,” *Der Spiegel* (January 16, 1995), reprinted in Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte*, 1999, 80-85.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. of 1981, with its list of American casualties in Vietnam, although the naming of the Jewish victims in a German context would have been a starkly different gesture. [Fig. 1.5] The successor of Hitler's Reich would on one hand officially have taken on responsibility for these deaths. On the other hand, with the iconographical approximation of a funerary stone, history would have been made to "rest in peace." In other words, the flavor of false identification between the German commemorators and "our dead" lingered in the symbolism, which was not the case in Washington, where there is a literal identification, since it is precisely American nationals who are commemorated. It is possible that Jakob-Marks envisioned an individual involvement of the audience, namely a performative interaction with the engraved names similar to the one that had made Lin's memorial so successful.⁵⁵ Gerz, in his Harburg memorial, made use of a similar strategy of audience involvement through writing, but he was aware of the unequal historical substructure involved when Germans remember Fascism. He thus avoided the option of mourning as the form of public commemoration—a difficult attitude for the Germans, since it seems to presuppose their innocence—and shifted the involvement into one of acceptance (or refusal) of responsibility in the present.⁵⁶

Both Gerz and Lin mobilized performative involvement to link historical facts to an individual confrontation with history. Who would have been involved by Jakob-Marks' monument? Small pathways through the memorial were suggested that would allow the

⁵⁵ The public presence of the D.C. memorial in photographs was characterized by the image of visitors tracing the engraved names on paper. This interaction became formative for the reception of Lin's project. The performative moment is often emphasized by showing a mirror reflection of the visitor in the shiny stone surface. See also my introduction.

⁵⁶ One mourns one's own family or friends. A guilty party must rather, as Jaspers emphasized, show remorse. A remorseful monument, on the other hand, is hard to imagine.

visitor to see (and possibly search for) specific names.⁵⁷ The proposal raised moral problems: collective mourning of the Germans would not only have been inappropriate, it could also have meant pushing away individual accountability, an issue Jaspers already discussed as the problem of any collective guilt theory. On the other hand, Jewish visitors and the Jews living in Germany might have felt uncomfortable seeing the names of their relatives engraved on a monolith by the German government—and in fact, several survivors refused permission for the engraving of the names of their family members.⁵⁸ Apart from these concerns, both the monumentality of the proposal and the infeasibility of discovering the names of all victims were criticized. Ignaz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany opposed the project as “distasteful.”⁵⁹ Ultimately, the proposal was vetoed by Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1995, and a scholarly colloquium was launched at the beginning of 1997 to reconsider the proposed site, political context, iconography, and the meaningfulness of the monument. The result was a new closed competition in July 1997.⁶⁰ By then, the whole story had become a distressingly symbolic rehearsal of the problems of German memory. What surfaced was a general demand for a decidedly representative (but somehow not too monumental) design for the new capital of the new Germany.

⁵⁷ The names could thus not have been walked on—as some opponents of the proposal claimed. Interview with Jakob-Marks, Hella Rolfes, Hans Scheib, Reinhard Stangl, “Warum dieses Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas?” In *Tagesspiegel* (October 29, 1997), reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 878.

⁵⁸ Cullen, “Chronik.” See also the reprint of significant newspaper articles in Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte*, 1999.

⁵⁹ Public reaction to the entries was generally negative. The director of the Holocaust research center Fritz Bauer Institut in Frankfurt, Hanno Loewy, proposed that the competition be viewed as a “social experiment, almost a laboratory experiment, in which all abysmal fantasies, all, but all cover-up-memories and guilt complexes, all absurd bestowings of meaning and hopes of salvation are expressed which German society developed in the underground of its consciousness with respect to its mighty deed of antisemitism” [my translation]. Hanno Loewy, “Wo keiner einsteigt und keiner aussteigt.” *Frankfurter Rundschau* (August 14, 1995), reprinted in Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte*, 1999, 133.

⁶⁰ The colloquium consisted of three panels, “Why does Germany need the monument?” “The site, its historical and political context,” and “Typology and iconography of the monument, ways of realization,” held on January 10th, 1997, February 14th, 1997, and April 11th, 1997, respectively. A protocol of these meetings was published by the Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur (ed.), *Colloquium. Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation* (Berlin, 1997).

A jury invited sixteen artists as well as those, whose proposals had been awarded a prize in the 1994/95 competition.⁶¹ Rachel Whiteread, who had won the competition in Vienna, was among the invited artists, but did not submit an entry; Christian Boltanski, whose photo-installations deal with loss and memory, often explicitly with the Holocaust, and whose permanent public art work *The Missing House* [Fig. 4.13] (1990) in Berlin had concretely dealt with the bombings of the city, also did not submit a project.⁶² This caution of prominent representatives of the new monument (and Holocaust commemoration in particular) is an eloquent testimony to the perceived difficulty of the Berlin project. The difficulty was political, to be sure, but also aesthetic: we see this most clearly in the work of Rebecca Horn, a performance and installation artist, who had already submitted to the first competition.

Horn's initial scheme of a path spiraling into the ground, and a golden flag protruding from the underground space, was reiterated in the second proposal, together with the idea of surrounding the above-ground park area with red-leafed trees. [Fig. 4.14, 4.15] Instead of an audio installation in the walls of the subterranean path, which was originally to include the whispering of the names of all murdered people, in the second proposal these same walls were to be filled with ashes, and the path was to lead to a 'lake of mirrors.' "The visitor is subjected to the polarity of life and death symbols," reads the proposal text. Furthermore, "in

⁶¹ A commission (all-male) including art historian Werner Hofmann, architect Josef Paul Kleihues, and international experts such as James E. Young invited the following artists: Christian Boltanski, Eduardo Chillida, Peter Eisenman, Jochen Gerz, Zvi Hecker, Hans Hollein, Rebecca Horn, Dani Karavan, Daniel Libeskind, Markus Lüpertz, Gerhard Merz, David Rabinovitch, Ulrich Rückriem, James Turell, Gesine Weinmiller, and Rachel Whiteread. See Cullen, 272-273. The site was also still contested at that point.

⁶² *The Missing House* takes as its subject a house in Grosse Hamburgerstrasse, which was bombed in 1945. Boltanski researched the names and professions of the people who had lived there, mostly Jews, and mounted small plaques on the fire walls on the two buildings adjacent to the still existing gap. See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Mourning or Melancholia: Christian Boltanski's Missing House," *Oxford Art Journal* (21, 1998), 1-20. The photo-installations usually use portraits (often taken from group shots) that are enlarged, and then mounted together with light bulbs in an "altar," for example, *Le Lycée Chases. Classe terminale du lycée chases a Castellezgasse* (1987, in fact the Zwi-Perez-Chajes school in Vienna), and *Jewish School of Grosse Hamburgerstrasse Berlin, 1939* (1994). Boltanski sees himself in the tradition of Beuys.

its unforeseeable rhythm of movement, the mirror bundles instantaneity and transcendence....the sky is on this side mirrored on the inside of the gravesite.”⁶³ Horn positioned herself as decidedly anti-monumental and resolutely dramatic. Her second proposal made it into the last round of six (later eight) entries that the commission proposed to the contracting authorities. During the hearing of her proposal, however, skepticism against the use of ash as material dominated the discussion, and Horn was eliminated from the competition at that point.⁶⁴ Let us try to parse the significance of this work, both in its appeal and its limitations.

What may have been appreciated by the jury in Horn’s project is her transmission of a physically challenging experience to the visitor, skillfully transposed from her own experience as performance artist. Horn’s idea was to change the visitor’s frame of reference by setting up visual and symbolic opposites that had to be encountered on a theatrically planned journey down the spiral staircase: light versus darkness, sky versus earth, ash versus golden flag, and so on. Horn explained the desired effect on the visitor as follows:

After the visit, looking down for the second time, his perception will have changed. He will see and feel differently, and will have experienced a process of change of the self, which is daily being kept alive in remembrance of the victims.⁶⁵

This sounds very ambitious, and the question remains whether reception can be manipulated so precisely. Horn would include parts of this proposal in later installations dealing with problems of remembrance, such as the black lake in the Synagogue Stommeln (*Spiegel der Nacht / Mirror of the Night*, 1998) in Pulheim near Cologne, and the glass walls filled with

⁶³ “Der Besucher ist so der Polarität von Lebens- und Todeszeichen ausgesetzt,” Rebecca Horn, “Annäherung an das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas,” in *Denkmalstreit*, 892-93 [my translation]. For the first entry see entry number 1171—51264, *Denkmalstreit*, 298.

⁶⁴ The other five were: Eisenman/Serra, Karavan, Libeskind, Lüpertz, Weinmiller, *Denkmalstreit*, 919.

⁶⁵ “Nach dem Besuch, beim zweiten Hinunterschauen, wird seine Sehweise sich verändert haben. Er wird anders sehen und empfinden, und so an sich einen Prozess der Selbstveränderung erfahren haben, der durch die Erinnerung an die Opfer hier täglich wachgehalten wird.” *Denkmalstreit*, 893 [my translation].

ashes in Weimar (*Concert for Buchenwald*, 1999, permanent installation).⁶⁶ What might work poetically as an evocation in these venues might have seemed trifling in a national monument. For the proposed site, a very public symbolism was needed, not a poetic assimilation of a process of mourning.

After the hearing on the eight short-listed competitors in the middle of November 1997, the works of four artists were presented in detail to a wider public, even though the jury had only favored two, according to the official transcripts from the meetings: the proposal by German architect Gesine Weinmiller, and the proposal by Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra.⁶⁷ [Fig. 4.16, 4.17] Despite their differences in symbolic charge and scale, both projects fragmented the massive monumentality of the stone monolith into a multiplicity of stone steles that suggested a space somewhere between a cemetery and a labyrinth. The initiator of the project, Lea Rosh, favored Jochen Gerz, who was therefore included in the final round [Fig. 4.18, 4.19, 4.20], while Daniel Liebeskind, the architect of the Jewish Museum Berlin, was nominated by the political authorities.⁶⁸ [Fig. 4.21] Finally, in January 1998, the Serra/Eisenman project was declared the winner of the competition.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See Rebecca Horn, *Concert for Buchenwald* (Zurich / New York, Scalo, 2000), Rebecca Horn, *Spiegel der Nacht* (Cologne: König, 1998), and Rebecca Horn, *Moon Mirror: Site-specific Installations, 1982-2005* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2005).

⁶⁷ James E. Young, "Empfehlungen der Findungskommission," reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 939-40.

⁶⁸ While in a meeting of the jury on October 31, 1997, Gerz was eliminated from the competition, he was put back after another meeting that included the commissioning authorities, Lea Rosh, politicians, and others on November 1, 1997. See Günter Schlusche, "Protokoll der Sitzung der Findungskommission am 31.10.1997," and "Protokoll der Sitzung des Beurteilungsgremiums am 1.11.1997," in *Denkmalstreit*, 920-21. Richard Serra was brought into the discussion very early on: in April 1991, Harald Szeemann, who was invited to develop a concept for the monument, argued for a project bringing together Richard Serra and Christian Boltanski. Harald Szeemann, "Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas," *Denkmalstreit*, 74-78.

⁶⁹ Novelist Günter Grass and playwright George Tabori called for the abandonment of the project in February 1998: "Wir sehen nicht, wie eine abstrakte Installation von bedrückend riesigem Ausmaß einen Ort der stillen Trauer und Erinnerung, der Mahnung oder sinnhaften Aufklärung schaffen sollte." In Cullen, "Chronik," 290. In 1998, Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel and writers including Arthur Miller and Amos Oz also argued against the monument. Cullen, "Chronik," 293. See also the detailed description "Das engere Auswahlverfahren von 1997/98" and "Der Entscheidungsprozeß vom November 1997," in *Denkmalstreit*, 919-1139.

Beyond Mourning? Gerz's Proposal and Eisenman's Monument

I will conclude this chapter by comparing the monument as finally built with Gerz's proposal, which stands, as we might expect, for a performative monument based on interactivity, a language-based approach, and—this would play a role in the development of the winning project itself—a combination of commemoration and historical research. To some extent, Gerz's proposal can be seen as an ideal candidate for Assmann's practice of "group memory," in its attempt to bridge individual action with an experience of teaching and learning on the national scale. The difficulties encountered in trying to make this particular project a reality, then, will tell us something about the German national project today and its relation to memory.

According to Gerz's plan, thirty-nine steel light poles, sixteen meters in height, were to be erected. In glowing filaments, the question "Why" was to be illuminated from the top of these poles in various languages. The answers were to be given by visitors, and then engraved into the floor panels of the monument square. This process was to continue for several years, and after the space on the floor was exhausted, answers should continue to be collected, but no longer inscribed. The performance was thus intended never to end, while the function of the witness was to be made visible through the engraving. Gerz described the duality as follows:

The space exists in two conditions, the modifiable and the irrevocable. The irrevocable condition is reached once the space is filled with answers. Paradoxically though, the modifiable condition of the Monument-Memorial [*Denk- und Mahnmal*] is the permanent one, because the answers of the visitors are still collected after the inscriptions have ended. This ongoing process makes the temporal dimension of the monument-memorial similarly inconceivable to the number of six million murders.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Der Platz existiert in zwei Zuständen, dem veränderbaren und dem endgültigen. Der endgültige Zustand ist erreicht, wenn er mit Antworten vollgeschrieben ist.Paradoxiertweise aber ist der veränderbare Zustand des Denk- und Mahnmales der permanente, weil die Antworten der BesucherInnen auch nach der beendeten Beschriftung des Platzes gesammelt werden. Dieser fortdauernde Prozeß macht die zeitliche Dimension des

Gerz's distinction between modifiable and irrevocable, and emphasis on the former, is a refinement of the thinking about time already made concrete at Harburg. One aspect of the project which is curiously talked away by this distinction is the asymmetry between the answers collected during the first phase and the second 'irrevocable-modifiable' phase: the first set is inscribed, the second set is only collected and stored (or perhaps thrown away) by the staff. It seems that the act of answering has a notably different, more public function in the first case than in the second. Gerz might have felt this discrepancy, for he compensates with the awkward comparison between the monument's time scale and the number of Jewish victims. In a sense, a kind of poetic transformation of the spectator is still expected here despite the focus on collecting survey answers. The visitor was to become part of the memorial, Gerz explained, as "remembrance is the awakening from mourning, as well as a revolt against its cause and the powerlessness of suffering....nothing can represent this in substitution, not art and not politics."⁷¹

In addition to the performative feature of the work, Gerz proposed a center of documentation, planned by Iranian architect Nasrine Seraji. This was to house several projects, such as Steven Spielberg's *Shoah Foundation*, the video archive with interviews of survivors, as "memory of the Shoah," a library, and so on, in order to encourage an intellectual exchange about memory and commemoration. Additionally, Seraji's building was also to include a room for meditation purposes with music by La Monte Young.⁷² There

Denk- und Mahnmales ähnlich unvorstellbar wie die Zahl der 6 Millionen Morde." Jochen Gerz, "Warum ist es geschehen? Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas Berlin 1997." Proposal, reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 884 [my translation].

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² The Shoah Foundation is now housed by the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. See <http://college.usc.edu/vhi/> [Online document, accessed December 19, 2008].

are, then, *two* performative faces to the work: the public-contractual, which we know already, and the private-contemplative. The former feeds into and is justified by the latter.

It is possible that Gerz's competition entry combined too many approaches to convince the jury. In the respective protocols, concerns were raised that the proposal was too didactic, but formally deficient, with possible misinterpretations of the question asked.⁷³ I suspect that part of the issue was that the performative interaction Gerz intended (the "answer" to his question), was too vulnerable to "performative contradictions" no one would have wanted to see engraved in stone in the new capital. In Harburg, political authorities had raised concerns about the "image" of the city given the Fascist slogans and symbols, and obviously it was to be expected that the monument in Berlin would be much discussed in the international press.⁷⁴ The Harburg memorial could be considered binding for the city, its citizens, the local population, and the modest number of outside visitors; and in this sense, a performative contract made sense, and could indeed bind together the people signing. Berlin was a different case altogether: not a memorial [Mahnmal] was planned (although Gerz used the term "monument-memorial" for his proposal), but a monument [Denkmal]; not an admonition for the future, but the acceptance of responsibility for the past; not an art project that was to be expected to be debated in the local press (and reach into international art discourse through its aesthetic significance), but the internationally long-awaited political gesture of a reunited Germany towards the victims of the Nazi era. What was longed for was an "answer" to the past, not a question, but also, the question had its problem: for "why" might have been too neutral a question altogether.

⁷³ See *Denkmalstreit*, 920-21. The interactive moment in the project was well-received.

⁷⁴ During his hearing, Gerz stated that the site could tolerate some "hefty right-wing statements," according to the newspaper *Die Tageszeitung*. Julia Naumann, "Viel Beifall für Jochen Gerz' Provokationen," in *Die Tageszeitung* (January 19, 1998), reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 984.

The open-endedness of Gerz's question also missed its audience: the Germans were not meant to "discuss" their past, but to articulate their guilt.⁷⁵ Would a reply from a Neo-Nazi even have been a performative contradiction? Or rather an unpleasant dilemma for the authorities responsible for the inscription? After all, the bold question "Why" legitimizes any possible answer, in contrast to the clear statement in Harburg. In this sense, there hardly was any contractual agreement one could enter. Gerz was surely aware of some of these difficulties. And yet, he chose to forcefully shift the term to the audience through the extraordinarily confrontational staging of the question. The ambiguity of the proposal (where the Harburg memorial was subtle *and* forthright), suggests that the group memory demanded by Assmann may be difficult to perform indeed.

The winning project by Peter Eisenman in collaboration with Richard Serra appealed both to partisans of traditional monumentality and to proponents of a cathartic element for the audience.⁷⁶ [Fig. 4.17] Indeed, it combined the two in a process of physically subjecting the visitors to an experience of unease. Initially, the project consisted of approximately 4,000 concrete piers, with heights ranging from zero to nine meters, arranged on uneven ground in an randomized order simulating the entry of chaos into a disciplined grid. The piers were to be separated by passages so narrow (92 cm) that only one person could pass through at a time. There was "no goal, no end, no path directing one in or out," Eisenman and Serra

⁷⁵ According to a press review, this question was raised very directly by an interlocutor during a discussion in Berlin. Not perpetrators, but the victims, he argued, were entitled to ask "Why?" Julia Naumann, "Viel Beifall für Gerz' Provokation," *Die Tageszeitung* (January 19, 1998), reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 984.

⁷⁶ In contrast, Young had initially advocated an ongoing debate about the monument, instead of actually building it. During the third colloquium, he "... admitted that until that moment, I had been one of the skeptics. Rather than looking for a centralized monument, I was perfectly satisfied with the national memorial debate itself." James E. Young, "Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem—and Mine," *The Public Historian*, 24/4, (fall 2002), 65-80; this quote from reprint in *At Memory's Edge*, 193. The text, which finally came out strongly for a real physical monument, appeared in German under the title "Gegen Sprachlosigkeit hilft kein Kreischen und Lachen. Wer an Vernichtung erinnern will, muß die Leere gestalten; Berlins Problem mir dem Holocaust-Denkmal—und meines," in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (January 2, 1998).

explained their project in the first phase, emphasizing that the focus was not to be placed on the weighty material, or any didactic purpose, but rather on the disorienting *experience* of walking through the forest of steles.⁷⁷ Communication between persons walking next to each other was to be prevented; the idea was to single out the individual visitors without affording them privacy, or as jury member James E. Young described it, to “deprate us from orientation.” This feeling, according to Young, is at once visceral and symbolic: “part of what Eisenman calls the ‘uncanny,’ derives precisely from the feeling of danger...from the demand that we have to find our own path to and through remembrance.”⁷⁸ Young elaborated here the idea of Eisenman and Serra of the performative as a corporeal feeling.

The idea that such discomfort would in itself constitute remembrance, points to the assumption that unmediated experience lies at the center of commemoration. This has been at the center of the German monument-making at least since Beuys and Negt/Kluge, and it has not been questioned much since. Even Horn and—to a certain extent, at least in his Berlin proposal—Gerz, do submit to this assumption, which I would evaluate as highly problematic.

Eisenman and Serra fractured the monolithic “threat” of the old national monument into feelings of unease to be experienced by individual spectators. These were no longer thought to be capable of visual mastery of the intact monolith, but had to *interact* with its fragments. In the course of the ongoing discussion about the symbolism and the feasibility of the project and process of revisions, Richard Serra left the collaboration in 1998.⁷⁹ Eisenman,

⁷⁷ Eisenman architects with Richard Serra, Proposal text, reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 883-4 [my translation].

⁷⁸ James E. Young, “Empfehlungen der Findungskommission,” *Denkmalstreit*, 940 [my translation; I am retranslating from an English original] The press reactions were fairly positive after the presentation of the final proposals. See *Denkmalstreit*, 941ff.

⁷⁹ See “Holocaust-Mahnmal: Richard Serra zieht sich zurück,” *Der Tagesspiegel* (June 3, 1998), reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 1053, the interview with Peter Eisenman by Verena Lueken: “Dem eigenen Unbewußten ins Gesicht schauen. Ein Mahnmal, das auf einen Bruch in der deutschen Geschichte deutet: Verena Lueken im Gespräch mit Peter Eisenman, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (September 22, 1998), reprinted in Jeisman, 270-276, and the interview with Richard Serra by Carsten Probst, “Warum ist ein Holocaust-Mahnmal

now working alone, reduced the number of piers to 2,700, and adjusted their measurements between zero and no longer than four meters high. He also integrated a free area on the outside of the actual monument (15-20 meters), and added trees flanking the site. [Fig. 4.22] A metaphor initially brought into the discussion by the press was now explicitly incorporated into the project description: the idea of the “labyrinth.”⁸⁰ The lowering of the piers was meant to avoid the “feeling of physical danger,” while keeping the impression of instability and the uncanny.⁸¹ Considering the oeuvre of Serra, which features a fair amount of inclined steel sculptures, sometimes intermingled to construct the impression of a labyrinth, objects that both disorient the visitor and induce feelings of possible collapse, one suspects the artist disapproved of the toning down this confrontational element in the second project proposal.

These changes aside, the monument still worked with the expectation of a performance of the visitor—now no longer contractual but affective. In this it was quite effective. Typical of the public’s search for an emotional interaction with the monument, and of its problems, is the account of a US-based German geographer, Olaf Kuhlke. He described the visitor as being “actively confronted with a realistic experience of the gradual loss of embodiment, with the experience of disembodiment and death... [the visitor] is asked by Eisenman to live through the emotional experience of Holocaust victims symbolically.”⁸² The experience cannot be argued with, but its interpretation shows a crucial misunderstanding of the connection between individual experience and commemoration. The idea of assimilating oneself to the victims via a symbolic act of bodily discomfort is

unmöglich, Mister Serra?” *Der Tagesspiegel* (November 25, 1998), reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 1169-70. Serra claims to have left the project for personal reasons.

⁸⁰ Eisenman architects, revised proposal, in *Denkmalstreit*, 1114.

⁸¹ James E. Young, “Die menschenmögliche Lösung des Unlösbaren,” *Der Tagesspiegel* (August 22, 1998), reprinted in *Denkmalstreit*, 1115-17.

⁸² Olaf Kuhlke, *Representing German Identity in the New Berlin Republic. Body, Nation, and Place* (Lewiston / Queenston / Lampeter, GB: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 243-44.

complacent, and—for a German spectator—even obscene. Performative interiority is inflated in this model to the point where it swallows up both the binding exterior action and historical consciousness itself.

We encountered a similar problem in Beuys's Auschwitz proposal, and to a lesser extent, in a variety of monuments since. In the case of the finished Berlin project, it shows how much reception—and not just German reception—still long for such redemption, or the possibility thereof. It might even be that the generational gap—at this point, most Germans had not experienced the Nazi past as adults—renewed this wish in altered form among a class of spectators not really racked by guilt but sympathetic to the victims of Fascism. The misunderstanding emerges from the attempt to submit the de-historicized body to a performance of catharsis. The illusive return of the “presence” of the past in commemoration prevents the taking on of responsibility for the past in the presence. A fictive performance of the Holocaust loses all historical traction, and it raises the problem of identifying with the victims. “An identification with the victims is inappropriate in Germany,” art historian Katrin Hoffmann-Curtius insisted during the third colloquium, dedicated to the iconography and the realization of the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* in April 1997.⁸³ But if the monument *works* in the experiential sense, how is one to prevent such identification?

In the executed project in Berlin, the possible discomfort with monumentality and the narcissistic implications of the project were counteracted (“complemented”) by a documentary center, the idea of which seems to have been suggested from Gerz's proposal. This idea came into discussion after the many revisions of the Eisenman project and was

⁸³ Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur (ed.) *Colloquium. Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation*. 3rd colloquium, April 11, 1997, protocol, 95.

initially advocated by Social Democratic politician Michael Naumann.⁸⁴ “I am writing to you in regard to your meeting with Mr. Michael Naumann,” Jürgen Habermas addressed Eisenman in a letter in December 1998, “and would like to ask you not to give in to any alternative that might be offered to you.”⁸⁵ Habermas had not been a forceful advocate of Eisenman’s design, and yet he opposed the idea of overturning the project of a monument after a ten-year debate in favor of a (politically safer) historical research center. One reason might have been that Habermas saw the switch to the “third” person unfit for keeping the memory of disaster of Fascism alive. More importantly, he distrusted the political ambiguity of “some sort of institution for historical instruction: “Such a place can be tacitly turned into something else, once the climate shifts, ” in contrast to this mutability, he contended, “The monument should be a sign that the Holocaust remains a constitutive feature of the ethico-political self-understanding of the citizens of the Federal Republic.”⁸⁶

Habermas laid out this opinion in greater detail a few months later in an essay in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*.⁸⁷

With this memorial, the present generation of descendants of the perpetrators profess a political self-understanding into which is branded the deed—the crime against humanity committed and tolerated under the National Socialist regime—and *therewith* the anguish over the unspeakable crimes inflicted upon its victims, as a permanent source of disquiet and admonition.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ The designated Minister of State, Michael Naumann, argued for a branch of the Shoah Foundation *instead* of the monument in 1998. He became the biggest advocate of the additional documentary center. See Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte*, 1999, 283f, and *Denkmalstreit*, 1143ff.

⁸⁵ Jürgen Habermas, letter to Peter Eisenman (December 16, 1998), published in *Denkmalstreit*, 1185.

⁸⁶ Letter to Eisenman, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ “Der Zeigefinder. Die Deutschen und ihr Denkmal.” *Die Zeit* (March 31, 1999), reprinted in Habermas, *Zeit der Übergänge. Kleine Politische Schriften IX*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001. 47-59, and in *Denkmalstreit*, 153-158. The text was published in English under the title “The Finger of Blame: The Germans and Their Memorial,” in Habermas, *Time of Transitions* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

⁸⁸ Habermas, “The Finger of Blame,” 41.

Habermas's language here betrays some tension: Germans ought to performatively "profess" political self-understanding and with it emotional "anguish," formulations that recall the protestant crisis of conscience demanded by Jaspers. The path from self-understanding to anguish is a deeply interior one, which seems outside the purview of a monument, or of rational discussion altogether. Yet the monument, as he wrote to Eisenman, is a "sign" of self-understanding, a "finger of blame" as the English title of the *Zeit* essay has it, or better yet, following the original *Zeigefinger*, an index finger: it does not so much enact German self-understanding as point to it, as may be gleaned from the acts of commissioning, debating, building, and visiting the monument.

Given this mediated self-understanding, with its symbolic politics of representation, the monument's built form had to avoid the traditional triumphant form of monumentality. Habermas approvingly ascribes a "discrete pathos of the negative" to the second Eisenman proposal, but notes that other monumental schemes could also have achieved this.⁸⁹ Interestingly for the relation of performativity to responsibility, Habermas addresses the problem of vandalism: Under the subtitle "The challenge," he opposes objections to the proposal citing the danger of right-wing vandalism: "Faintheartedness amounts to resignation in the face of the very mentality which the monument opposes."⁹⁰ If the monument had to be protected against German citizens, then Germany would not have achieved any national identity worth having. The only kind of self-understanding worth having would have been

⁸⁹ Habermas, "The Finger of Blame," 46.

⁹⁰ Habermas, "The Finger of Blame," 46. A few years later, amidst the construction of the monument, a political scandal broke out because the company providing a special color resistant to graffiti (Degussa) had been involved in the production of Zyklon B for the gas chambers. See *Der Spiegel Online* (October 29, 2003), <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,271810,00.html> [Online document, accessed February 10, 2009], and Michael Naumann, "Hygiene am Bau," *Die Zeit* (October 30, 2003).

that which “is branded in the deed” that the monument, however negatively, struggles to keep in present memory.

Despite the debate and the voices raised against the proposal, a compromise was reached, stoically named an “improvement” by Eisenman, who again reduced the number of piers (to approximately 1500), and included a building to house the Leo Baeck Institut, a documentation and education center.⁹¹ [Fig. 4.23] The final structure—after yet another round of political wrangling—was ultimately inaugurated in 2005, with 2711 piers, a subterranean “information site,” (architecture by Eisenman, exhibition concept and design by Dagmar von Wilcken), lecture halls, a room with the exemplary vitae of fifteen Holocaust victims, a room with audio recordings of the names of all known Holocaust victims (based on research from the central memorial site Yad Vashem in Jerusalem), a screening room for historical film material, and rooms for events such as book presentations.⁹² Experience and learning are separate but adjacent in this “compromise,” without making a claim to any performative taking of responsibility. And perhaps this would not have been possible in Berlin, not just because national responsibility is too heavy a burden for any individual to bear, but also because no individual can, alone, enact the nation.

Compared to the moral equivocation and political instrumentalization of official Holocaust policy since the 1950s, we have to acknowledge that the process of making the “central” monument in the reunited Germany was more transparent, and more eager to expose the difficulties of public commemoration of the Holocaust in Germany to the world. Perhaps more could not be asked from such a monument, and the mere fact of using precious land in the middle of the city (which, so to speak, happened to be available only due to a

⁹¹ “Lösung im Streit um Holocaust-Mahnmal zeichnet sich ab,” *Der Tagesspiegel* (January 16, 1999), and Michael Naumann, “Haus der Erinnerung und Holocaust-Mahnmal in Berlin,” both in *Denkmalstreit*, 1200ff.

⁹² The official website is <http://www.holocaust-mahnmal.de> [online source, accessed February 4, 2009].

course of history steered by National Socialism and postwar Soviet policy), has to be considered an act of political insight in the midst of the capitalist rush to assimilate East Berlin. In this sense, the proposal by Eisenman adds to mere size (by many seen as *the* important factor in the matter of Germany acknowledging responsibility) yet another facet, namely the imposition on the viewer of an awareness of the body and of the space of the city while walking through the site. This imposition needs as prerequisite an audience willing to submit: as I could witness on my visit in 2007, children played tag around the steles or hopped from one to another, while teenagers lounged nonchalantly. The limit of the performative force of this work might lie in its mere focus on the body. Not only is the equation between symbolic enactment and experience simplistic, so that the proposed experience runs the risk of falling into solipsism, but also, the audience might refuse to submit to the experience at all.⁹³

Delegating Authority: Recent projects by Gerz and Haacke

We have seen how the issue of national identity drove the German monument debate after 1945. The attempt to shatter the authoritarian claim of monumental architecture, which attached itself to national(ist) claims, derailed as an utopian project, but brought about an effect to make this authority legitimate through public acts of commemoration. Part of the claim of the new monuments was to be “democratic” in the sense of non-authoritarian. And

⁹³ The possibility of “refusing to play” is fundamental to performatives: “however much we take into the procedure, it would still be possible for someone to reject it *all*.” *How to do Things with Words*, 29. (and 166). Despite this, “uncanny” architecture as a spur to involvement is widely used in Holocaust museums: Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin and the US Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Washington, D.C., are often interpreted in that sense. See James E. Young, “Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin. The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture,” in *At Memories Edge*, 152-183, and *idem.*, “Memory and the Politics of Identity: Boston and Washington, D.C.,” *The Texture of Memory*, 323–349. Other Holocaust museums, notably that in Frankfurt am Main, evoke fear in their display strategies (lights, narrow paths, unstable ground, etc.).

yet they could never dispense with authority, for else how could they oppose the authority of fascism? The kind of authority they represent, at its best, approaches the voluntary coercion (Habermas calls it “unforced force”) of a social contract.⁹⁴ The *Monument to the Murdered Jews* carries in its imposing physicality the demand for performative submission—no matter if the spectator actually submits. In a speech act, the performative functions because of the authority of the speakers, their right or mandate to baptize ships or execute wedding ceremonies. This authority in turn depends on the audience accepting this authority. Can we then see a continuation of the authoritarian claim of the traditional monument in performative monuments, and if so, do these deliver part of their authoritarian force to the audience?

One way to begin answering these questions would but be to take stock of the post-Berlin development of performative monuments. Gerz’s most recent projects are addressed not to national concerns but to questions of a broader European identity such as in *The Future Monument* (Coventry, UK 2004) [Fig. 4.24], or the ongoing *Square of the European Promise* (Bochum, 2007-10). In Coventry, the monument is a glass obelisk dedicated to nations named by English respondents as past enemies of the country: “To our German friends,” the inscription reads, “to our Japanese friends,” and so forth. The simple renaming of enemies (in the past) into friends, is a performative claim to be made good—such is the hope—in the future.⁹⁵ In *The Future Monument* Gerz frankly makes use of the strength of a traditional monument: the inscription and its authoritarian hold on history and hence

⁹⁴ “...[T]he person to be the object of the verb ‘I order to...’ must, by some previous procedure, tacit or verbal, have first constituted the person who is to do the ordering an authority, e.g. by saying ‘I promise to do what you order me to do.’ This is, of course, *one* of the uncertainties—and a purely general one really—which underlie the debate when we discuss in political theory whether there is or is not or should be a social contract.” Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 28-29.

⁹⁵ Gerz’s numerous realizations and projects are listed on his Website www.gerz.fr. Ongoing participatory projects include *The Square of the European Promise* (2007-10) in Bochum and the *National Memory Grove* Ballymun (Dublin), Ireland 2005–.

historical consciousness. This is an indicator that the performative monument need not simply get rid of the traditional strategies of coercion. On the contrary.

What of our second question, on which the political claims made for performative monuments turn: is the authority of the monument made benign by being redistributed? Here, the answer in *The Future Monument* is instructive. For it is Gerz who has chosen to preserve in monumental form the survey answers, as was the case in his Berlin proposal; in Coventry, this appropriation is sharpened by Gerz's transformation of 'past enemies' into 'future friends.' We seem to reach a limit in redistributing the monument's authority symmetrical with that observed on demanding submission in the case of the Berlin monument. A public work commissioned from an artist is only participatory to the extent that the artist *wills* it: but, in turn, an audience is needed to enforce that authority whether the monument claims to be democratic or not. The most effective performative monuments set into motion this public negotiation of authority. It is by the *delegation* of authority from monument to spectator that performative monuments approach, not a political utopia of zero coercion, but the regulative ideal of a democratic process.

A most telling instance of monumentality at the service of a delegation of authority can be found close to the Eisenman monument in Berlin. Hans Haacke's work *Der Bevölkerung* (1999/2000), installed inside the northern courtyard of the German Reichstag, consists of a quadrangular wooden box filled with soil brought by the representatives, at Haacke's request, from their respective districts, and a dedication executed in neon light, "Der Bevölkerung" (To the Population) [Fig. 4.25] This dedication is to be read in direct contrast to the 1916 inscription "Dem Deutschen Volke" (To The German People) on the pedimental frieze of the neoclassical building. [Fig. 4.26] Not only does Haacke herewith

indicate a significant shift in the mission of the political representatives, or the demographics of Germany, he *calls for* this changed attitude. Where *Volk* indicated national homogeneity, *Bevölkerung* (which plays on the same root word, but eliminates its singular connotation) embraced everyone living in Germany.⁹⁶ The artist demanded that the soil be left completely ungardened (not even watered), allowing plants to seed freely without intervention, an idea he had already unsuccessfully proposed for the government precinct in Bonn in 1973. The plants hence exemplified the idea of an ever-mixing, free-to-move population.⁹⁷ The performative proposition is direct in the involvement of the politicians, who take part in making the performative monument work by contributing the soil; and accordingly, Haacke described the piece as “communal project.” We must be precise in understanding this: it is not “communal” in the communist or radical democratic sense of “involving everyone equally” but in the restricted sense of involving equally the community of parliamentarians (refusal would also be one form of involvement), and in turn, perhaps, of involving the *local* communities from which the parliamentarians brought soil by a variety of criteria, with their own political significances factored in.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ The project was executed after a long and heated debate. It was ultimately approved by a small margin of parliamentary votes (260 for 258 against its execution). On the long decision process, see Andreas Kaltenbach, “Stationen der Entscheidung—das Kunstprojekt ‘Der Bevölkerung’ von Hans Haacke und der Kunstbeirat,” in Michael Diers, Kasper König (eds.), *Der Bevölkerung. Aufsätze und Dokumente zur Debatte um das Reichstagsprojekt von Hans Haacke* (Cologne: Walter König, 2000), 15-18. This publication also encompasses a selection of press clips, several parliamentary protocols and interviews with Haacke.

⁹⁷ The 1973 project is described in Walter Grasskamp, “No Man’s Land,” in *Bodenlos*, 48, and idem., “Survey,” in Walter Grasskamp, Molly Nesbit, Jon Bird, *Hans Haacke* (London: Phaidon, 2004), 43. Already in 1968, Haacke had proposed a similar project for Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn. He realized this idea on a small scale on his studio roof on East Houston Street in 1970.

⁹⁸ The collecting of the soil and the choice of its local origins were broadly covered in the newspapers; many representatives used the opportunity to make clear political statements with their choices. In 2004, Haacke expressed contentment with the process: “As I imagined, many MPs involved people from their election district in choosing where the soil should be collected from. And so it became a participatory process even on the district level. ...Several members brought soil from former concentration camps.” Molly Nesbit in conversation with Hans Haacke, in Grasskamp/Nesbit/Bird, *Hans Haacke*, 2004, 24.

The performative claim reaches beyond this involvement into the architecture of the habitat. As we have seen, the inscription in neon light aims at changing the context for the 1916 dedication on the façade. And the garden itself fills the interior courtyard with a ‘population’ of geographically diverse plants and soil animals. These aspects of the project express, of course, Haacke’s hard-won authority in carrying through an ambitious piece of public art—but they join up with the performative delegation of authority to the Parliament to the extent that the resulting habitat *is* constituted of these representative contributions. The “total speech act” is further complicated by Haacke’s insistence that he wanted to make explicit the part of the constitution claiming that no one could be discriminated against due to race or ethnic background. Retrospectively Haacke commented on the resistance his project met with the following statement: “I wanted the project to be an ongoing participatory process. Taking politicians at their word turned out to be provocative.”⁹⁹ The performative delegation of authority in the *making* of the monument thus embraces the artist’s “taking politicians at their word,” in other words holding them to the consequences of legally binding language, which is of course what the successful performative demands of its audience.

The performative force of the project was so publicly conspicuous that it even inspired a legal opinion that “the political content of the piece” was unconstitutional, exactly for its contradiction to the 1916 dedication “to the German People,” an opinion not obscure enough to escape being taken up by conservative newspapers, politicians and opinion-makers.¹⁰⁰ Though this legal opinion was not upheld, Haacke’s request for involvement of

⁹⁹ Nesbit in conversation with Hans Haacke, 23, 24. And further about the gardening: “No, no gardening whatsoever. No watering, no weeding, no cleaning, no nothing. It’s to be left alone. The coming together of earth and plants from all over Germany in a building with the highest security provisions makes this a unique ecosystem.” Ibid., 24. The processual character is additionally underlined by a web-camera that uploads images of the site twice daily. See <http://derbevoelkerung.de>.

¹⁰⁰ Hans Meyer, “Wie ein deutscher Staatsrechtslehrer mit Kanonen auf Spatzen schießt—und sie verfehlt,” in Diers/König, *Haacke*, 2000, 35-46. The ‘offense’ was to replace ‘the German People’ with ‘population.’ (37).

the representatives was interpreted as “coercion” by various opponents.¹⁰¹ Certainly, we have a “happy performative” if the art piece was taken for legal action, and even more so if we want to think through the performative force, the authority of monuments, and the relation between the commissioning authorities and the executing artist. Is the performative force of a monument then synonymous with coercion?

I have argued that the *Monument to the Murdered Jews* with its stated goal of disorientation was a veiled call for submission.¹⁰² The only way a monument can avoid such misdirection is to acknowledge its compulsory nature—and its extent. Even if we can resign ourselves to the fear that Haacke has the authority to force his will on the politicians to make them drag earth to Berlin against their will, his performative claim, if it is to be “happy,” needs a certain authority. But that authority is not one-sided: in Haacke’s case, the representatives, who are the first audience, must choose to take up his invitation. This performance of parliamentary democracy is itself memorialized, in ever-changing fashion, in the resulting environment. In doing so—in hoping for this change in the social structure—the work contributes to the hope that the performative act can change the social context at its core: that through the inscription and the monument’s “growth,” it might overwrite the 1916

¹⁰¹ For example by Eduard Beaucamp, “Das Volk und seine Erde. Künstler als Auftragsgeber: Hans Haacke’s Reichstagsprojekt,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (December 23, 1999), reprinted in Diers/König, 2000, 103: “In der ‘Aufforderung’ zum Erdbeitrag steckt ein Stück Nörigung im Namen der Freiheit der Kunst.”

¹⁰² In an unexecuted proposal for the *Memorial to the Victims of National Socialism at the Military Target Practice Range ‘Feliferhof’ in Graz*, Austria (competition 1995), Haacke himself used the architecture of the “uncanny,” and the idea of submission. He proposed an underground passage on the site (which now serves as military training ground), 1,2m wide and 2,1m high, which visitors were to enter. Haacke expected the visitors would “feel trapped, isolated from the outside world, as if standing pinned against a wall oneself, threatened by an invisible firing squat...All these elements...could heighten one’s psychological sensitivity to such an extent that, for a moment at least, a personal and initially unthinking identification may be possible with whom the National Socialists murdered at Feliferhof. Such an experience could serve as a catalyst for a critical examination of the National Socialist past.” At the site, 142 people were shot during the Nazi time; the mass grave of the unknown victims was found in May 1945. Hans Haacke, “Description of the Proposal,” reprinted in Sabine Breitwieser (ed.), *Hans Haacke, Mia San Mia* (Exh. Cat. Generali Foundation Vienna, 2001), 114-123. The competition was won by Esther and Jochen Gerz, who proposed that the soldiers were to lift flags as part of their military routine, the texts of which would for example read, “Courage Brings Death,” or “Treason Against Your Country is Being Decorated.” Their project was not executed due to resistance from the official military.

dedication. This task is certainly difficult, but this difficulty is inseparable from the importance of the performative as a social phenomenon. As Austin put it:

In ordinary cases, it is the fact that he is running which makes the statement that he is running *true*... Whereas in our case it is the happiness of the performative 'I apologize' which makes it the fact that I am apologizing: and my success in apologizing depends on the happiness of the performative utterance 'I apologize.'¹⁰³

There are limits to doing by or saying so. One cannot of course simply *make* democracy work, with Haacke, any more than one can, with the Berlin memorial, make amends for the Holocaust. But acts of commemoration that can compel us to take responsibility for the past, perhaps hold some significance for the future.

¹⁰³ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 47.

Chapter 5: The Place of the Public: Site, Audience and Political Context in Yugoslavia

In this final chapter I will discuss two fundamental issues of performance and the monument: their audiences, and the “site” or “site-specificity” so deeply embedded in their histories.¹

These two questions are in fact really one subject, since “site” is almost never reducible to a particular geographical location, but is rather comprehensively a matter of *who* sees the work under which circumstances. In this sense, “site” encompasses audience, physical space, and the perennial question for performance of institutional versus street public. Ultimately, and decisively, site also extends into time, because—as I have already shown—the performative moment is extended historically through the production of documents. Later audiences re-imagine the original site(s), fractions of which they encounter in documents; this imagination is infused with its own particular present and past circumstances. This complexity might make the determination of audience and site sound like a daunting task, so let us start with a seemingly simpler question, one which we already have a procedure for answering: what is the significance of the adjective “public” that invariably attaches to successful performatives, and how does it differ from the noun “public,” that is, the empirical body of spectators? Does the performative monument depend on existing political culture, or does it shape it? And if it is not accessible only to a local public, just how important is that “initial” public for its later reception? Brus’s *Vienna Walk* (Chapter Two) showed how a police intervention captured on photograph could embed an action for posterity in a particular ideological “site.” Ultimately, we have traveled back to the discussion of the “total speech act,” which constructs itself in

¹ On site-specificity see Rosalind Krauss’s classic article “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October*, vol. 8 (spring 1979), reprinted in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another. Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), and James Meyer, “The Functional Site; or, The Transformation of Site Specificity,” in Erika Suderberg (ed.), *Space Site Intervention. Situating Installation Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Importantly for my argument, Meyer argues for a distinction between “literal” and “functional” site, the latter defined as “process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them...” 25.

the moment the performative takes effect as agreement between artist and audience, and is different (bound by historical reference) every time the performative act is re-instantiated.

In asking what makes a performance public, we are really asking: just what makes a performative work? The *being public* of performance is not a literal matter of taking place outside art institutions, but of the taking place of a functioning (“happy”) performative; this can happen anywhere, *and* anytime, for instance when the photographic documentation sets in motion an imaginary performance in the minds of a gallery public decades after the fact. The previous chapters of this study have shown different ways in which the performative gesture traveled into commemoration, turning audience members into literal co-performers of remembrance. And yet, I argued, we need to account for temporally wider audiences, reading audiences who do not act literally but bear witness to (and thus indirectly participate in) earlier audience involvement. I also stressed the connection between document and history by arguing that the image or artifact is a shuttle for this re-instantiation of the performative. In a sense, neither the act nor the document comes first, but they anticipate and follow each other in historical chains of performance and memory. This transferability must be captured, however roughly, by an account of the audience-site of performative monuments.

To begin this account, we can note with Austin that the being public of a performative is no simple state, for it both presupposes and seems to result from its taking place. As discussed in Chapter One, the performative classically needs a certain appropriate “situation” entered into by those participating in the act. This situation constitutes the public quality of the performative. If the context cannot be entered, the performative must be considered “null

and void,” in Austin’s sense of an ad-hoc ritual lacking institutional authority.² Now, if we attempted to understand the successful (i.e. genuinely public) ritual in psychological fashion, as a performance which produced the same impression in the mind of the performer and the audience, we would have to accept Derrida’s objection that context is never “determinable,” that it is neither fully established by the performer nor by the receiver, let alone whether we can know what’s on everyone’s mind.³ And yet, the “total speech act,” as Austin called it, containing the actions of all parties involved, does not require a survey of all known context; it *creates* or selects its own relevant context.⁴ For it does not just occur within a preexisting field of possibilities. The participants in the action—not only those who act out the gesture, but also those who witness it (say, the guests at a wedding party)—*are* themselves the “total act.” In other words, the context is unstable, but not un-analyzable, since it comes into being only in a concrete historical situation. This might make us think the performative monument is always entangled in political culture: and by entangled I do mean dependent *but* mutually interacting. It is best, then, to look at the question of site-audience-politics in an intensely politicized context, one that lives on state-sponsored public gestures while allowing sufficient intellectual freedom for a vigorous (and public) oppositional culture to develop. This context should also exhibit some continuity with our narrative of performative monuments in postwar

² It is worth pointing out here that Austin’s use of the term “unhappy” is a very broad category of various kinds of failures, not all of which would result in the act not having taken place. A vivid example of a ritual that fails for no clear reason (or for many) is the attempt to baptize penguins. See Austin, “Performative-Constative,” 23.

³ “For a context to be exhaustively determinable, in the sense demanded by Austin, it at least would be necessary for the conscious intention to be totally present and actually transparent for itself and others, since it is a determining focal point of the context.” Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context,” 327. See also Chapter One. It ought to be emphasized that Austin strenuously denied all psychologizing recourse to “inner performances.” See *How to do Things with Words*, Ch.1, and the discussion following the lecture “Performative-Constative.”

⁴ “An exceedingly important aid is the circumstances of the utterance. Thus we might say ‘coming from *him*, I took it as an order, not as a request.’” Austin does—and here I agree with Derrida—try to brush away this problem: “But in a way these resources are over-rich: they lend themselves to equivocation and inadequate discrimination; and moreover, we use them for other purposes, e.g. insinuation. The explicit performative rules out equivocation and keeps the performative fixed, relatively.” Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 76 [original italics]. But I would agree with Austin that the performative can work even on unstable grounds.

central Europe: a 'site' in which the Second World War, Fascism, and the Holocaust engage (or fail to engage) public discussion, and in which artists have access to the performance and monumental discourse developing in other national contexts. These various conditions are fulfilled by Yugoslavia during the last two decades of rule by Josip Broz Tito.

On December 23, 1974, the International Committee of Concern for Academic Freedom in Yugoslavia addressed a letter to Marshal Tito. The letter was signed by Noam Chomsky, A.J. Ayer, Paul Ricoeur, Jürgen Habermas, Jaakko Hintikka, and other prominent philosophers, and published in the *New York Review of Books* on February 6, 1975. As "friends of the country, who admire Marshal Tito's achievements for the liberation of the Yugoslav peoples," the signatories expressed their concern about the recent "infringements on academic freedom," in particular repression of intellectuals and laws endangering the autonomy of universities.⁵ The philosophers' protest was aroused by Tito's attempt to expel professors at Belgrade University who were members of Praxis, a philosophical circle active since 1964. Praxis, devoted to the adaptation of Marxism to the Yugoslav idea of self-management, was decidedly anti-Stalinist, and had been in open conflict with the official party line on many occasions. Their orientation was cosmopolitan, with Ernst Bloch, Robert S. Cohen, Erich Fromm, Jürgen Habermas, Agnes Heller, Herbert Marcuse, and Henri Lefebvre on the editorial board of their journal, *Praxis International*.⁶

⁵ *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 22, no. 1 (February 6, 1975). The letter has been reprinted frequently.

⁶ Many of the international members were also participants in the famous summer school on the island of Korčula which took place from 1964 to 1974. Praxis influenced and was influenced by the Yugoslav student movement (many of their members taught at the universities in Zagreb and Belgrade), and an intellectual avant-garde oriented towards interdisciplinary thinking and anti-Stalinist artistic practice. Its issues were devoted to subjects as diverse as contemporary interpretations of Hegel and the problem of censorship in Eastern Europe, and a long-standing discussion of the "stagnation" of the Marxist movement. Articles concerning the cultural-political situation in Yugoslavia included Svetozar Stojanović, "The June Student Movement and Social Revolution in Yugoslavia," *Praxis* 3-4 (1970); Stefan Morawski, "Censorship versus Art," *Praxis* 1-2 (1974); Antun Žvan "Ecstasy and Hangover of a Revolution," *Praxis* 3-4 (1974). The bonds and differences between the Frankfurt School and Praxis are discussed in Gajo Petrović, "Die Frankfurter Schule und die Zagreber

The open letter by the international circle of philosophers nicely circumscribes the complex political situation of the time: on one hand, for left intellectuals, Yugoslavia, a non-aligned country with its relative lack of restrictions (Yugoslavs were free to travel abroad, for example) and its ideology of self-management, was an island of hope in the middle of Cold-War oppositions. Nevertheless, in the midst of what some historians retrospectively call “laissez-faire-Socialism,” freedom of speech and press was infringed by severe censorship.⁷

Apart from insight into the curiously contradictory Western perception of Yugoslavia in the mid-1970s, the letter is interesting for its performative self-definition: the way the signatories, who have “become” a political committee purely in the act of publishing their missive, wish to act on Tito on behalf of their Yugoslav colleagues by praising the regime. And by publishing the letter in an prominent American periodical, they made sure that Tito—whose reaction must remain undocumented—was *not* the only addressee. Rather, Tito is more or less the “imaginary” first public, one we must envision reading the letter but whose reaction remains opaque to historical research, or even imaginative penetration. The gesture of publishing an encomium to Tito’s achievements, while “regretting” the repressions, is very much performative: it constitutes a situation in which an international community of scholars—some of them members of the Praxis editorial board—show their solidarity with their persecuted colleagues.

By publishing the letter in New York, the Committee insists on its role as historical document. In the process, it was addressed to a much wider public, the left intellectual community, some of whom presumably may have political influence, not on Tito, but in their

Philosophie der Praxis,” originally delivered as a lecture (Ludwigsburg, December 1984), and published online under <http://www.praxisphilosophie.de/praxisgruppe.htm> [online document accessed March 26, 2009].

⁷ Bojana Pejić borrows the term from Denis Rusinov to describe the years in Yugoslavia after 1965. Bojana Pejić, “Sozialistischer Modernismus und die Nachwehen,” in Lóránd Hegy (ed.), *50 Jahre Kunst aus Mitteleuropa* (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst, 1999), 118.

own national public spheres and press, which may indeed result in international protest of more significance to Tito. The letter reveals just how pervasive performative gestures were, beyond the realm of art, on an international political scene of the 1970s. It also eloquently points out the fact that a performative must constitute its public through an act of representation, or—as Austin found in his later thinking on the subject—that performance and truth claims are often inseparable.⁸ Paying attention to this inseparability of performance and representation and to the tension between them will help us shed light on our question of the audience. Representing politics of the past performatively, and representing the public which is being mobilized, is indispensable to performative monuments. This narrative drive of the performative monument is, as we have seen in Chapter One, essential to the work of Marina Abramović, and will gain in definition if we examine her early Yugoslavian output; I will be comparing Abramović especially to Braco Dimitrijević, another Yugoslavian artist concerned with the constitution of the public who came to work internationally, and thus to face a particularly unstable constellation of audiences, sites, and political presuppositions.

To begin, we might characterize Yugoslavian politics schematically for the purpose of our analysis by saying that Tito’s politics and the complex political culture they enabled were based on a charismatic personality cult and the strong creation myth for Yugoslavia as having been founded by the Partisans who freed the country from Fascist occupation.⁹ Within such a loaded political framework, artists sounding out the relationship between individual

⁸ See *How to do Things with Words*, chapters 4 and 11, and especially J.L. Austin, “Performative-Constative,” 22-53. This is the English version of a lecture held originally in French, printed in *Cahiers du Royaumont IV: La Philosophie Analytique* (Paris: Minuit, 1962), 271-304. It should be added, that some of the signatories of the 1974 letter to Tito, in particular Ayer, Hintikka, and Habermas, were followers of or at any rate intellectually quite close to Austin.

⁹ Tito himself had been the leader of the partisans fighting the Nazi Occupation during World War II, before becoming Prime Minister of Yugoslavia in 1945. See Richard West, *Tito: And the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1995). In Yugoslav social science of the 1970s there is a heated debate, followed in *Praxis*, of the desirability of what was then already called the “partisan myth.” Partisan myths were of course common throughout Eastern Europe (cf. Andrzej Wajda’s 1958 film *Popiol i Diament*), as indeed in France.

agency and the public sphere had to—more or less explicitly—work through the related issues of propaganda, censorship, and the symbols of a glorious past extending into the present in the person of Tito. I will not interpret such work as mere counter-propaganda, because of the complexity of the situation in Yugoslavia, which placed resistance to Tito’s paternalism side by side with a sincere admiration for the charismatic leader. Rather, it must be seen that the ambivalence of political art under Yugoslav communism, and of art working through mechanisms of censorship and propaganda generally, is a product of performative mechanisms: in ‘propagating’ or ‘censuring,’ the artists engaged in acts continuous with the public policies of the political establishment. Naturally enough, these acts both represented and acted out the political strategies which determined them. In this interpenetration between action and description, between official and oppositional culture, and between artist and audience, public art emerges as a shaping force *and* beneficiary of public political culture.

Abramović’s Communist Star and the Body as Document

Let me begin with a classic example. *Rhythm 5* (*Ritam 5*), alternatively entitled *Star of Fire* in contemporary catalogues and newspapers, was performed by Marina Abramović in the course of the *Third April Meeting* in 1974 in the courtyard of the Student Cultural Center (SKC) in Belgrade. [Fig. 5.1-4] The artist constructed a five-pointed star out of brushwood which served both as stage and perimeter for her performance; at the center of the star was bare pavement. A contemporaneous Belgrade reviewer praised the action as a “salvation from useless discussions about art” accomplished by a “female priest of art.”¹⁰

Outside the SKC, in front of the building, she made a skeleton of a star, the edges filled with sawdust and oiled. The action started with the lighting of the star, she

¹⁰ Zrinka Jurčić, “Život u Umjetnosti,” (The Life in Art) *Oko* (Zagreb, May 8, 1974), n.p. [translation Vukan Vujović].

walked around it, cut the hair on a wig she was wearing and then she cut her own hair almost down to the bare skin, then her nails from both hands and feet. She then lay inside the star waiting for the fire to burn down.¹¹

Due to lack of oxygen, Abramović fell unconscious, and was eventually carried out of the star by an audience member.¹² In this concluding moment, although the intervention was unplanned, the force of ‘making it so’ shifted from Abramović to the audience, in spite of its slowness to act.¹³ The viewers were forced to take responsibility for the symbol’s force, so to speak, at least for this one evening; they ended Abramović’s probing of her bodily strength by removing her document-body from the stage she prepared for it: a very public symbol.

For the contemporary Yugoslavian audience, the association of the star with the Tito government must have been plainly obvious, even though Abramović carefully chose the symbol for its broad range of connotations. The inscription of the body into a five-edged star can be found in the Christian tradition (where the symbol stood for the five senses, or for the five wounds of Jesus).¹⁴ The Pentagram, closely related to the number five, also stood for mathematical perfection in the tradition of the Pythagoreans, for the microcosm in various secret societies and mysticisms, and had been widely mobilized as a symbol for international

¹¹ Jurčić, “Život u Umjetnosti.” Several newspapers and journals reported on Abramović’s *Rhythm 5*; a satirical review of *Rhythm 5* and *Rhythm 10* was published by Radivoje Bojičić in *Jez* (May 1975).

¹² That this audience member was Joseph Beuys is a persistent rumor, not dispelled by the one, suggestively blurry photo of the rescue. Beuys held a lecture on April 19, 1974 at the SKC during the Third April Meeting, and took part in a discussion of “Expanded Media or New Art” on April 20 (other prominent international participants at the Meeting were Tom Marioni, Achile Bonito Oliva, and Francesco Clemente). In her *Oko* interview, Abramović recalled being carried out by her colleague Radomir Damnjanović. Ibid. Later she described the event thus: “When flame touches my leg and I still don’t react, two persons from the public enter the star and carry me out.” Toni Stooss (ed.), *Marina Abramović. Artist Body. Performances 1969-1997* (Milan: Charta, 1998), 72.

¹³ The passivity of the audience was criticized in a review by Milanka Lečić: “The audience did not participate, they stood as passive observers, without doing anything, which you could see at the end of the ritual, when Marina Abramović remained supine inside the burning star, and everybody stood still, observing the situation. No one with the exception of one man realized the ritual had ended.” “Treci Aprilski Susret. Lutanja Umesto Susreta,” [translation Vukan Vujović]. Press clip collection, folders 1974 and 1975, SKC Archive, Belgrade.

¹⁴ See Alva William Steffler, *Symbols of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 82.

socialism.¹⁵ It featured centrally in the flag of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.¹⁶ Most newspaper reports at the time were circumspect concerning the political application of the star to communism, commenting instead on the ritualistic nature of the action. When a contemporary viewer asked directly how the star should be interpreted, Abramović suggested the pentagram's ambiguous richness of meaning:

The star is what it is. I just put it in another relation. I myself was born under the sign of the five-pointed-star in 1946 in a partisan family, so it was present from my childhood till today, and [I used it] also because it is similar to man, because both have five limbs. When you lie down, you have the shape of a star, that is the reason why I cut my nails—in fact it was to feed the fire. ... I also use the elements of ritual and magic, only I use them in a contemporary manner.¹⁷

The interview reveals that Abramović wished to bind the communist symbol that shaped her childhood to her body in a ritual over which she had more agency. Since the ritual aimed to establish a personal link to political history outside the routine of official celebration, her task is in part the paradoxical Beuysian one of 'inventing' a ritual and having the audience play at going along with it and *imagine* that it understood what is going on.¹⁸ Thus the "feeding" of the star with parts of her own body (or surrogate) could be considered a ritual sacrifice. The difference from Beuys is that, politically *and* personally, the symbol manipulated belonged as much to the audience as it did to Abramović. When the flames burnt high and the oxygen was used up, or, more likely, smoke inhalation rendered the performer unconscious, her

¹⁵ Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Penguin, 1997), 747ff, and 296ff.

¹⁶ Particularly suggestive is the formal proximity of the burning star with the star on the flag of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which consisted of blue, white and red bands (the pan-Slavic colors), with a red star outlined in yellow in the center as the symbol of international communism (the USSR used just the yellow outline, with the hammer and sickle, on a red flag). The Yugoslav partisans had a similar flag, with a solid red star on a white band. The new flag of Serbia and Montenegro simply omits the star.

¹⁷ Zrinka Jurčić, "Život u Umjetnosti."

¹⁸ Bojana Pejić argues that Abramović introduced ritual into Yugoslav post-war art, which—interestingly—she defines (after E. M. Meletinski) as "the 'effective' or 'practical' aspect of myth." Bojana Pejić, "Being-In-The-Body. On the Spiritual in Marina Abramović's Art," in Friedrich Meschede, *Marina Abramović* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1993; on the occasion of the exhibition *Wartesaal* at the Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin), 33.

becoming passive in this ostentatious symbol-stage of the burning star was an aggressive, or better a performative passivity, urging the audience to act, in this case to step in and interrupt the performance. Of course we must ask whether this audience activation was intentional, even scripted, and thus performative, or if we must assume a coincidental coming together of circumstances or even a humanly understandable but “aesthetically incorrect” interruption of the dangerous performance. Abramović’s own ‘debriefing’ (which does come two decades after the fact) suggests an ambivalence about her expectations in this work:

After this performance I ask myself how to use my body in and out of consciousness without interrupting the performance.¹⁹

In other words Abramović does not object to audience intervention or to her own passivity (and indeed, her being unconscious might make performances uninteresting if there *were* no intervention) but only to the premature ending of performance due to unconsciousness. The phrase “my body in and out of conscious” is striking—one gets a full sense of the degree to which Abramović could detach herself from what was most important to many 1970s artists—the performing body—to analyze it as a document or relay of performance.

It is right to doubt that there was a script or clear intention to activate the audience of *Rhythm 5*, and yet the activation must have been very much part of the possible outcomes of the action. This interpretation is consistent with many of Abramović’s early performances, where we see a similar pattern: Abramović would objectify herself by subjecting her body to a (potentially dangerous) unforeseeable situation—making herself into the surface of events that would then evolve around her. In many cases, performances had no set ending, and thus ‘had’ to be interrupted by the audience.²⁰ In *Rhythm 5* Abramović was not just testing her

¹⁹ Stooss, *Artist Body*, 72.

²⁰ This means that the set-up of these performances bore an element of danger, and even surrender, a part where Abramović would potentially lose being the active part, thus relying on the audience to become activated. Most

own relationship to the symbol, but she pressed the audience to do the same, to test the relationship in a public act. Indeed she did not provoke a self-examination on the part of the audience (“how do *I* feel about the star?”) but pragmatic action in relation to the star’s effect on someone else’s body—Abramović herself. The dramatically blurred photograph that bears witness to her rescue suggestively does *not* clearly delimit the identities or even the number and appearance of her rescuers: the image seems to say (inadvertently) “it could have been anyone.” [Fig. 5.4] This charged relay of responsibility lends itself easily to political interpretation, particularly in today’s explicitly post-Yugoslavian discourse. In a 2006 essay, filmmaker and art historian Lutz Becker, who had been present at the Third April Meeting, assigns a political narrative to the performance:

This performance in which the artist staged a specific cleansing ritual seemed to me a kind of exorcism. There was an element of self-sacrifice, which echoed the sacrifice of the generation that had founded Yugoslavia during the war of liberation and the Revolution (1941-45). But the star of the revolution, the guiding star of the parents’ generation was, so it seemed to me, devouring the children of this revolution. This performance provided an insight into the psyche of a generation that had been kept in a state of ‘permanent adolescence,’ politically overruled by the old establishment.²¹

This reading is of course tempered not only by hindsight but by the passage of some years after the dissolution of Yugoslavia (into Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Montenegro). In Becker’s reading one finds the belated discourse of a Yugoslav generation victimized by the failure of its parents’ ideals presciently coded into the 1974 performance.²²

I would rather argue that Abramović’s performative occupancy of the symbol externalized

prominently in *Rhythm 0* (1974), and *Thomas Lips*, the latter of which I will discuss in some detail, but also in *Warm Cold* (1975), in which Abramović smashed a glass put on top of a block of ice, then kept her hand on the ice until the audience intervened.

²¹ Lutz Becker, “Art for an Avant-Garde Society. Belgrade in the 1970s.” In Irwin (ed.) *East Art Map. Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe* (London: Afterall, 2006), 396. In retrospect, Becker emphasizes the independence of the various Yugoslavian Student Cultural Centers. Zoran Erić, curator at the Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade, confirmed this impression. Interview with the author, June 2007.

²² Abramović noted recently that “the star that always followed me, drawn on my birth certificate, on my flag. I asked myself what it meant: control and restriction. To put it on my stomach was like liberating myself from it.” Marija Gajicki, “intervju Marina Abramović,” *Nezavisni* (October 30, 1998) [translation Vukan Vujović].

her internal relations to the star (feelings, habits, intentions) through a ritual, in which others *could* participate due to the availability of the symbols used. Her ritual was only incidentally an act of arson, endangering her own body and making the star dangerous without criticizing it outright. Abramović would on various occasions renounce the interpretation of her work as political, or of herself as “political artist.”²³ These denials are not obtuse or made in bad faith, but reflect rather Abramović’s understanding of herself as neither engaged in official art nor in a purely oppositional project. In *Rhythm 5*, Abramović tested the symbol of the star in its political and mystic meanings and the conviction they engender, which is certainly provoking but does not add up to a political thesis—which is after all not what Abramović is after, if the work is about political complicity and its performative instantiation in members of the public.

Abramović’s awareness of the significance of the symbol for her audience can be gathered from her cautious attempts to explain the star in 1974. First, she pushed the task of interpretation back to the audience: “it is simply the matter of each individual to understand it.” The interviewer then became more specific, offering one such interpretation:

Q: Would you say that your action represents a socialistic-realistic addition to conceptual art?

A: Yes, I think that this is correct. I cannot negate that star, because that star is here, and that star is ours. I’m not somewhere in India or somewhere else, where it would have a different meaning. To make a star in Yugoslavia has a specific meaning. I did not intend to produce an intimate message, but a general one. And I wanted people to know that what I was doing was honest and without consideration of whatever could happen.²⁴

The performative value of the star is implicit in Abramović’s resignation to the “specific meaning” the star *cannot help having* for her Yugoslav audience. There is almost a stoic tone

²³ Abramović also does not consider herself a feminist artist. See Klaus Biesenbach, “Interview with Marina Abramović,” in Kristine Stiles, Klaus Biesenbach, Chrissie Iles, *Marina Abramović* (London: Phaidon, 2008), 20: “Second question—did you or do you consider yourself a political artist? Abramović: No. Biesenbach: Third question—did you or do you consider yourself a feminist artist? Abramović: Absolutely not, never.”

²⁴ Zrinka Jurčić, “Život u Umjetnosti.”

to the answer, as if no interpretation, however incongruous, could be discounted which relied on the public symbolism of “that star [which] is ours.” In particular, a “conceptual” socialist realism, even if it playfully seems to hint at the subversive strategies of Sots Art, brings us back to our main question: in which ways do art and political reality intersect in the realm of the performative? Would it be at the point where the audience had to take on responsibility? Thinking back to Gerz’s *Monument against Fascism* we would certainly answer the question positively. In the same sense, we have to look beyond the Abramović’s defensive assurance that she is “honest and without consideration’ of the consequences, and to state her positive project as precisely the full pursuit of these consequences, “whatever could happen.” The audience was implicitly made to act out what Abramović did not explicitly state about the coercive force of the star of political imagery in general. In light of this highly performative indirection, Becker’s interpretation of the ‘dangerous’ symbol ‘eating’ Abramović and the post-revolutionary generation is a fit interpretation of the later reading audience, based as much on the allegorical force of the staging as on the (documented) reaction of the audience present at the performance. His reminiscence, and the rumors and photographs of the event have become part of *Rhythm 5* as it inhabits its most general and lasting site, contemporary art history. Abramović did not *only* rely on documents or intend *only* this ‘last’ interpretation; for she sees herself as very much part of the ambiguous socio-political document that we are made to read. This self-placement in history will become clearer with another example.

The ambiguity of the star as occult symbol with concrete political relevance and the tension between its mathematical precision and the lived experience of the body were most thoroughly explored by Abramović one year after *Rhythm 5*. On this occasion she worked outside her home country and, perhaps not coincidentally, the public gesture was even more

violent. In 1975, Abramović performed *Thomas Lips* at the Galerie Krinzinger in Innsbruck, Austria; [Fig. 5.5, 5.6] she re-performed the work as part of the *Seven Easy Pieces* in New York in 2005 under the title *Lips of Thomas*.²⁵ This performance began with eating a kilo of honey and drinking a liter of wine—actions that make one think both of ritual and of compulsion. Then, Abramović cut a pentagram into the skin of her stomach with a razor blade.²⁶ The performance continued with self-flagellation and lying on a cross-shaped ice-block heated from above, which made the star-shaped wound bleed.²⁷ Ultimately, states Abramović, “the public came onto the stage and removed the ice blocks from under my body, covered me with their coats, and carried me out.”²⁸ The artist’s body, emphatically shown to be of flesh and blood, was set in tension with its function as surface of a geometric, esoteric, religious, and political sign.²⁹ The audience took Abramović off the cross—indeed, the photographs reveal how much Abramović’s posture on the ice block with her arms spread simulated the conventional gesture of the Crucifixion—and, though they acted freely and

²⁵ Thomas Lips is indeed a person. According to Abramović, “This performance in the beginning was originally to a real person with the name Thomas Lips. But later on I re-performed the piece for the Guggenheim and I changed the name to Lips of Thomas.” Email from Marina Abramović to the author, June 9, 2009. It seems that the change of title in the subsequent writing of the piece into art history is a deliberate distanciation on Abramović’s part from her personal connection allowing connotations from Christian tradition (e.g. Thomas’ doubt). There is a photo edition of Thomas Lips showing the cutting of the star. Whether the photograph was in fact produced after the fact or the piece was performed earlier, remains in the dark. According to Abramović, she cut the star “more than once.” Email from Abramović, June 9, 2009. In some catalogues, the performance bears yet a third, related title, *Thomas’ Lips*. See for instance Friedrich Meschede, *Marina Abramović* (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1993), 304.

²⁶ For the motif as a disciplinary *performance*, see especially Franz Kafka’s story “In der Strafkolonie” [1919], in Franz Kafka, *Die Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996), 164-198.

²⁷ Abramović used ice blocks the same year in her Performance *Warm-Cold* (Fruit Market Gallery, Edinburgh).

²⁸ Marina Abramović, in *Artist Body*, 1998, 108. “To state” in this manner is of course in part a performative.

²⁹ German theatre historian Erika Fischer-Lichte, who uses *Lips of Thomas* for her introduction to the concept of performativity, declares the political interpretation “incommensurable in the event of the performance,” as the act of Abramović hurting herself overwhelmed the audience. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 17-18. Apart from the problem of ascribing homogenous audience responses, the star was ubiquitous as political sign in the 1970s, used by left-wing political groups (e.g. the RAF), pop groups, and rebellious students alike. Indeed, in the photo of Joseph Beuys lecturing in Belgrade in 1974 [Fig. 5.9], we can see among his typical writing in chalk on a blackboard, the word “Sozialismus” with a pentagram drawn next to it. In *Performance 1968-1978*, (Cat. Gallery Beograd, n.d.), 12. Fischer-Lichte restates her ‘incommensurability’ argument in “Performance Art. Experiencing Liminality,” in Marina Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces*, 33-45. It is particularly hard to believe that the religious and political symbolism would have been missed in the deeply Catholic city of Innsbruck, the capital of rural Tirol.

from their point of view spontaneously, we can see that, in the context of Abramović's developing performance practice, they in a sense *had* to. It is not only a matter of sympathetic viewers wishing to put a stop to Abramović's suffering. In the action and its interpretation by the intervening audience, Abramović's individual body fused with the representational body of public signs, bound both to Christian religion and to communism. Abramović's body became symbolic only in front of the audience.³⁰ In the act of inscribing the star, she became the surface for the political symbol written by herself. Abramović thus actively performed becoming a document, and showed just how powerful a performative body-document could be. Her passivity, the becoming the surface of the symbol, has great performative force. This body as document combines the ephemeral presence of the individual body and the permanence of the document, doubly distanced and preserved in the photographs that document this act of self-documentation.

As we have seen throughout this study, the successful production of a performative document calls into being a *reading audience* which in its turn transmits the performance historically. Abramović's achievement in *Thomas Lips* seems to have achieved this already at the initial event: by allowing the performance to end in a passive posture of great physical pain, Abramović *called for* the audience to become public recipients responding to the action and the symbols. The 'least active' moment of the performance, with Abramović on the ice-blocks, transfers the action to the public. I would argue that it *produces* this rescuer-public of fellow performers, in a manner quite independent of the very specific political and cultural

³⁰ In an interesting and comprehensive essay on the political formation of Abramović's body art, Kristine Stiles recently drew the connection between Abramović's upbringing and the role of the body very concretely: "An understanding of her [Abramović's] work depends in part upon learning that although she internalized the necessity for adherence to severe disciplinary measures at home and to communist principles in the public sphere, Abramović also externalized their psychosomatic effects in body actions for others to witness." Kristine Stiles, "Cloud with its Shadow," in Stiles, Biesenbach, Iles, *Marina Abramović*, 2008, 34.

make-up of art world insiders actually in attendance. For at the core of this performance is authority: authority resting in the symbols used, but especially in the transfer of activity from Abramović to the undifferentiated public. The cutting of the star is no simple act of aggression; for the same time the symbol that melded and bled with her body lets this body partake in political authority.³¹ Abramović came out of a context of performance in a society in which the contemporary hero cult had taken on explicit continuity with old monuments—from the May 1st Parade to the State celebrations of Tito’s birthday on May 25th, and in which the “political body” had become a synonym for the “people.”³² This political body is of course to a certain extent abstracted, removed from its naturally shifting physical state. Abramović bridges the two by inserting the function of the body as document into her performances. The gesture as performative act ready to become document is geared towards the historical relevance of the symbol as much as towards the future.

On various later occasions, notably in the late 1980s and beyond, when the political tension in Yugoslavia turned into civil war, Abramović would project herself into the role of the charismatic leader, the narrator or the protagonist of a historical myth. Even though she

³¹ The Cross is itself an appropriation: a Roman torture instrument become symbol of rebirth and Church power.

³² Bojana Pejić points to the biologist terminology in the official language of the Yugoslav Political Party, from “state organs,” to “the hand of justice,” and sums up the conflict between the party and the individual with a story told by her mother: After the War, the case of a woman, who was rumored to have had sexual relationships with German soldiers, was discussed on a public meeting. The woman finally stood up and said: “Comrades, my cunt is not political.” Bojana Pejić, “Being-In-The-Body,” 1993, 31; this saying is not only interesting of course in contrast to EXPORT’s *Genital Panic* (Chapter One), but also in respect to the performance *Triangel* by Sanja Iveković, during a visit by Tito in Zagreb in 1979: “The action takes place on the day of the President’s visit to the city, and it develops as intercommunication between three persons:

1. a person on the roof of a tall building across the street from my apartment;
2. myself, on the balcony;
3. a policeman in the street in front of the house.

Due to the cement construction of the balcony, only the person on the roof can actually see me and follow the action. My assumption is that this person has binoculars and a walkie-talkie apparatus. I notice that the policeman in the street also has a walkie-talkie. The action begins when I walk out onto the balcony and sit on a chair, I sip whiskey, read a book, and make gestures as if I perform masturbation. After a period of time, the policeman rings my doorbell and orders that ‘persons and objects are to be removed from the balcony.’” Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (ed.), *Sanja Iveković* (Zagreb 1998), 27.

will often describe these performances in terms of pure “presence,” we must be careful not to interpret this presence reductively. It will be the presence of a symbolic figure, bearing symbols of a historical or mythical provenance, often constituting a situation in which her public is forced to respond ethically by recoiling from the subject of performance or completing it in time. This document-function of performance is firmly grounded in Abramović’s early, photographic work in urban space in Belgrade.

Photography and the City: Abramović’s *Freeing the Horizon*

The performance of political symbols, based on Abramović’s own political experiences, took place nonetheless in an international context: Innsbruck, and, in a sense the April Meetings must be considered fairly international contexts. This choice of a trans-national frame, anticipated her move from Belgrade to Amsterdam in 1976. She was aware of the Viennese Actionists, and had even participated in an action by Nitsch the same year she performed *Thomas Lips*.³³ The violence of this performance may be informed by Brus’s self-mutilations in particular (though one would have to add those of Italian performer Gina Pane, who performed in Belgrade in the early 1970s), but the superimposition of the star on her body makes the action universal and at the same time explicitly territorial: Yugoslavian. In a sense we can see how this kind of identity formation gave political significance to *Thomas Lips* and

³³ Abramović took part in the first major action by Hermann Nitsch in July 1975 in Prinzendorf, Austria, the 50. Aktion (24 hours), July 26 to 27, 1975. Email from Hanno Millesi, Nitsch’s former assistant, to the author, March 25, 2009. According to Millesi, they probably got in contact through the Italian gallerist Giuseppe Morra in Naples, where Abramović performed *Rhythm 0*, in 1974. See also Hermann Nitsch, *Das Orgien Mysterien Theater, Die Partituren aller aufgeführten Aktionen* vol. 2, Napoli: Edizione Morra, 1984, 33 (65. Aktion). In 2009, the Morra Foundation opened a Nitsch Museum in Naples, the Museum Nitsch. See <http://www.museonitsch.org> [Online document, accessed June 3, 2009]. In a 1974 interview, Abramović mentions two of the Viennese Actionists, Günter Brus and Otto Muehl, together with Chris Burden, Franz Hacke [possibly Hans Haacke? MW], and Jürgen Klauke as influential to her work. “Marina Abramović in conversation with Radovan Gajić, 1974,” Reprinted in English in Stiles, Biesenbach, Iles, *Marina Abramović*, 2008, 125.

Abramović's early performances in general; on the other hand, there remains the mystery of how these international audiences, whose political formation and assumptions differed quite a bit from Abramović's, could *read* her body-documents. The question remains if Abramović herself regarded the document a useful tool for performative interaction. I will try to answer it by looking at the photographic performances of the early 1970s in Belgrade through which Abramović's monumental practice first found its site and public.

In June 1973, Abramović presented a photographic work at the Student Cultural Center (*Studentski Kulturni Centar*, SKC) in Belgrade entitled *Freeing the Horizon*.³⁴ [Fig. 5.7] Although the material object is projected slide positives, the work is already on the verge of performance. An archival image shows Abramović sitting in the middle of the gallery space, hand-operating a slide projector. [Fig. 5.8] What was projected were snapshots Abramović had taken on a stroll through the center of Belgrade, along the main axis through the center, *Ulica Knez Mihailova* (Prince Michael's Street), leading to what was then called *Titova Ulica*, "Tito's Street."³⁵ The photographs she took showed significant architectural markers, framed by the pedestrians who go about their daily life in the city. After printing, Abramović covered parts of the images with white acrylic paint, blotting out some of the buildings, photographed them once again using slide film, and projected the results.³⁶

³⁴ An early translation from the 1970s calls the piece *Releasing of the horizon*. The original title is *Oslobadjanje vidokruga*. Verso of handout of artist, Archive of the SKC, Belgrade. Abramović also began her performance work proper in 1973. There is an interesting analogy in this title to her trilogy *Freeing the Body* (Berlin: she moves to drum beats until she cannot move anymore), *Freeing the Voice* (Belgrade: she screams until the voice is lost), and *Freeing the Memory* (Tübingen: she utters words until she cannot think of any more) of 1975. These works are usually seen as pursuing states of meditative emptiness. See Stooss, *Artist Body*, 122-131.

³⁵ The name of Titova Ulica was changed in the 1990s to "Street of the Serbian Rulers."

³⁶ "Freeing the Horizon piece was made very simply. I photographed the streets and buildings myself and developed the photographs and covered parts of the photographs with simple acrylic white paint. Then I re-photographed them again and made slides out of them." Email from Marina Abramović to the author, February 26, 2009.

As can be seen from the archival documentation in the SKC, Abramović screened the slides on the walls of the gallery using several projectors, reinforcing the experience of architecture as lived space.³⁷ *Freeing the Horizon* is a performative involvement in urban space enacted on the document. The *aesthetic* act of erasure in white acrylic paint, a symbol of postwar abstraction and ‘white paintings,’ seems to bring about an utopian city devoid of government buildings. But one could as well connect this act to the practice of censorship. How *should* one read the erasure? It seems necessary here, for once, to sketch the pre-existing institutional context in which Abramović staged her gesture. Her early activities took place in the creative and liberal atmosphere around the SKC, which was administrated through Belgrade University), the focal point of the artistic avant-garde in Belgrade after its foundation in 1971.³⁸ The student cultural centers (operating in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana) were a concession to the students from Tito after protests in June 1968, a way of “pacifying the young generation’s growing discontent with any form of authority.”³⁹ They were run fairly independently by the universities, mostly by students of art and art history, and became meeting places for a loose group of emerging artists.⁴⁰

The SKC in Belgrade was the center that became the most important base for the exchange between Yugoslav and international artists. The yearly *April Meeting—Expanded Media Festival*, held at the SKC and consisting of exhibitions, actions, lectures, and

³⁷ According to Abramović, she “demonstrated the process in the form of a slide installation in an oval room with eight slide projectors, showing a 360 degree perspective.” “Freeing the Horizon, in Germano Celant, *Marina Abramović. Public Body. Installations and Objects, 1965-80*, (Milan: Charta, 2001), 50.

³⁸ The organization and history of the SKC are described in Friedemann Malsch, “Das Studentski Kulturni Centar, Belgrad,” *Kunstforum International* (117, 1992), 194-199. The art activities in Belgrade in the 1970s are put in political perspective by Lutz Becker, “Art for an Avant-Garde Society, 2006, 390-400. Becker also discusses the role of the SKC. See also Dunja Blažević, “Wer Singt da Drüben?—Kunst in Jugoslawien und Danach 1949-89...” In *50 Jahre Kunst in Mitteleuropa*, 81-96.

³⁹ Branislav Dimitrijević, “A Brief Narrative of Art Events in Serbia after 1948,” in Irwin (ed.) *East Art Map*, 2006, 291.

⁴⁰ In Belgrade, an informal group was established: apart from Marina Abramović, Nesa Paripović, Raša Todosijević, Zoran Popović, Gergely Urkom, and Era Milivojević participated.

conferences, was the most influential caucus of international art in Eastern Europe, beginning with its first year in 1972, when Italian artist Gina Pane participated with her performance *LIFE-DEATH-DREAM*. Video screenings that year included works by artists Allan Kaprow and Dennis Oppenheim. Two years later, Joseph Beuys participated in the April Meeting (the same year Abramović performed *Rhythm 5*).⁴¹ [Fig. 5.9] The tension between paternal political authority and freedom under Tito that brought about the SKC and its relatively unhindered activities must have provoked rather different questions of artistic freedom and autonomy than those posed in the West.⁴² Most significantly, Yugoslav artists did not believe themselves to have effected an ideological break with the public order which sponsored them—and which they may have hoped to criticize. How to translate this tension into art?

Let us return to *Freeing the Horizon*. In addition to the screening, photocopied handouts were given to the audience of the six slides with buildings removed. [Fig. 5.10]⁴³ The process of erasure brings that which is not erased into emphatic focus. If we start in conventional reading direction, left-right and up-down, in the first image in the upper left-hand corner everything but the *Palace Albania* in Terazije Square is removed. This high-rise building from 1938-40 has historical significance: it was the edifice where the planting of the

⁴¹ Beuys and Abramović both also participated in the Edinburgh Festival in 1973. Abramović, who participated together with Raša Todosijević and Gera Urkom, performed *Rhythm 10* on August 19 at the Richard Demarco Gallery, and Beuys held his *12 Hour Lecture*. On the early years of the April Meetings, the following publication by the SKC is an indispensable resource: Studentski Kulturni Centar (ed.) *Prosireni Mediji* (Belgrade, 1974, partly in English). The meetings were suspended 1992-2001, and revived in 2002. See also the website of the SKC <http://www.skc.org.yu>. An excellent tabular overview of art activities in Serbia during the 1970s can be found in *Nova Umetnost U Srbiji. Pojedinci Grupe Pojave. 1970-1980* (Cat. Muzej Savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 1983). In 1971, for example, a show of Joseph Kosuth's and one on Yves Klein's work took place the same month (February). The cultural climate in Serbia from 1945 to the 1980s is well-discussed in Branislav Dimitrijević, "A Brief Narrative of Art Events in Serbia after 1948," in Irwin (ed.) *East Art Map*, 2006, 287-296.

⁴² The political censorship concentrated on film, while artistic practices of performance, conceptual art, and land art was considered marginal, even as art in public space started to play a greater role. Interview with the curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, Zoran Eric, by the author, Belgrade, July 2007.

⁴³ I conclude this from several photographs that exist in the archive of the SKC. The date on these photographs is June 7th, 1973. One shows Abramović operating one of several projectors, another shows the audience sitting on the floor with handouts. An original handout is in the archive of the SKC, which I reproduce here.

red flag by the Red Army and the Yugoslav partisans announced the liberation from German occupation in 1944. A department store on Ulica Knez Mihailova stands alone, with a car and some pedestrians, in the second image. The National Theatre on Republic Square is missing from the third image [Fig. 5.11], putting in stark isolation the nineteenth-century equestrian statue of Prince Mihailo (1823-1868), the first ruler of an independent Serbia. In the fourth image, the union headquarters is removed, leaving a free space adjacent to the Museum of Revolution, where Abramović's mother served as director; the museum had been the Communist Party headquarters for the first two decades after the war.⁴⁴ In the last two images, passers-by are at the center of the composition: the image on the right shows pedestrians walking past the lawn in front of City Hall, which has been removed. [Fig. 5.12]

What do these interventions add up to? On first inspection of the handout sequence, the logic of removal is self-evident: from oppressive institutions to “an open space.”⁴⁵ This interpretation, common in the recent literature on *Freeing the Horizon*, is not precisely wrong, and yet it is not fully consistent with the sequence of cuttings and their detailed connotations to a Belgrade public, which I have striven to suggest in the slide-by-slide account above. For one thing, the cuttings do not sequentially increase in quantity, but rather in the *significance* of what is removed, culminating with City Hall. We might interpret the piece, as an act of utopian vandalism removing historical and political ballast from the public space of the Yugoslav capital.⁴⁶ And yet, if we bear in mind the focus on the monumental

⁴⁴ Today, it is the Museum of Yugoslav History (Muzej Istorije Jugoslavije).

⁴⁵ Art historian Chrissie Iles finds in the action a clear sequence: “In a small room, a circle of slide projectors projected a panoramic sequence of large black and white images of Belgrade round the walls. As the sequence progressed, more of the city was removed, until the final image showed people in an open space.” Chrissie Iles, “Cleaning the Mirror,” in Chrissie Iles (ed.) *Marina Abramović. Objects performance video sound* (Oxford, Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1995, 22. Iles wrongly calls the piece *Project - Empty Space*, the title of another Abramović project.

⁴⁶ Henri Lefebvre's *Le droit à la ville* (“Right to the City”) of 1968, comes to mind, a text broaching the “need to creative activity, for the oeuvre (not only of products and consumable material goods), of the need for

buildings left *in* four out of six images, and their historical relevance for Yugoslavia (intermingling always with Abramović's own family history) we must wonder if the act of "freeing" the horizon is a simple protest against authority. Instead, one might say cautiously that the horizon is freed in order to examine afresh some focal sites of Yugoslav identity formation. The monument and its ideological implications are not struck out, but remain ambiguously present in what is erased and what is left in the images and how the erasure is done. The use of white paint, in turn *erased* by re-photographing, results in a resonantly *documentary* gesture: the procedure is obtrusive enough that it can be noticed and yet covers its tracks sufficiently (the overexposed second photograph hides signs of paint handling) that it can be taken for an official speech act of documentary deletion. It is striking to compare this painterly-photographic act with EXPORT's quasi-objective diagrams in the *Body Configuration* series, discussed in Chapter Two: whereas EXPORT sought to make visible power relations flowing from architecture to the body and vice versa, Abramović seems to *make so* a realignment of landmarks in a document of the city, which is not a 'real' shift in

information, symbolism, the imaginary and play." Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1968), quoted from English translation "The Right to the City," in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (eds.) *The Blackwell City Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 367-373, 373. Obviously, Lefebvre thinks mainly of cities in capitalist societies. Abramović probably knew of the Situationists and Lefebvre's writings, which were easily accessible: Lefebvre's books were translated into Serbo-Croatian starting in the 1950s; in addition, he had served on the international editorial board of Praxis, and had visited Yugoslavia, Poland, Bulgaria, and other countries of the Eastern Block. Lefebvre was particularly interested in the Yugoslavian model of "self-management" as an anti-Stalinist model of communism. In 1986 he submitted a text and proposal (together with architects Serge Renaudie and Pierre Guilbaud) for the New Belgrade Urban Structure Improvement by the Yugoslav State, in which he connects the "self-management" of Yugoslav socialism to urban practices. See the forthcoming publication Sabine Bitter, Helmut Weber (eds.), *Autogestion or Henri Lefebvre in New Belgrade* (Berlin: Sternberg Press), and Zoran Eric, "Differentiated Neighborhoods of New Belgrade," *A Prior Magazine*, "On Paper I," (no. 17), Online Version, <http://www.aprior.org/articles/10> [online document, accessed June 1, 2009]. Yet, I am reluctant to interpret the painted photograph-slides as a 'popular' gesture of antiauthoritarian vandalism because of their self-conscious aesthetic and managerial ('censorship') symbolism.

the public force or objects, but is a real, and thus forceful, intervention into the sphere of documents.⁴⁷

This status of an immanent critique of authority in the artifact is fully consistent with Abramović's actual 'action' in *Freeing the Horizon*, which is not an imaginary stroll through the city so much as an evening of re-projection and 'indoctrination' at the SKC. Recalling the complicity Anselm Kiefer had demanded from the viewer in his *Occupation* series (Chapter Three), we can see that in *Freeing the Horizon* a similar, if not even more concrete, bond is achieved through the handouts: they make the audience collaborators in the imaginary action. These photocopied pieces of paper show the sites *after* the painterly intervention. While the erasure through over-painting and re-photographing is Abramović's doing, the possession of the handouts—which resemble anonymous leaflets—becomes the audience's responsibility. In this sense, a reading audience is *formed* through the making and distribution of these copies, as much as through the act of projection and the pragmatic task of inviting an audience to an event at SKC. That the reading audience was itself photographed examining its sheets of paper is eloquent testimony to the performative status of the images Abramović distributed, which begin with her snapshots of Belgrade and end—perhaps—with images of the gallery event itself.⁴⁸

An interpretation, with its emphasis on the *event* of the gallery projections and the distribution of the document (the handout), resulting in the concrete delineation of an acting

⁴⁷ An example diametrically opposite to EXPORT may also be adduced: the grand architecture of Vienna's *Ringstrasse* is the focus of Austrian artist Arnulf Rainer's series of *Schwarze Architektur* (*Black Architecture*, 1964/65): in a three-part sequence, a photograph of Vienna's *Burgtheater* disappears under violent brushstrokes of black paint. In Rainer's case, the performative action enters the document through the heroic vocabulary of action painting, a conceit conspicuously absent in *Freeing the Horizon*. See Weibel and Export, *Bildkompendium*, image p 6.

⁴⁸ I say "perhaps" because at the time of writing, there are plans to 'reperform' or 'redo' *Freeing the Horizon*.

(=reading) public, is supported by an announcement for *Freeing the Horizon* that appeared in a Serbian newspaper in 1973. Abramović is quoted as follows:

My ideal has been expanded media for a long time, and my experiments tonight are a continuation of earlier ones. I wish to remind the people of everyday experience, of that which they lost the power to perceive and the possibility to enjoy.⁴⁹

Through ‘expanded media,’ which we have learned to equate with self-conscious use of the document, Abramović invites her audience to complicity in an act of monument-making and erasure, involving others in her own (imaginary) urban planning and its very real distribution through gallery screening and the handout. Again, we should be careful not to interpret this distribution as ‘in itself’ a revolutionary act or protest-gesture. In taking the leaflet, the public *did* take responsibility, but in an act that as we have seen is fundamentally ambiguous: an act that could be contextualized in two extraordinarily divergent ways, as civil disobedience or as the ‘spontaneous demonstration’ of solidarity with the regime for which communism was famous. It is the imaginative performance undertaken by every audience member, and transmitted through verbal and written histories of the piece, which would ultimately determine—though of course, only provisionally—which context should rule. That in the afterlife of the event an urban-revolutionary interpretation should come to have dominated is then further testimony to the performative force of Abramović’s documentary intervention, which shifts but does not lose meaning as the ‘knowing’ Belgrade inhabitant is superseded by a cosmopolitan art-world reader anxious to place Abramović politically and historically.

The interpretation of *Freeing the Horizon* as a public act in the gallery with historical-documentary resonance gains in plausibility when we take into account a related earlier work called *Project - Empty Space* (1971, Fig. 5.13). Produced during the international theatre festival Art BITEF, in some sense the forerunner of the April Meetings, *Project - Empty*

⁴⁹ Press clip collection 1973, Archive of the SKC, Belgrade [translation Vukan Vujović].

Space pursued an analogous evacuation of the built environment in photographic media.⁵⁰

Abramović initially planned to operate in public space, showing two photographs inside the gallery space of the SKC and simultaneously Republic Square, the center of Belgrade. The 1972 SKC catalogue described the planned action as follows:

Two gigantic photos on Republican Square in Belgrade B.C. The same two photos in the Gallery of SKC (both photographs are taken from the same angle). One represents the theatre *Atelje 212* between two neighboring houses and the other the empty space between the same houses.⁵¹

Abramović's parallel description of the photographs simply mentions the theatre and then verbally replaces it with "the empty space between the same houses." This *speech act* of erasure is emphasized in the photograph, where the theatre is occluded by white paint, through the black writing on the sign mounted on the façade of the theatre, which Abramović leaves in: "slobodne forme 71" ("free forms 71"). This description, itself the title of a show at the *Atelje 212*, is thus part of a performative assertion of an action of freeing that Abramović could undertake only in her imagination: and in the document. At the same time she seems to be ironically partaking in the festival the location of which she is erasing.⁵²

⁵⁰ BITEF (Beogradski Internacionalni Teatarski Festival/Belgrade International Theatre Festival) started in 1967, and presented works by John Cage, Merce Cunningham, The Living Theatre, La Mama Troupe, and others. A year later, Art BITEF (until 73) was launched by Biljana Tomić in cooperation with Germano Celant, Harald Szeemann, Joseph Beuys, etc., to concentrate more concretely on art. See Biljana Tomić, "Art—Life—Utopia," in Kröller-Müller Museum (ed.), *Living Art on the Edge of Europe* (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2006), 63.

⁵¹ See Cat. *Student Cultural Center, 1972* [translation Vukan Vujović]. Abramović confirmed that the project only took place at the gallery; it was shown there in September 1971. *Atelje 212* opened in 1956 and became the most important theatre in Belgrade and since 1967 the location of the European theatre festival BITEF. In the catalogue of the 1995 Abramović exhibition in Oxford, *Project—Empty Space* is mentioned as having taken place in Republic Square during the BITEF festival in 1971. See Iles (ed.) *Marina Abramović. Objects performance...*, 1995, and also Celant (ed.) *Marina Abramović. Public Body*, Appendix, 485. The theatre moved into a new, larger building in the 1990s.

⁵² This is an ambivalent act given that the venue was a leading venue of the Yugoslav and visiting international avant-garde of the time, notably the Living Theatre (1967), experimental films by Maurizio Nannucci (1968), or lectures by Germano Celant on *Conceptual Art—Arte Povera—Land Art* (1970). See *Nova Umetnost U Srbiji. Pojedinci Grupe Pojave. 1970-1980* (Beograd: Muzej Savremene umetnosti, 1983), 75f. Abramović later recalled her dislike for theatre at the time: "In the seventies, the theater was the enemy of performance artists. It was considered a fake, a staged experience," though this would probably not have applied to most activities in *Atelje 212*. Incidentally, she confesses that "In the nineties now, my attitude has changed completely." Hans-

Did Abramović push the slogan “free forms” to its extreme? Her provocation and the institutional narrowing of its scope provides us with a good opportunity to reconnect the discussion of the performative document as formative of the public with the concept of *site* which, as we have said, both embraces the public and comprehensively places it in history. First, we can state the site of the document literally: the façade of the theatre, and its absence. Secondly, there are the specified sites of reception: SKC and Republic Square. But here we already encounter a difficulty, since one of these sites was instantiated and the latter was not made available, or remained a “planned” site of reception. And yet, this does *not* make Republic Square irrelevant to the work, nor even remove it as part of the ‘site specificity’ crucial to the work’s performative drive. The loss of one prominent landmark, *represented* in the center of another, is very much part of the work. *Project - Empty Space* is a play on the absence and presence of ideological markers in public space: the photographs should have been present there, just like official images were at the time, and are enlarged to give the impression of monumental art or propaganda. The attempt to seize Republic Square as the chosen site for the photographs is itself instructive, for it indicates the imaginary performance which her public is invited to think through. In general terms, then, we might say that the site of performative monuments is that spatial-political-temporal complex toward which the performance orients its audience.

Having seen just how subtly Abramović introduced political gestures in *Freeing the Horizon* and *Project—Empty Space* through the medium of photography and a performative strategy of removal, we must consider how this informs her appeal to the performance public. In part, the subtlety has to do with her subject matter, the ambivalence of oppositional art in a

Peter von Däniken, Beatrix Ruf, “Marina Abramović in conversation,” in Beatrix Ruf, Markus Landert (eds.), *Marina Abramović. Double Edge* (Kunstmuseum des Kantons Thurgau, Sulgen: Niggli, 1996), 43.

“progressive” totalitarian public sphere. In performance, carried out for the most part in an international context extending beyond Belgrade, her body would become the interface between individual and global issues, a body that won political significance in the act of being made public. In gaining this public resonance, her body loses its biographical mystery as the ‘privacy of Abramović,’ which is itself mobilized by the artist as a public symbol.

I will discuss only a small selection of Abramović’s performance work, which is a multi-faceted and prolonged project spanning four decades. My selection focuses on the work that can or needs to be read politically; I do not discuss those parts of her oeuvre that are read primarily in terms of subjectivity. As we look at these works, we should keep in mind that Abramović had already granted the photographic document performative potential early on. What one misses in these early works, almost necessarily given their play with political resistance, was an explicit awareness of the performative force of Abramović’s own activity. This activity as formative of political context is at the heart of her political-personal performances of the late 70s and beyond. We need to consider the use of her own body an extension of the idea of a performative document, as the surface that incorporates both her individual experience and a historical past. This reading is possible due to Abramović’s upbringing in a consciously political climate, with intersecting personal and political issues in her biography. In a sense, this is a study of the political authority carried by the performative gesture. While this might be specific to the political context of Yugoslavia, the study of the publicity of the performative gesture as creating the necessary “situation” is relevant for performative monuments as a whole, shedding particular light on the question of how the document (extended by the body or captured on film) brings its audience to performative involvement.

Public and Private: Dimitrijević's Anonymous Monuments

In the discussion of *Rhythm 5*, we have seen that the overlaying of public symbolism on a private ritual performed in public (Abramović's feeding and then inhabiting the fire star) led to the precarious transfer of political responsibility to the audience, a phenomenon which certainly lends evocative power to the piece, if not discursive clarity. What is puzzling in the performance of *Rhythm 5*? Is it the oscillation between obscure ritual and obvious symbols? Is it the mingling of the public and private nature of the piece? It seems openly readable, yet biographically indexed to the artist. This mixture of public and private makes it especially hard to say to what extent the work conditioned its own reception, and to what extent its force depends on a very specific Yugoslavian climate of opinion. The examination of the early photographic oeuvre cast light on Abramović's use of her body, and the star, as a document capable of spurring others to action—but there is still the question of privacy, so prominent in the performance work and conspicuously absent in the photographs, that stands in the way of understanding *Rhythm 5* and *Thomas Lips* as pure performatives and not private rituals in a Beuysian mode. We may get farther by considering privacy not in isolation but as the complement of "being public." The issue of publicness, and privacy as its opposite, as an absence of publicness, are illuminated by the work of an artist who dealt almost exclusively with heroic and monumental markers in public space, Abramović's contemporary and colleague Braco Dimitrijević.

Dimitrijević was born in Sarajevo in 1948, the son of a prominent official artist, and was educated at the art academy in Zagreb (1968-71) as well as the Saint Martins School of Art in London (1971-73).⁵³ Like Abramović, Dimitrijević became internationally known in

⁵³ Dimitrijević's father Vojo Dimitrijević was a painter and sculptor who produced a national monument in Sarajevo on the location of the murder of the Austro-Hungarian heir Franz Ferdinand (June 28, 1914). See Nena

the 1970s—he participated in the 1976 Venice Biennale, and had numerous solo exhibitions in Western Europe starting in the early 1970s.⁵⁴ Abramović and Dimitrijević are the most internationally successful Yugoslav artists of their generation: and both belong socially to the children of the revolutionary elite.

During his student years in Zagreb, Dimitrijević was active as founder and organizer of an alternative exhibition space “in a doorway hall of an apartment house in a busy street in Zagreb.”⁵⁵ In 1971, Dimitrijević started a series called *Passers-by* that he would continue in various geographical and political contexts and in different media over the next decades. He produced large (two by three meters) portrait photographs of three people he had met on the street (a young woman, and elderly woman, a middle-aged man), and mounted these images on an imposing façade on Republic Square in Zagreb.⁵⁶ [Fig. 5.14] The full title of the piece, *Passers-by whom I met by chance at 1:15pm, 4:23pm, and 6:11pm in Zagreb* gives the exact time of day, but not the actual date of the encounters.⁵⁷ Dimitrijević’s explanation:

When people see a large face shot, they automatically think it must be of an important person. It is this acceptance that I oppose. For my piece to be effective the viewer must understand that the subject was a casual passers-by, and then the questioning process can begin. Hopefully, the next time he is confronted with a monument there will be some degree of questioning about the process that went into it.⁵⁸

Dimitrijević, “Dimension Dimitrijević,” in *Braco Dimitrijević* (Darmstadt: Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, 1995), 91. The monument consists of casts of the footprints of Gavrilo Princip’s shoes—the Bosnian nationalist who murdered Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie—that Vojo borrowed from a museum, with a plaque saying “From this place the First World War broke out.” Ibid. One can hardly imagine a more intimate marriage of site and the body. Abramović also attended the Art Academy in Zagreb from 1970-72, overlapping with Dimitrijević for one year, after studying at the Art Academy in Belgrade from 1965-70.

⁵⁴ These solo exhibitions include Museum Ludwig Cologne and Kunsthalle Bern, 1984; Tate London, 1985; Museum Moderner Kunst Vienna, 1994; Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, 1995; he also participated in documenta VI, 1977, and documenta IX, 1992.

⁵⁵ The name and address of the place was Frakopanska 2a. Adrian Morris, “Biography,” in *Braco Dimitrijević. ‘Culturescapes’ 1976-1984. Gemälde, Skulpturen, Fotografien* (Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and Kunsthalle, Bern, 1984), 125.

⁵⁶ Supposedly, the building was reserved for party representatives. See Dunja Blazević, 90.

⁵⁷ The original title is *Prolaznici koji sam slučajno sreo u 13:15, 16:23 i 18:11 sati u Zagrebu 1971*.

⁵⁸ Braco Dimitrijević, quoted in Caroline Tisdall, “Notes for a Friend,” in *Braco Dimitrijević* (Zagreb: Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti, 1973), n.p.

It is notable that Dimitrijević emphasizes as the object of his critique *not* official monuments as such but the “acceptance” of public faces as belonging to politically important individuals. In other words, it is the spectator’s implicit performance of acquiescence that Dimitrijević wishes to suspend. He openly addresses the complicity of ideology and public art: but only through the ‘questioning process’ which he wishes the spectator to initiate. As an artist and public figure in his own right, Dimitrijević ‘merely’ propagated the faces as public gesture.⁵⁹ At the moment the portraits were mounted on the building in monumental size, they became impersonalized, denuded of their privacy; the title gives no names, professions, or details about the individuals or the circumstances of the encounter. If the anonymous celebrities make one question the mechanisms of publicity, Dimitrijević implies, the ‘real thing’ should too. By monumentalizing private persons, Dimitrijević called into question the binding character of monuments to public figures.

Two issues are of relevance here to our interpretation of the early Abramović. First, Dimitrijević’s critique, like hers, takes effect indirectly: he is not directly stating doubts about communist personality myth through mass media. Rather, he elevates anonymous people, making propagandistic strategies dubious by practicing them in a less than overwhelming manner. Secondly, the force of Dimitrijević’s ‘unmasking’ depends on an audience that is at least initially caught unaware by the abuse of medium (photographs in the tradition of the political poster), and the hope that the encounter with this ruse would affect the audience strongly enough to change the reception of the whole genre of the monument in the future. This hope is perhaps utopian, but Dimitrijević can be modest: if he disturbs public

⁵⁹ Cf. for example Andy Warhol’s *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, displayed on the New York State Pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair in Flushing Meadow, New York. See Richard Meyer, “Warhol’s Clones,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* Vol.7, No. 1 (1994), 79-109, and Caroline Jones, *Machine in the Studio. Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 260.

perception of monuments in the least, the work has achieved its stated intention. In order for this strategy to work, the positing of an ‘uninformed’ audience which meets the subverted ‘official’ gesture in public space is indispensable. Their lack of private access to the figures becomes the very irritant that drives them to see the political poster as a public *act*, and thus by no means a neutral occurrence.

In order to make good on this hypothesis of an unsuspecting audience, Dimitrijević had to pay close attention to the existing codes of history making and the hero cult. His strategy in this ongoing series is one of mimesis: depending on the media rhetoric used in the particular public spaces he worked in, he chose various media, from the academic bust sculpture to the new media of postwar consumer culture. In Yugoslavia this usually meant blown up photographs, commenting on the personality cult of the communist system, and the folk propaganda of political heroes and popular actors—as in the prevalent portraits of Tito in offices and in public space on the occasion of official celebrations such as his birthday.⁶⁰

Let us think through the possible reception of these photographic works in public. In the case of the photographs mounted in Zagreb and in other cities, no additional information was available on-site. Therefore, the suspicion Dimitrijević wanted to induce in the viewer had to be achieved through visual cues.⁶¹ In the case of the middle-aged man, whose face is presented as a close-up, with no obvious hints to social or political standing to be derived from his clothing or posture, the work might read as a simple declarative statement along the

⁶⁰ The “unknown hero” as a satirical trope on propaganda is at least as old as George Orwell’s *1984*, with its fictitious helicopter pilot; the myth of the Yugoslav common-man hero, and his touchy relation to partisanship and collaboration in the Second World War, is finely dissected in Dušan Makavejev’s film *Nevinost bez Zastite [Innocence Unprotected]*, released internationally in 1968. Makavejev used the footage of a 1941 Yugoslav movie about the love between an acrobat (Dragoljub Aleksić, a famous acrobat in real life) and a young woman (threatened with marriage to a rich, old, evil man), spliced with archival footage of the German occupation of Yugoslavia, as well as with newly filmed interviews with the elderly cast of the original, suggesting that resistance and collaboration were far more a gray area in the 1940s than the partisan myth allowed for.

⁶¹ Dimitrijević undertook a similar project in Belgrade, and later at the 1976 Biennale in Venice, with financial support from Beuys, who at the same time showed his *Monument to the Future*.

lines of “this is a hero,” or leader. (One recalls the closely cropped images of Stalin, which focused on the authoritative face alone). The elderly woman, on the other hand, is presented with a winter coat, scarf, and hat, which may or may not indicate high status; and the young girl has only an unimpressive sweater to show. In these two latter cases, the affirmative context of the monumental photo might be confused by details unfit for an official image.

Can we assume that in the complex political situation of Yugoslavia, some viewers could have accepted the new faces as yet another part of the official personality cult, or as government propaganda broadly, as the presentation of heroes from daily life? Let us do so for the sake of argument. With this acceptance, the very acceptance Dimitrijević wishes to question, a strange social bond is formed: the passers-by chosen for the piece does become prominent in the imagination of the uninformed viewer. The piece would then function in a performative way for the uninformed public by presenting as accepted this significance of these unknown people. The public brings about the happy performative by taking their part in the “total speech act:” by noticing the pictures and thus confirming the apparently official approbation attaching to the “unknown heroes.”⁶² The “questioning process” which Dimitrijević wished to provoke would not be immediate, but could only follow from frustrated expectations: when nothing else in public space confirmed the substantiality of these heroes, the substantiality of other heroes might come to look questionable.

And yet, if the work did nothing but make public figures slightly dubious, it would hardly press the questioning process into the consciousness of its spectators. In order for the piece to really work, both the uninformed *and* the informed audience are needed: the latter to reconstruct the possibility of a performative that worked on the uninformed audience. The

⁶² We can gather from photographs of the installation and several written accounts that no additional information was given. See, e.g., Nena Dimitrijević, 65.

unknown 'heroes' become, for the viewer in the know, anti-heroes or decoys. Without this possibility, the work would be very simple. The tension enters at the point where the two audiences meet: where the informed public imagines (however justifiably) a contentious public sphere in which the uninformed audience participates and is changed by the encounter with the 'heroes.' In some later works of the same series, or in cases where the photos were shown in institutional contexts rather than the public space, Dimitrijević would add the information that the person was a "casual passer-by" which, in this case, was given through the title of the actual work in a catalogue. This indicates that the informed audience was a reading audience, while the urban public was to remain uninformed. The questioning process is thus divided between two audiences: and since the uninformed audience is hypothetical (albeit crucial to the meaning of the piece for the reading audience), it is in the informed audience that we must locate the critical spirit Dimitrijević wishes to stimulate.

The implicit split between a 'naïve public' which simply acts on political conventions already installed in public space, and an informed public who reflects on these conventional performances and contributes to their reform, becomes explicit in another of Dimitrijević's work. Upon entering St. Martins School of Art in London, Dimitrijević began producing marble plaques with names of people from the neighborhood, and soon started working on a bust to an unknown passer-by, allegedly a "heretic piece in the context of the prevailing St. Martin's idiom of abstract welded metal sculpture."⁶³ [Fig. 5.15] What interested Dimitrijević, of course, was not formal invention but self-consciousness in the presentation of public art. When the bust was unveiled in a park in London, Guy Brett wrote in the *London Times*:

⁶³ Morris, "Biography," 127.

For one day last week, a new piece of public statuary appeared in the garden of Berkeley Square. The craggy bust on top of a massive plinth, the nameplate in heavily incised gold letters, looked remarkably like a hundred others of London's public monuments. In fact the whole thing was made of fibre-glass and was put there by a young Yugoslavian artist, Braco Dimitrijević, a post-graduate sculpture student at St. Martins School of Arts. Its subject was a "public figure," but not in the usual sense. Dimitrijević had sculpted "A Casual Passer-by I Met at 1:10pm."⁶⁴

Of course, the critic's article reveals Dimitrijević's strategy to a reading public while *still* (and this is crucial) suggesting the unexpected stroller whom the work lulls into thinking it is one of "a hundred other" monuments. A different kind of reading experience informs one that the bust depicted a person still alive: "David Harper, born 1924," read the inscription. In other words, the viewer had various options for becoming informed, and in the process the two ideal audiences were allowed to coalesce. Most explicit is Dimitrijević's project for the garden of the Schloss Charlottenburg in Berlin in 1979, where he would erect an obelisk of Carrara marble with the inscription, "This Could be a Day of Historical Importance," in four languages (German, English, French, and Serbo-Croatian), with a date chosen by a random person he met on the street (the person chose his own birthday).⁶⁵ [Fig. 5.16] Thomas Deecke has drawn attention to the circularity of the monument's address to the reader:

Enclosed by historical memorials and forming the *point de vue* of the baroque garden, Braco Dimitrijević's imitation "obelisk" clarifies...its function as a memorial through its reflection upon and its interaction with history: This could be an event of cognitive importance.⁶⁶

The inscription, by not *giving any reason* for its assertion of historical importance, sets up a performative action with a self-undermining context. Though devoid of reference, the work *is*

⁶⁴ Guy Brett, "Private Faces in Public Places," *The Times* (April 18, 1972), 10. ADD Martha new book?!

⁶⁵ See "Obelisk-Kunst im Konjunktiv," *Der Spiegel* (April 9, 1979), Nena Dimitrijević, 117, and Thomas Deecke, 'Ein Obelisk für den 11. März, Denkmal als Fiktion', in *Braco Dimitrijević, 11. März, Dies könnte ein Tag von historischer Bedeutung sein* (Berlin: DAAD, 1979). Deecke underlines the uncertain, subjunctive (German *Konjunktiv*) mood of Dimitrijević's utterance: "This *could* be a day of historical importance..."

⁶⁶ Thomas Deecke, "Ein Obelisk...", n.p. I'd like to thank the author for providing me with an English version of his text.

a monument. What makes it odd is the process it wishes to stimulate: the viewer is being informed (and probably puzzled) while looking at the obelisk, and thus made to change his or her position in the act of reception, from one of passive reception to one of active questioning of historical significance. This strategy is straightforward, even though allusions range from Charlottenburg as tourist magnet to Berlin's recent history as city controlled by the allies, thanks to the inscription in different languages.⁶⁷ These varied allusions come together in the *act* of informing the viewer, as the monument decrees a change in the status of its audience from uninformed to informed: not informed passively about history, to be sure, but about the performative force of the monument and the public itself. For it is the audience that makes the context, and thus is essential to the performative act. The Berlin monument is still in its place in Charlottenburg, but some others have made their way into museum exhibitions, and galleries, their potential of interaction possibly changing with their site of reception.

In Dimitrijević's work in general, and in the Charlottenburg obelisk most eloquently, publicity as a negative bound on private experience is seen as a condition of possibility for historical meaning: "this *could* be historically important" is as performative as a generalizing factual assertion can get. For Dimitrijević, it is the deceptively neutral act of conveying information that changes the context for the viewer, and hence the performative interaction. Dimitrijević's monuments say "I am important," through material and monumental staging, and "I am of no importance," through the captions with their banal anonymity. The circuitous reasoning which does not seem to lead to a clear answer is part of the performative confusion intended by the artist. The question then arises whether this intentional performance of failure can travel by analogy from Dimitrijević's work, through the intellectual activity of the "audience that informs itself," to the genuine objects of monumental authority in public

⁶⁷ Notably, of course, Russian, not Serbo-Croatian, was the fourth language during that time.

space. In other words, can failed monuments tell us anything about successful (and authoritarian) monuments?

In expecting an uninformed (passive) public to become an informed (active) public on the basis of enlightenment (getting informed), Dimitrijević seems to beg the question of a receptivity to critique of institutions among his public that is not necessary in the case of a purely imaginary (or at any rate mythic) uninformed public. The artist may have sensed this, for, in parallel with the ‘informative’ works we just discussed (those with labels), he kept on making monumental images *without* captions. In 1972, Dimitrijević produced photographs of passers-by for a show in Düsseldorf with the help of Joseph Beuys, whom he had befriended on the occasion of a joint gallery opening in Naples the year before.⁶⁸ In 1976, a *Casual Passer-By I Met at 1.49pm* was mounted on the “Biennale’s office building” on Canale Grande during the Venice Biennial, and supposedly caused such confusion that it had to be taken down.⁶⁹ [Fig. 5.17] It is of course not the putative confused tourists who could have benefited from this work, but those viewers in the know who appreciated the anarchic addition of an empty sign in the crowded public space.

At the same 1976 Biennale, we should recall, Beuys was showing his *Monument to the Future*. He might have been particularly interested in Dimitrijević’s engagement with the monument, even though the artists approached the issue from different angles. While Beuys

⁶⁸ Beuys and Dimitrijević had shows at Lucio Amelio Gallery in Naples in 1971, both shows opened the same day. “Interview with Braco Dimitrijević by Klaus-D. Pohl,” In *Braco Dimitrijević*, Darmstadt, 1995, 37. The photos were shown at Konrad Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf. According to Nena Dimitrijević, Beuys offered both his studio as well as financial aid for the production. Nena Dimitrijević, 79. Dimitrijević also mounted these very images in Kassel for the documenta V. Although a photograph of the installation is printed in his catalogues, he does not appear on the official list of artists of the documenta (he participated in documenta 6 and IX), Nena Dimitrijević, 81; for the photograph see, *Braco Dimitrijević, Louvre is my studio, street is my museum* (Budapest: Ludwig Museum, 2008) 64; for the list of participants in documenta V, cf. Roland Nachtigäller, Friedhelm Scharf, Karin Stengel (eds.), *Wiedervorlage d5. Eine Befragung des Archivs zur documenta 1972* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2001), 218ff.

⁶⁹ See Adrian Morris, “Biography,” in *Braco Dimitrijević. Slow as Light, Fast as Thought* (Vienna: Ludwig Stiftung, 1994), 213.

went for private myth, Dimitrijević's strategy was to mimic the existing surface of codes in public space, excluding any personal content. The "problem" of decoding the *Monument for the Future*, which "needed a manual," as one journalist complained, rested in unconventional rituals and signs Beuys used, as I have shown in Chapter Three. This absence of convention made the performative defunct (a 'non-play' in Austin's terminology). On the contrary, the private life Dimitrijević allowed in his pieces via the "causal passer-by," was presented to the viewer as a pure public opacity. Since the 'key' to the code was not presented to the public in the form of a caption, the viewer remained at liberty to engage with it imaginatively, and effectively, on the model of the 'uninformed' spectator—without the indeterminacy of Beuys's biographical symbolism. In the mid-1990s, Dimitrijević phrased the differences between the two approaches as follows:

His [Beuys's] work however was based on modeling and elements of personal mythology; he introduced new artistic materials and new forms. He was the last myth worth constructing, the last myth worth believing in. In contrast my work is based on the deconstruction of myth and I introduced an idea based on the concept of non-originality. So the modeling or composing of my work does not come from shaping new materials linked with individual mythology but from creating new semantic structures referring to the myths and contradictions in our world. In this sense he is the last historic artist and I am the first post historic one.⁷⁰

The contrast between Beuys and Dimitrijević can help us understand the complexities of Abramović's use of that ideologically loaded symbol, the star. In Beuys's case, we can only approximate meaning by trying to get as close as possible to his idiosyncratic choice of symbols—no wonder that even when he became successful internationally, he remained a "German" artist, as if Germans possessed some key for decoding Beuys.⁷¹ As appropriate to a citizen of a constructed nation that would later fall apart, Dimitrijević, by contrast, could

⁷⁰ Interview by Klaus-D. Pohl, 1995, 41. Dimitrijević would write a manifesto in 1976 entitled *Tractatus Post Historicus*, in which he argued for "Formal Non-Originality."

⁷¹ I discuss Beuys's reception in Chapter Three.

easily play out his impersonal critique in an international context: from the critique of the hero cult to the critique of an authoritative “making” of history in general. Monuments, Dimitrijević claimed, were not “innocent reminders of the cultural values of the past, but a carefully constructed mythical system which conceals the chaotic reality of that past.”⁷²

It might not surprise us, given his political background, that Dimitrijević is suspicious of the making of the past, but of course, as we have seen in previous chapters, his attitude also reflected a generational position. The symbols he used are maximally conventional, they are given as “there” to be critiqued by the audience. Given this sobriety, it may surprise us that Dimitrijević thinks Beuys is “the last myth worth constructing.” Aside from any personal admiration the statement might reveal, Dimitrijević is of course interested in Beuys’s monumental procedures or routines. For if Beuys played the charismatic leader without the distance necessary for a critique, Dimitrijević is so “informed” of the mechanisms of propaganda that he can reduce charismatic leadership to a function of monumental mass media. But if the Beuys myth is worth constructing, there is more to political assent than just rational strategies of manipulation; Dimitrijević’s enlightened posture of informing his audience does not give a full account of the appeal—or the force—of political coercion, even in the narrow spheres of propaganda or the personality cult.⁷³ This is where Abramović fits in: by conjoining private experience and public symbolism in *Rhythm 5*, she makes possible the two elements held apart in Beuys and Dimitrijević, namely a rehearsal *and* a critique of political myth. Her half-informed spectators struggle with their own reactions to the official symbol in interpreting Abramović’s perilous ritual, a ritual which compels their intervention.

⁷² Dimitrijević, “ERC System,” in *Tractatus Post Historicus*, cited in Nena Dimitrijević, 197.

⁷³ Stanley Cavell, appropriately enough in an essay on Austin, points out that the modern practice of unmasking is itself “the occasion for finding a mask or pose of one’s own (sage, prophet, saint, and so forth.)” Stanley Cavell, “Austin at Criticism,” *The Philosophical Review*, Vol.74, (Apr. 1965), 204-219, this quote 217.

The audience in Abramović, unlike the enlightened and unenlightened audiences of Dimitrijević and Beuys respectively, is presented with a process that should stand poetically for shared experience, a shared experience that cannot be stated because it is supposedly too traumatic. Abramović's case is the most complex of the artists discussed, for she is aware of her participation in the mechanisms of power she explores. She incorporates personal, but not necessarily private myth in staging her ritualistic performances. Her performative gesture in *Rhythm 5* is thus neither fully public nor fully private: in fact, Abramović constructs herself as "private" subject from the surfaces of public discourse. We have seen similar issues in the oeuvre of VALIE EXPORT (Chapter Two), who approached the issue of the cultural construction of individual experience on a more abstract phenomenological level. In the given political situation of Yugoslavia, and Abramović's own childhood experience of growing up in a celebrated Partisan family, these issues became more concrete, and her body became itself a document of a historical struggle of pre-determined and self-determined facts. In this sense, her own role is neither counter-revolutionary nor an authoritarian confirmation of charismatic leadership. Abramović would continue to test her authority in relationship to ideology and rituals in much of her later work. More and more, this "being a document," or, to stay within the formal art historical terminology, Abramović's more and more theatrical yet static staging of herself and her circumstances, creates events that are intrinsically hospitable to the document, or, better, *live* acts which carry the truth claims normally found to reside only in the mediated retrospect of the document. This culminates most recently in the re-staging of 1970s performance in the *Seven Easy Pieces*.

Body-Document of the Balkans: Abramović's Emigration and Commemorative Performance

In 1976 a biographical fact radically shifted the context of Abramović's art practice: she emigrated from Yugoslavia to Holland, settling for some years in Amsterdam. How the passive body turned sign can activate an audience, and in which ways this activation determines the imaginative "site" complex of time, place, and political context for the reading of performance by a historical public, can be seen in the Amsterdam performance *Communist Body / Fascist Body*, (1979, sometimes called *Communist Body / Capitalist Body*), in which Abramović and her German partner Ulay (born Uwe Laysiepen) invited a selected audience to their loft in the late evening of their shared birthday, November 30th. The guests, who had been told little about the event, entered a room in which tables were set up with food and champagne from the artists' 'countries of origin' (in fact, Abramović had Russian champagne and caviar, and clippings from *Pravda*).⁷⁴ [Fig. 5.18] A third table presented both their birth certificates on a desk.⁷⁵ The artists lay on the floor, seemingly asleep for the duration of the event. Their bodies were covered in white sheets and a red wool blanket, the red standing for communism, but also (in particular in combination with white) alluding to National Socialist symbolism. [Fig. 5.19] Ulay was born in Germany in 1943, so his certificate displayed a Swastika; Abramović was born the year after the liberation, 1946, and thus her document displayed a communist star. [Fig. 5.20]

⁷⁴ It is not clear whether these Russian objects for Abramović indicate: 1) a simple inaccessibility of Yugoslav goods in Amsterdam (which is at any rate very likely) 2) an ironic or even quite sincere commitment to Russian culture on Abramović's part (she would later recall that her mother taught her Russian songs as a child) 3) A decidedly ironic commentary on the lumping together of 'Eastern bloc' nationalities in West European eyes.

⁷⁵ The tables also had decorative significance: one was set with "white damask table cloth, damask napkins, porcelain dishes, crystal champagne glasses, silver tableware, German champagne and caviar," the other with "a copy of the newspaper 'Pravda,' toilet paper, enamel dishes, enamel cups, aluminum knives and forks, Russian champagne and caviar." These notes are published in *Artist Body*, 1998, 220. Ulay claims to have been lulled to sleep by the guests' politeness, while Abramović could not sleep and had a hard time holding the passive pose.

Some commentators have interpreted this piece as a ritual *détente* or overcoming of the Cold War, à la Beuys, but this seems over-determined by the biographical fact that Abramović and Ulay were lovers: there is after all a saying about “sleeping with the enemy” current in many languages. I would argue rather that the title and the doubling of objects does not suggest the overcoming of political conflict but its displacement into personal tensions.⁷⁶ In this vein, it is important to evaluate the discrepancy between seemingly ‘passive’ artists and their constitution as political subjects through the audience’s presence. The event was documented with a camera, and three weeks later the eleven guests were interviewed about their impressions of the evening.⁷⁷ These interviews were used as the soundtrack of the film, which was then shown to the guests at a later date. These reactions are not just interesting as social history, but in particular as striking proof of the extent to which a performance practice can condition the sort of reactions people have to it: for the reactions, for all the differences of detail, are strikingly alike in their distracted mood. One visitor, curator Dorine Mignot, expected the artists to involve the audience very directly by “hypnotizing” them.

[J]ust sit down. I’ll do exactly as they tell me....And then exactly the opposite happened of what I had thought would happen: that you were lying in bed, maybe hypnotized, maybe with a sleeping pill....So I just sat down at a corner of the table and thought: well, who knows, maybe something else is gonna happen.⁷⁸

Many members of the audience recalled having remained expectant of ‘something’ more, of some kind of action on the part of the artists, and while their personal experiences ranged from boredom to inhibition and a sort of prurient merriment, the most obvious feeling was the one of an uncomfortable split between active and passive roles, presence and absence:

⁷⁶ Kristine Stiles argues that by sleeping together under the blanket, they “neutralized culturally explicit and destructive ideologies and nationalism through two requisite actions for life: rest and food.” Stiles, Biesenbach, Iles, *Marina Abramović*, 2008, 57.

⁷⁷ The transcript of these interviews can be found in *Artist Body*, 1998, 221-233.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

“You had turned things upside down by being asleep, by not being present, so to speak,” curator Gijs van Tuyl noted ruefully.⁷⁹

In line with Abramović’s earlier work (though without danger and interruption), *Communist Body / Fascist Body* impelled the audience to construct a context of the action: after a while, the champagne was opened and drunk; many guests tried to interact with the unmoved artists; some were disturbed by the display of the swastika, and *all* interpreted Abramović and Ulay as political bodies emerging from incompatible systems and wishing to thematize this in a performance. In a way, the performance consisted in purely descriptive acts: displaying the birth certificates, the bodies, and the food. But of course, in choosing not to act themselves, Abramović and Ulay left the audience the work of political interpretation of these ‘descriptions,’ giving only the title as clue to how they should be construed as private individuals *and* public figures. The artists selected what would be discussed, and directed the event through their non-participation, in concert with the apparently objective display of political documents and objects of consumption.⁸⁰ Finally, the “party behavior” was collected as film, and superimposed with the document of “interpretations” of the event (the interviews), themselves produced in the clarity (and inaccuracy) of the passage of time.

The staging of this ‘Cold War’ and ‘Second World War’ birthday party, its filmic documentation, and the eliciting of the multifarious experience of the participants through the interviews, add up to an extraordinarily rich episode in the history of performance, of social or pre-relational art, and of contemporary commemoration. Conducting the interviews (and the showing of the film to the guests) makes obvious that the piece cannot be reduced to the duration of the action. But the more challenging contention that we would have to make is

⁷⁹ Ibid., 224.

⁸⁰ They quite literally set the agenda for discussion: gender relations, for instance, remained in the background.

that the event already was temporally open, and anticipated a certain temporal extension, in the decision to have it filmed and to work with the result. *Communist Body / Fascist Body* thus closely interwove memory, celebration, and sociality, and worked with strategies of historical cliché (the “communist” table with cheap aluminum mugs and *Pravda* slogans was contrasted with the “bourgeois” German porcelain) and ceremony (the birthday champagne), but left enough performative room for action for each audience member to navigate the political significance of the evening individually. That it is the invited audience who is given space to recall the event, not the artists, emphasizes their role as co-performers, and their centrality for the later reading audience wishing to reconstruct the action retrospectively.

In this process of pushing the task of performance and of memory-interpretation to the audience, the bodies of Abramović and Ulay, and their attributes (the food, utensils, and most crucially the birth certificates) were assimilated subtly to a world of documents which one probes in the hope of answering historical questions. In this and other performances by Abramović, starting perhaps with *Rhythm 5*, the body functions in a double role not only as culturally constructed and authentic presence, but also as a documentary shuttle for the reader to construct a historical past in his or her imagination: in this sense, the body *takes on* the meaning of a document, inscribed or interwoven with the symbols of history, while its real presence provides a platform for performative involvement, which *must* at some point in time take place.⁸¹ The exterior of the body—the skin—as symbol of this interface between the private and the public self is utilized most dramatically in *Thomas Lips*. Is this historical body, revealed and acted upon in a performance, only accessible to an audience receiving it in a since-vanished present? I have urged throughout this study, beginning in fact with

⁸¹ One could say this more technically by saying that history and the present or multiple presents are, in Charles Taylor’s formula, an “internal dyad,” that is, two terms with the instantiation of one necessitating that of the other. To Taylor’s list: “up / down,” “left / right,” and “secular / religious” we could add “history / present(s).”

Abramović's recent re-performance, that such a view cannot be very productive for understanding performance or its memory work. But the viable alternative is also *not* the retreat into a non-time of perpetual simulations and documentation without reference. For the very idea of the document or the documentary, like that of memory presupposes history and past presents about which it is possible to be right or wrong, though, as with memory, it may not be possible to be sure. To make the body a document, and performance a documentary function, is to attempt a kind of historical truth value for performance that goes beyond subjectively "inventing" the past: as in *Communist Body / Fascist Body*, it is to investigate the conditions of its intelligibility.

Having thus recaptured and reformulated our basic insight about the historicity of performance, the task remains to connect the insight into Abramović's practice to our broader question about site and audience of performance, and to the narrower question of the *content* of Abramović's bodily documents: namely, political symbols like the communist star. These symbols are in important ways both arbitrary conventions and, through their use, objective realities in political life. How can they be made documentary by Abramović, or, in other words: what kind of performance endows them with truth claims?

The question can be broached in a way that encompasses both *Thomas Lips* and Abramović's identity as a performer through Abramović's truly monumental ongoing retrospective performance called *The Biography*, a complex piece combining performance, theatre, and literature, with changing details on the various occasions it was performed (Kassel, Madrid and Vienna in 1992, then in Berlin, Frankfurt, and various other cities through the 1990s. It was also made into a film, and a book). The very opening sentence of the text of *The Biography* places the artist as human being firmly—perhaps inescapably—in

a Yugoslav context: “1946 / Born in Belgrade / mother and father partisans.”⁸² This laconic declaration is not just a fact but a *statement* of fact and thus part of the performance. *The Biography* is a selective re-performance of Abramović’s oeuvre, partial interpretation and introspection, and an act of remembrance *and* of shaping the past: Highlights of her career are recreated by means of short fragments acted out by Abramović on stage, others (the collaborations with Ulay) play on video screens. Thus documentation and re-performance enter the piece as equal partners. Under “Thomas Lips” we are told: “Cutting a star with a razor blade on my stomach. Whipping myself.” Abramović acts out these two scenes.⁸³ [Fig. 5.21] The star and the flagellation were thus—in a public act of commemoration—made to stand in for the whole performance. A critical text accompanying *The Biography* in its catalogue notes:

Biography is always mediated history, not just the past...ordered past, classified in blocks, gearing towards a goal, at least analyzed history...The individual and its relationship to the masses are the parameters of every biography.⁸⁴

The last sentence is true of many performances reckoning with the political circumstances of Abramović’s upbringing—if for “masses” we substitute fellow citizens, or, in the context of a performer at work, *audiences*. At any rate, the terms for the master category through which these parameters are to be organized, “ordered past,” “classified...blocks,” etc., are really synonyms for the document or documentary function, whose truth status is not evident but constitutes its work. What interests me in *The Biography* is the opening up of performance art to history—Abramović’s own *and* the political history of her country—not through an

⁸² The full text for *The Biography* can be found in Marina Abramović. *The Bridge/El Puente. Retrospective Exhibition* (Milano: Charta, 1998), 236-253, and in Marina Abramović. *Artist Body*, 394-407.

⁸³ Marina Abramović. *Artist Body*, 396.

⁸⁴ Thomas Wulffen, “Überlegungen zu Marina Abramović’s ‘The Biography,’” In Marina Abramović. *Artist Body*, 390 [my translation].

appeal to a false objectivity or an easy subjective ‘entry’ to the past, but through laborious restaging of semi-autonomous “images” of the past for a later audience.

Abramović’s biography and its performance are particularly interesting because she is an artist, who works the changing contexts, the different “sites” consisting of institutional settings and their audiences, into her oeuvre. In contrast to her work of the 1970s, where the political context was ever-present but had to be indicated ambiguously, Abramović began to incorporate references to Titoism, the partisan-hero, and the Balkan myth openly in her later work: *The Hero* (2001) is a video dedicated to her father in which Abramović sits on a white horse in a landscape with a white flag in her hand, as if enacting a kind of historical epic in which nothing happens [Fig. 5.22]. A voice singing folk songs accompanies the image. And in *Portrait with Tito* (2004) [Fig. 5.23], she posed in tights and high heels, holding a portrait of Tito in front of her bare torso.⁸⁵ The body as document contextualizes these odd artifacts, from an idealized leader portrait to ‘epic’ stage gear, as historical documents, managing issues of longing and historical fantasy as empirical manifestations of how the past is commemorated. In this work, the packaging of the past, but even more the sensual pleasure and pain of memory, seem to gain ascendancy over a critique of political participation. Abramović neither joins in the nostalgic celebration of the Titoist past prevalent among some intellectuals in the 1990s as civil war and genocide shattered the Yugoslav ecumene, nor did

⁸⁵ This piece does not *simply* show her admiration for Tito. In a recent interview, Abramović recalls 1968 and her role as student secretary in the Communist Party as follows: “[After the student protests] we were asking Tito for thirteen points, like more freedom, a multi-party-system, freedom of expression so that people could write what they wanted and criticize the system.” Later, “Tito had given a talk, and out of the thirteen points he had accepted only four totally uninteresting things, like better food, but not the major things. One of the things given to us was the Student Cultural Centre... That evening there really was a party, like everything was fine. I was so disgusted by the whole thing that I burned my communist membership... But that Student Cultural Centre became the main focus, a place where I really knew art was happening.” Interview with Klaus Biesenbach, in Stiles, Biesenbach, Iles, *Marina Abramović*, 2008, 10. The image is not without irony, for Tito’s dark tie in front of Abramović’s pubic area comes to look like a vagina.

she repudiate this past, as did the nationalists in complaining that Tito stripped them of their religious and national identity.

Indeed, nostalgia and its material practices were put under great pressure through the lens of nationalism and national identity in works such as *Balkan Baroque* (Venice Biennial, 1997), widely and rightly understood as an allegory on the war in Yugoslavia. [Fig. 5.24, 5.25]. For days, Abramović sat in the exhibition venue, scrubbing beef bones with a brush and singing dirges from the various warring regions of Yugoslavia, while a three-part video installation showed her father, her mother, and herself.⁸⁶ On the floor, two copper sinks and a copper bath filled with water were positioned. The element of forthright politics in the work, at a desperate time and embodied in an ambitious performance, may explain the work's being honored with the Golden Lion of the Biennale.⁸⁷ Yet, how obvious *is* the political content of the work? As performance, a 1970s conceptualist monotony of process (the scrubbing) was incorporated with new video and the material excess of realist theatre (the beef bones), for a result that the performer pointedly identified, through the title, with the didactic *ars memoria* of the Baroque. On separate video screens, Abramović's mother and father told their life stories, while Abramović, dressed in the white coat of a natural scientist, recounted the semi-mythical story of the "Rat-King," then took off the coat to reveal a tight black dress, in which

⁸⁶ A description of *Balkan Baroque* goes as follows: "The installation. Images are projected onto the three walls of the space. My mother, my father, and myself. On the floor are two copper sinks and one copper bath filled with water. Performance: In the middle of the space I wash 1,500 fresh beef bones, continuously singing folksongs from my childhood." Kristine Stiles considers *Balkan Baroque* one part of a trilogy together with *Cleaning the Mirror I* (1995), in which Abramović cleaned a human skeleton, and *Cleaning the House* (1996), in which she scrubbed beef bones. Stiles, "Cloud with Its Shadow," 45.

⁸⁷ The piece was preceded by a scandal. Abramović had been chosen for the Yugoslavian pavilion by the Montenegrin curator Peter Cuković, a decision annulled of by the minister of culture Goran Rakocević, who insisted on "authentic" art from Montenegro. Abramović distanced herself from any kind of nationalism in an open letter and was subsequently replaced by the painter Vojo Stanić. She was then invited by chief curator Germano Celant to perform *Balkan Baroque* in the main pavilion, for which she was awarded the Golden Lion.

she began dancing to a Slavic song.⁸⁸ A video about how to get rats to kill members of their own family has been rightly seen as an “allegory of Balkan familial sadism, social violence and genocide.”⁸⁹ Showing the family interviews in concert with the staged character of Abramović-the-expert and Abramović-the-dancer as three parts of the same installation not only pointed towards the entanglement of private experience and its historicization, but also towards the power of the document in making the performances (“authentic” and not) into fragments of one coherent history. The moral is surely *not* the banality that the documentary mode and subjective memory are on the same plane of unreliability, since the past is just an “invention” anyway. The work rather demonstrates that very different modes of probing the past, the subjective and the calculated, experience and allegory, footage and fiction, can be brought side by side to address the heterogeneous claims, of history and memory.

If this alone added up to a somewhat confusing, definitely uneven staging of local politics through biographical means, the scrubbing of the bones (while the videos were running) for six hours every day during the first four days of the Biennale, functioned as an emphatic unifying gesture. In Yugoslavia, stripping to the bone means getting to the heart of the matter; a verbal-performative interpretation would then translate this repetitive action into a search for the core of the violent conflict, overlaid with the concrete political use of bones in the nationalist hero cult: in 1989, the year Slobodan Milošević became president of Serbia, he started to spur nationalism, and prominently paraded the bones of medieval Prince Lazar around Serbia in rallies commemorating his fourteenth-century resistance to Ottoman rule.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Abramović’s video had become famous as a solo piece. It can be found on various online sources (YouTube, for example). The “Story of Wolf Rat” is printed as text in the catalogue, *Artist Body*, 380

⁸⁹ Kristine Stiles, “Cloud with Its Shadow,” 45.

⁹⁰ According to legend, Prince Lazar refused to capitulate and save his life; his death made him a martyr. The Ottomans ruled the country for five centuries. See Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History* (London: Papermac, 1996), 213, and Robert Thomas, *The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 50. Milošević’s speeches on this occasion were a “repudiation of the Titoist legacy,” (Thomas, 50).

It is a stretch indeed to see the ‘compulsive’ scrubbing of bones, a performative presumably tied to private and national traumas but to no objective public convention of political speech, as a happy performative, much less a performative document. And yet, I would argue that the ritual’s obstinate clarity of reference, and its monstrous effort to bring private devastation into the open in symbols internal to Yugoslav history yet unmistakable in the international context of Venice, is itself an achievement in the sphere of history writing, a monumental performance as much at home with the Biennale audience as with the video and photographic documentation that ensued. This coming nearer of event and documentation in Abramović’s work, which I have at times underlined by calling the performer’s body itself a document, is no rejection of historical reality, nor a retreat into its certainties when faced with the troubles of conflicting interpretation. It is rather the staging of events as already-interpreted, reality infused with documentary value. That this is possible at all is a peculiarity of the performative, for in scrubbing beef bones that stand for genocide, as in saying “I do” in the marriage ceremony, one both *does* and *says* what one is doing.

The shift in genre of Abramović’s performances to incorporate traditional narrative means (what she has acknowledged as her embrace of theatre) came about with a change in the attitude towards the audience. I argued that the audience was activated by Abramović’s early performances, while in *Balkan Baroque*, it is confronted with a possibly overwhelming theatrical act composed of video, objects, and performance.⁹¹ This impression is confirmed in 1999, when a film-biography on Abramović by Pierre Colibeuft was entitled *Balkan Baroque*,

⁹¹ This does not hold true for Abramović’s *Transitory Objects*, started in the late 1980s, “with the idea that the audience could actively take part.” These objects often incorporate materials understood to channel energy, such as amethyst or iron, and range from stone shoes, chairs, and other usable objects, but, Abramović explains, “I do not consider these works as sculptures, but as transitory objects to trigger physical or mental experiences among the public through direct interaction. When the experience is achieved the objects can be removed.” Celant (ed.), *Marina Abramović. Public Body*, 84.

and in her recent work *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005), a multi-channel video installation wherein Abramović sets into motion myths and fables from the ‘Greater Balkan’ region.⁹² [Fig. 5.26]

This expansion in political identity from the communist-partisan star to a Balkan internationalism is significant—as is Abramović’s refusal to involve the audience directly in these works. The connotations of the term Balkan (originally used in a pejorative sense) were inverted by a small group of intellectuals and artists during the 1990s, who hoped the term would acquire a utopian dimension that sought to define Yugoslavian political continuity beyond national identities.⁹³ The Balkans meant a symbol of peace in the region but also a sort of public face turned to the West. In *Balkan Baroque*, Abramović tried to apply this concept to the less-than-compatible political reality of the war-torn region through a gesture of closing the gap between the document and presence. Both have their place, and we should not be mistaken by the aesthetically pleasing documentation of Abramović’s washing of the bones: her life act and the videos do *not* melt into one layer of documentarity. Rather, a later reading audience will reconstruct the different layers of the performance in the document. Abramović in her consciously static actions enables this later reading of the document, without surrendering to it: the grain of presence ensures the complexity of the work, that we can read the piece as the personal act by an émigré artist, who brought the “blood” of the Balkan war into the art institution, and that we read the site as double: the Venice installation, and the Balkans of her personal struggle with the history of the revolution (her parents), and

⁹² The first lines of the film *Balkan Baroque* are the same as those of *The Biography*: “46, born in Belgrade. Mother and Father partisans.” In the Serbian press, Abramović’s *Balkan Erotic Epic* is seen as anti-nationalist.

⁹³ See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Dušan I. Bjelić, Obrad Savić (eds.), *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), as well as exhibitions such as *In Search of Balkania* (Graz, Neue Galerie, 2002), Harald Szeemann’s *Blood and Honey. Future’s in the Balkans* (Klosterneuburg, 2003), and René Block (ed.) *In the Gorges of the Balkans. Europe’s Art and Cultural Scene* (Kassel: documenta und Museum Fridericianum, 2003). Raša Todosijević, who had been part of the loose circle in Belgrade around the SKC, switched from performance to installations during the civil war. Famously, his installation entitled in German *Gott liebt die Serben / God loves the Serbs*, begun in 1989, featured a swastika-shaped table.

the abject failing of these ideals in the conflict of the 1990s; the Balkans of the myth of the Rat King, which seems to foreclose rationalist explanations of history altogether. In being present at *Balkan Baroque*, Abramović acts her own status in history: it is this that makes the event worth documenting, *and* distinguishes it from its documentary instantiations and later audience-sites, however much it may expect and even welcome them.

What we can say in conclusion, recalling the most recent of Abramović's performance-documents, which in fact can be considered performative monuments, the *Seven Easy Pieces*, can be stated briefly. There is not *one* public of performance, nor is there *one* performative moment in which the work has to be understood. The changing political and geographical context, which is not only apparent in Abramović's case, but made part of her very work, charges the "total speech act" of the performance.

When she re-performed *Thomas Lips* as part of the *Seven Easy Pieces*, Abramović added the figure of the partisan: the artist was wearing a green military cap, "the partisan cap with the 5 point star of my mother's from 1945 when she was in the Tito army, [a] wooden stick [with] which I used to walk the Chinese wall. The stick became 15 inches shorter during the walk. The shoes [with] which I walked the wall (2,500 k)."⁹⁴ This partisan, merged "original" props from the war, with utensils from the performance *The Lovers* (with Ulay, 1988), which consisted in Abramović and Ulay walking the Great Wall (one eastward, one westward) for 90 days until they met (and ended their relationship). A white flag was added, "with the blood stains from the cuts in my stomach."⁹⁵ Abramović had mounted it on the stick and held it in her hand on the stick, naked. She thus merged the historical myth and her own biography with her own body, through a theatrical repertoire of costume which she

⁹⁴ Email from Marina Abramović to the author, June 9, 2009.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

had earlier rejected as outside the means of conceptual art. [Fig. 5.27] The context that is activated in the present of performance is itself composed of earlier presents. This, I am claiming, holds true for all performance, because, in all performance, the change of public (from the one who witnessed the performance to the gallery spectator, or even the student viewing a digital clip on YouTube), brings with it a different performative. This makes the history, and the memory of performance, and enables performance to refashion the monument as an act of commemoration and taking of responsibility. The public, and thus public reception with its responsibilities, is always part of the performative, and the different levels we see in the uninformed, informed, or misinformed audience (to introduce a new term) will always determine not only the reading of past performance, but also its re-instantiations in the future.

Conclusion

In 2006, Spanish artist Santiago Sierra (born 1966) produced one of the least-liked public artworks concerning the Holocaust. [Fig. 6.1] His project *245 Kubikmeter*, installed in the former synagogue in Stommeln, Germany, consisted of the exhaust of six cars being discharged through tubes into the sealed building; visitors had to wear gas masks and were allowed inside the synagogue for five minutes each. A protest promptly followed across the political spectrum, most outspokenly from the Secretary General of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Stephan J. Kramer, who said the piece “damaged the dignity, not only of Holocaust survivors, but of the whole Jewish community.”¹ The exhibition, planned to be open to visitors for several hours every Sunday, was shut down prematurely. No doubt one can say that in any political context the installation was tasteless, immature, and appalling in its clumsy attempt to submit the visitor to the experience Holocaust victims lived through, or rather, most vulgarly, to their experience of *death* by gassing. The vulgarity of the attempt, of course, beyond any question whether one should wish to simulate such an experience, is that this is not an experience that can be had: what one gets instead is the passive or voyeuristic frisson of having been the tourist at a genocide.²

The shock value of *245 Kubikmeter* acquires its full significance, however, in the context of the statements concerning his intentions that Sierra released to the press. The work, it turns out, was no act of commemoration, but rather aimed at exposing the “banalization of remembrance of the Holocaust.”³ One might almost say, to borrow a

¹ See “Synagoge als ‘Gaskammer.’ Die Autos bleiben vorerst aus,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (March 13, 2006) [My translation].

² We could consider in this connection several texts which John Lydon wrote to music of the Sex Pistols in 1976 and 1977 (“Holidays in the Sun,” “Belsen was a Gas”) that interpreted the Holocaust precisely through the eyes of a emotionally and politically sedated tourist. “I don’t want a holiday in the sun, / I want to go to the new Belsen, / I want to see some history, / cos’ now I’ve got a reasonable economy,” etc.

³ See “Umstrittene Kunst. Synagoge wird zur ‘Gaskammer,’” *Der Tagesspiegel* (March 12, 2006).

rhetorical strategy we have witnessed frequently in the history of recent commemoration, that Sierra made a countermonument to Holocaust countermonuments! And if his work is self-consciously unacceptable, the gist of Sierra's claim is that recent Holocaust commemoration has become a trivial abuse of history indistinguishable from the most traditional monuments.⁴

Taking this all into account, we must admit that the venue was peculiarly well-chosen for such a claim to have its bite. The synagogue in Stommeln, near Cologne, had served as a medium for site-specific installations since the early 1990s, when the municipal Kulturverein began inviting prominent artists to the only synagogue in the area that survived National Socialism (the building was bought by the city in the late 1970s). Stommeln has thus gained an international reputation: to mention only one project, in 1998 Rebecca Horn executed *Spiegel der Nacht*, a poetic Holocaust memorial roughly compatible with her proposal for the Berlin monument, and with the German reception of Paul Celan, in which images of night, mirrors, ashes, and desolate landscapes are taken as melancholy entry points to subjective commemoration.⁵ In denigrating the subjective approach to Holocaust commemoration in general, Sierra launches an immanent critique of monuments that may remind us of Jochen Gerz's with his *Exit – The Dachau Project*. While in the 1970s, Gerz claimed that Holocaust commemoration in Germany had not reflected on its authoritarian form, that it preserved a model of didactic violence coming out of Fascism, Sierra now addresses the exuberance of soft-headed aesthetic offers to 'get personally involved' in the Holocaust.

⁴ In an essay on documentary film, Susan Rubin Suleiman discusses the problems of solely working with the concept of memory instead of historical research. At the beginning of the 1990s, she notes, "...the emphasis on memory has been justly criticized because it can lead not only to dogmatism and kitsch but to political instrumentalization of every kind...." Susan Rubin Suleiman, "History, Memory and Moral Judgment in Documentary Film: On Marcel Ophuls's *Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie*." *Critical Inquiry*, vol.28, no.2 (Winter 2002), 509-541. See also Charles S. Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy, and Denial," *History and Memory* 5 (Winter 1993).

⁵ See Chapter Four. Other artists who have used the space are Jannis Kounellis, Richard Serra, Georg Baselitz, Eduardo Chillida, Maria Nordman, Carl Andre, Rebecca Horn, Lawrence Weiner, Rosemarie Trockel, Richard Long, and Sol LeWitt. Not all the works, but a good portion, deal directly or indirectly with the Holocaust.

Let us examine how this interaction is offered up to the spectator and at the same time rendered obscene by Sierra. The visitor to Stommeln Synagogue in 2002 was expected to walk into the gas-filled space with a gas mask that prevented injury, and no other means of access to the subject of commemoration. Though presumably it would have required some courage just to entrust oneself to the protection of the gas mask and step inside, one would then only be able peer through the visor at the synagogue, which presumably did not look very different filled with poisonous exhaust, and leave. On-site discussion was preempted by the masks, as was any act besides the potentially suicidal one of taking off the mask.

What Sierra puts in question in Stommeln is, then, *not* commemoration in general, nor performative commemoration specifically, which he himself relied on, if the piece is to be understood as more than a simple provocation. What he must be taken to criticize rather is the “Holocaust sublime” mode of commemoration that seeks to put passive spectators (*not* actors) in the victims’ shoes, and evoke emotional reactions on the basis of such second-hand experience. In this sense, *245 Kubikmeter* may in fact succeed in being a radical critique of the cathartic element in *all* Holocaust commemoration, including itself. Insofar as the performative monument presupposes individuals making choices and not just serving as nodes of “social relations,” it seems to always run the risk of reassuring these individuals in the present about a past which should not offer any reassurance. This is at bottom the same stricture as Adorno’s, in asserting the barbarity of “poetry after Auschwitz.” As Adorno and later the young Gerz came to realize, this critique is so uncompromising that it is in danger of undermining itself: if all discourse about the Holocaust is self-serving, so is all critique of discourse about the Holocaust. Sierra, with his scandalizing *245 Kubikmeter*, has concretized the instability of the critique of monuments. If even democratic commemoration is a priori

both authoritarian *and* complacent, one is thrown back either into a return to some sort of traditional commemoration (which is ‘at least’ honest about its political violence) or one must, with Nietzsche and the German new conservatives, say goodbye to the bleak past and embark on a project of therapeutic forgetting. Neither choice is particularly appealing, least of all to Sierra, I imagine. But a solution is hard to find.

Sierra’s piece can at least, in its negativity, be taken as a spur to action and reflection. We see here, as in Whiteread’s Vienna monument, a skepticism about leisurely interaction expressed in the blunt refusal of performative involvement. This gives rise to new, interior performances, which however should not be confused with passive spectatorship. In some sense, a restrained performative monumentality is the strategy of this generation—though not exclusively. Over the course of this dissertation I have shown the development of the performative monument from 1960s performance to the national Holocaust memorials and multimedia monuments of the 1990s and early twenty-first century. In narrating this development, my focus was necessarily on the work of one generation of European artists formed after the Second World War. Since then, the paradigm of performance, some decades ago a marginal practice in artistic production, has successfully traveled into aesthetic theory, art production, and has even replaced older models of exhibiting.⁶ “Performativity” now suggests a whole range of contemporary aesthetic and political ideals. The term is often applied loosely to a new model of art production in which the audience is granted access to the art piece on ostensibly equal terms with the producer, if not included as co-producer. Most prominently, it has come to play a role in “relational art,” an aesthetic discourse first

⁶ From documenta to manifesta and the Venice Biennale, exhibitions are now proclaimed open structures, aiming at a non-hierarchical interplay between curators, artists and audience. The ‘platform’ has become a favorite display style, most prominently in Okwui Enwezor’s documenta 11, where the exhibition in Kassel was declared only one of many platforms of discussion and interaction in locations ranging from Vienna to Dakar.

theorized by Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s which aims at producing “sociability” or social interaction, often on a symbolic level, but occurring directly in the world, of which the art world (gallery, studio and museum network) is seen as one significant, strategically insulated subset. Santiago Sierra, in his public actions, is sometimes considered part of this new trend.⁷

Relational art implicitly operates on assumptions similar to those of art of the 1960s, principally that the event status of performance prevents the formation of hierarchies. Indeed, critical dichotomies have fallen away with the acceptance of the diverse objects coming out of performance, notably relics, photographs, and film; most obviously, what has been blurred is a dichotomy between the ephemeral and the permanent.⁸ And yet that dichotomy continues to operate subtly and to sanction much of the ambition for the nonhierarchical in art: and the permanence of the monument still serves as its antithesis or hidden referent. Thus Bourriaud: “Present-day art has no cause to be jealous of the classical ‘monument’ when it comes to long-lasting effects.”⁹ He explains that relational art ‘touches eternity precisely *because it is specific and temporary*,’ in other words, that ephemeral events have chains of effects that are long lasting, but this hardly troubles a traditional view of the monument as authoritative persistence over time. Bourriaud is indeed cautious about challenging this model of authority: contemporary art is “marked by its non-availability,” he claims, “by being

⁷ Sierra is not mentioned in Bourriaud’s manifesto *Relational Aesthetics* [*Esthétique relationnelle*, 1998], translated by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2002). Claire Bishop finds that Sierra and Thomas Hirschhorn are “conspicuously ignored” by Bourriaud, and introduces them in the framework of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of antagonistic democracy. Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October* 110 (2004), 70f. Bishop does not criticize so much Bourriaud’s model as some of his privileged artistic practices in “microtopian communities,” where art “collapses into compensatory (and self-congratulatory) entertainment.” Bourriaud does discuss Hirschhorn in a more recent book, but not his monuments as such. See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* [French ed. 2002] (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005), 31.

⁸ On the unstable character of the object, see Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*.

⁹ Bourriaud, 54. Bourriaud calls Félix Gonzáles Torres’s installations “contemporary monuments,” taking up the tasks of monumentality today, namely “the commemoration of events, the continuity of memory, and the materialization of the intangible.” Gonzales-Torres often mounted installations consisting of sweets or pieces of papers that visitors could take away with them—very literally, they would be reminded of the work through these souvenirs—an involvement in some ways similar to the tracing of names in Maya Lin’s memorial.

viewable only at a specific time,” and is thus “no longer presented to be consumed within a ‘monumental’ time frame and open to a universal public.”¹⁰ Here Bourriaud seems to evade the objection that relational art is elitist by identifying the “universal public” of earlier art with a suspicious “‘monumental’ time frame.” But since he has not given reasons to discard such a frame, it is unclear why the monument should be rejected.

The ambivalence of the monument in current discourse is not so much a theoretical weakness of Bourriaud but a fruitful legacy of the coming together of performance and monuments through photographic documentation since the 1960s. Let us see how this ambivalence works in practice: in Sierra’s oeuvre, the monument is both object of dispersal and a strategy of making social relations visible. The results are artworks that aggressively probe these relations while retaining the appearance of objective investigations, public acts. Sierra’s contribution to the 2001 Venice Biennale, *200 personas remuneradas para ser teñidas de rubio*, consisted in paying two hundred non-European men to dye their hair blond. [Fig.6.2] Many of the predominantly African men worked as street vendors and could be encountered within the city of Venice for the following weeks. The concern with authority always posed by the monument is put here in direct relation to the “use” of the body of the immigrants. Use is of course an extended term—Sierra is using their bodies for his work, but they are in turn using their own bodies for the money Sierra offers.¹¹ It has been rightly pointed out by British art historian Claire Bishop that the work consisted not in the act of dyeing the men’s hair blond, which Sierra in any case delegated to assistants, but in the after-

¹⁰ Bourriaud, 29. He continues: “The example of performance is the most classic of all. Once the performance is over all that remains is documentation that should not be confused with the work itself.” Interestingly, he sees a “contractual” agreement with the viewer in setting up a specific time (and location) for the work. Ibid.

¹¹ This division of labor in the production of *200 personas* does nothing to amend the capitalist exploitation of immigrants; on the contrary, Sierra pointedly hires underprivileged people for amounts comparable to their usual low pay. In this sense he makes visible the inequality by openly affirming its model. Sierra, Bishop argues, “creates a kind of ethnographic realism in which the outcome or unfolding of his action forms an indexical trace of the economic and social reality of the place in which he works.” Bishop, 70.

life of the act, the presence of these men in public space. This confirms that the participants are participants in a monument to contemporary social conditions: by which of course I do not mean a celebration of them, but a drawing of attention to what otherwise remains unnoticed. The people Sierra hires for a seemingly formal exercise, are, as Sierra himself pointed out in an interview, “humans, whom you can talk to, who *remember*—and *remind* us—of particular situations.”¹² Through this appeal to a memory that, however unevenly, encompasses both his actors and his audience, Sierra arranges his human material to stand for the social matrix: in being assembled with aesthetic sangfroid by Sierra, they display all the more clearly their own resistant markers of race, gender, and class, social relations in their brutality. But since we are part of the same social matrix as they (though presumably, as audience, we are higher in the social stratification), the work is one of social relations becoming aware of themselves. The resulting master document of historical conditions made out of the bodies, conceived on a grotesquely large scale, is then recaptured in photographs, catalogues, and other literal documents, which, in claiming only to document Sierra’s artwork, are claiming to document social facts. These facts of course are not ones that can simply be made *visible*—even poverty, to take the most obvious of Sierra’s concerns, is not so much a matter of outward appearance in a globalized consumer economy—but only emerge as subjects of memory (and critique) through the discussions provoked by Sierra’s use of others’ bodies. It is crucial for this relay of supposedly real social forces that Sierra’s managerial work not be ‘acted,’ that the men be paid, and thus really coerced through the leverage of wages into performing Sierra’s monument. For the aim is not an *image* of social forces but their *re-enactment*.

¹² “Ich versuche Wirklichkeit und Wunschenken nicht durcheinander zu bringen. Santiago Sierra im Gespräch mit Gabriele Mackert,” in Gabriele Mackert and Gerald Matt (eds.), *Santiago Sierra* (Vienna: Kunsthalle Wien, 2002), 18 [my translation and emphasis].

There is thus a continuity between Sierra's art and the 'classic' performative monuments at the core of this dissertation in the need for the performative to be happy, for the social contract to bind, for the utterance to be taken as the reality it represents. But there is also a major change in the way Sierra binds the performative into a monument permeating public space: the change lies in the authoritative transfer of the public gesture from the artist to someone else's body. I have, with Austin, emphasized that the performative is continuous with overlapping moral and political notions of responsibility. In light of this, the ultimate question for politically committed public art might be: what responsibility does it (or the artist) take on, and what responsibility does it demand from its audience? This question helps us get clear about the element of *coercion* at the center of Sierra's body of work.¹³ Accepting the invitation to perform commemoration entails taking individual responsibility for past historical events in the present; in Sierra the aggressive transfer of the public gesture to the paid immigrants who *let* themselves be dyed or tattooed, or to the unfortunate tourists who "experience" the gas-filled synagogue, throws responsibility, perhaps internalized as a feeling of remorse, back to an audience not given any opportunity to act.

Individual experience, whatever we may think of it, is indispensable in interpreting the current memory debate. That this experience is not necessarily based on being "present," I have shown in studies of performance in Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg-Harburg, Belgrade, and the Guggenheim in New York. Sierra goes one step further. By insisting on the crudest possible presence, he shows that the experience it generates may be radically misleading. It may be that it is rather a *mediated presence* that can give late-comers an experience for political commemoration. This would not necessarily mean the failure of all attempts to

¹³ An important personal background for the Spanish artist Sierra might be the Fascist regime of Francisco Franco which ended, somewhat gradually, with Franco's death in 1975 (when Sierra was nine years old).

engage the individual through experience. It would only mean that we must approach the idea of experience as carefully as that of presence. I have tried to show that a contemporary practice of monuments need not be purely negative, that important questions of political and historical responsibility in public space can be addressed through the monument. Whether the model of performative commemoration will persist, collapse into orthodox monumentality, or disappear in the interstices of an ever-expanding relational art practice, remains to be seen.

I would like to end by reflecting briefly on the theory of *responsibility* which gives the performative monument its foothold in the difficult terrain of postwar European memory. In his sixth lecture on performative utterances, J.L. Austin concerns himself with strange limit cases, neither fully performative, not purely descriptive, of “suing the action to the word.” Thus one could say “Look here,” and proceed to write something on the blackboard. Then there is “I salute you,” which could either be accompanied by a gesture, or stand in *for* a gesture which is dispensed with, and thus become purely performative. “To say ‘I salute you’ now *is* to salute you.” “Compare,” Austin continues, “‘I salute the memory...’.”¹⁴ To salute the memory of a person or event through a public gesture, is, according to Austin, purely performative. There is no actual salute, but there is a speech act in which memory is being activated through the word “salute.” Translating the insight into our terms, the salute described by Austin is a classic case of commemoration rather than an act of introspectively dredging up memories. For the memory that is being saluted is neither one’s own, nor that of one’s interlocutor, but the public and thus fully political memory of an event worthy of being recalled. Commemoration is a public act, not necessarily connected to personal memory or experience (though this cannot be excluded), an act in which the past is cited in the present as a commitment to future responsibility. Even if we agree on this, there is the hard work of

¹⁴ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 81.

deciding what to take responsibility for, how to act on it, and of actually acting. But this takes us beyond art history into the world in which the performative monument hopes to intervene.

In Chapter One, I showed how photographs, but also narratives constructed in concert between artist, audience, and art discourse monumentalize performances as historical events. Re-evaluating the historiography of performance art as historically bound, I concluded that reception relies on an ever-changing *imaginary* presence of the past event. Chapter Two, a case study of Vienna from the 1960s to the present, took up the issue of the document, which I introduced as crucial link between presence and history. I show how conscious mediation and a concern with actual monuments led to commemorative architecture. In Chapter Three, I analyzed the inconclusive efforts of mourning through ritual in Germany after 1945. In Chapter Four, I showed how in the 1970s and '80s, these rituals were formalized as contractual agreements, bringing about a shift to conscious performative involvement of the audience. The tension between mourning and commemoration raises the issue of political responsibility in performative acts, an issue still unsettled after the long debate on Holocaust commemoration in reunited Berlin. In Chapter Five, a case study of Yugoslavia in the 1960s and '70s, I showed how performance and context mutually determine each other. If the performative monument is bound to its political environment, it also selects parts of this environment to be included in performance: this explains its political force, and also the role of the public as component of the "total speech act." This context as a whole, I argue, must be considered the "site" of the performative monument. Finally, in this conclusion I tried to show that performative commemoration today extends beyond the genre of monuments proper into the heterogeneity of relational art.

Besides presenting historical case studies, my aim in this dissertation was to question the notion of a dichotomy of object-based public art and ephemeral performance. This aim is not mine alone, for the history of performative monuments is embedded in broader historical narrative: that of the ‘dematerialization of art’ in the 1960s and ‘70s, and the interest in process emerging from minimalism but also from political activism and developments in literature and popular culture. I do see a dialectical relationship between the monument tradition and its overturning rather than a teleological development away from the object. That the performative could be frozen in commemorative sculpture had much to do with its application to the trauma of WWII and other disasters. But to see performance simply as a mediator between the individual and history—in the sense that the corporeal presence could overcome the chasm to historical events—is not enough, I have argued. Too instable is the concept of presence, like that of history, to begin with. And yet, we cannot deny their connection: personal involvement is necessary if we want memory to be relevant in the political future. The involvement may but need not be corporeal, since our mediatized society opens up many channels into the performative, and into history.

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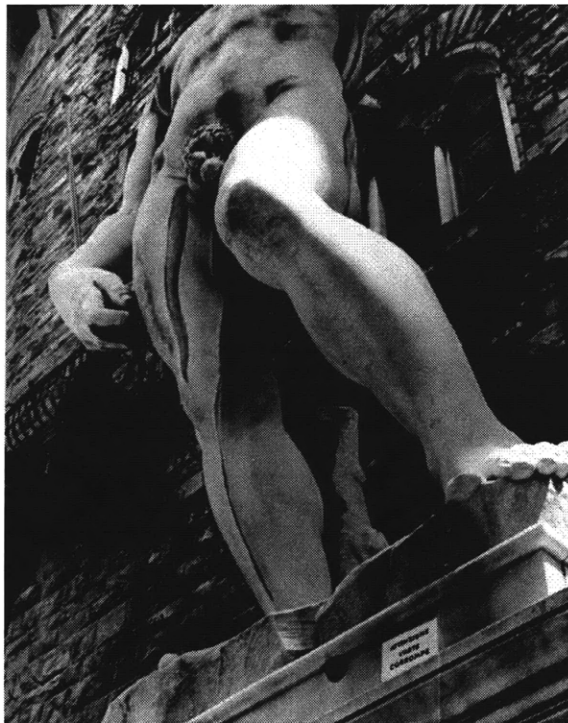


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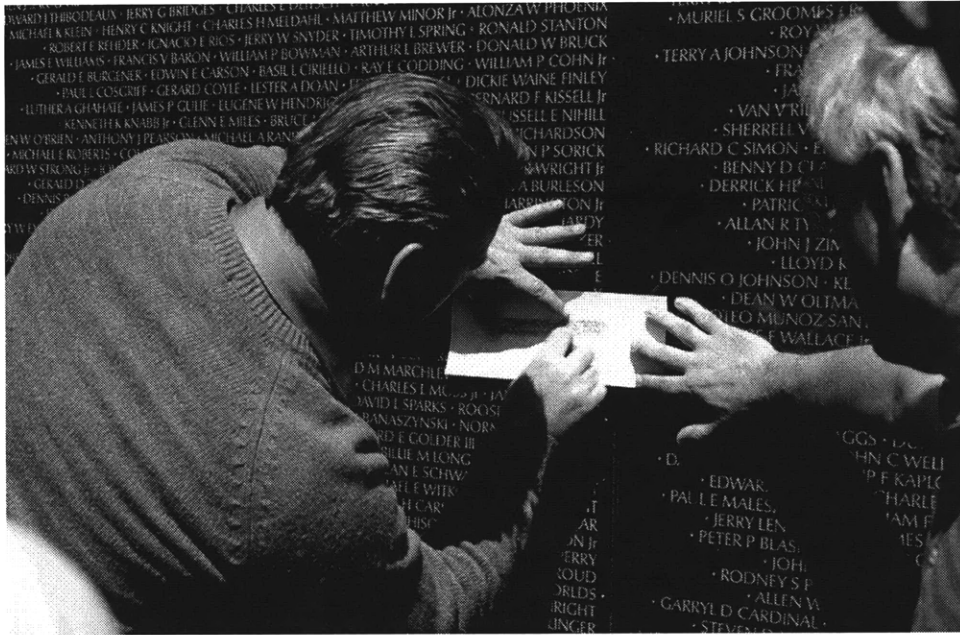


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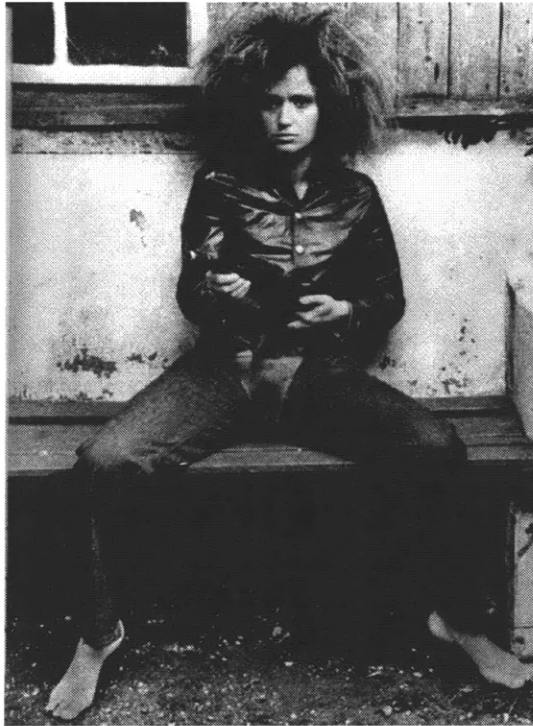


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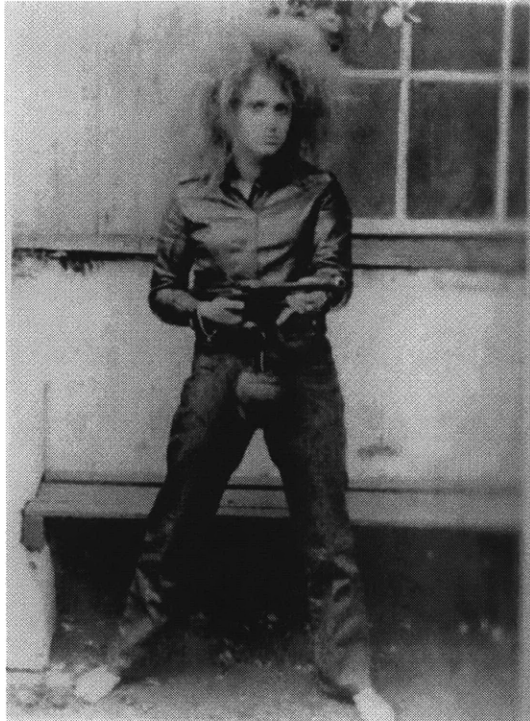


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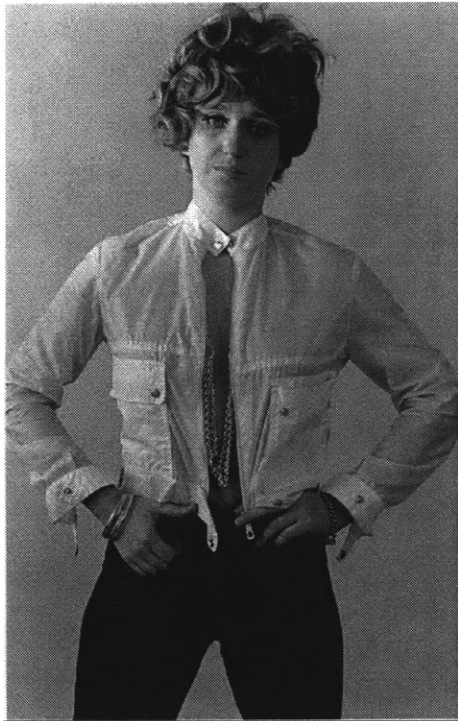


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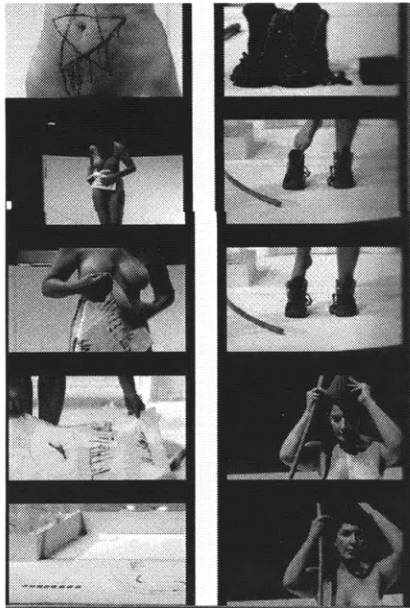


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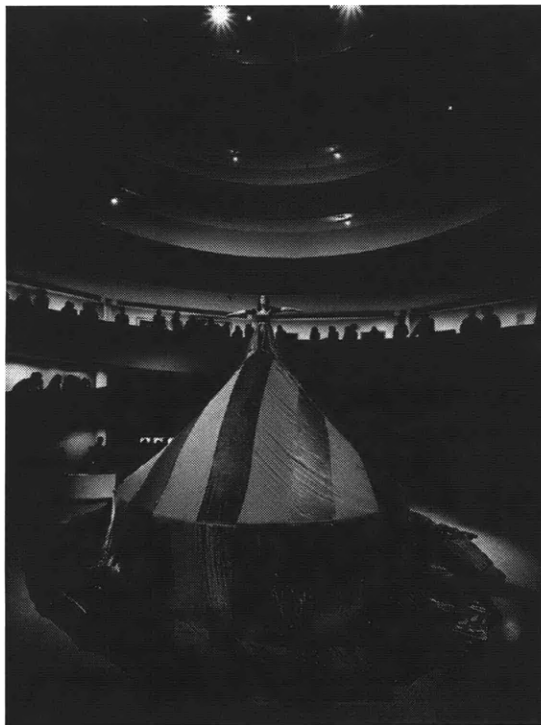


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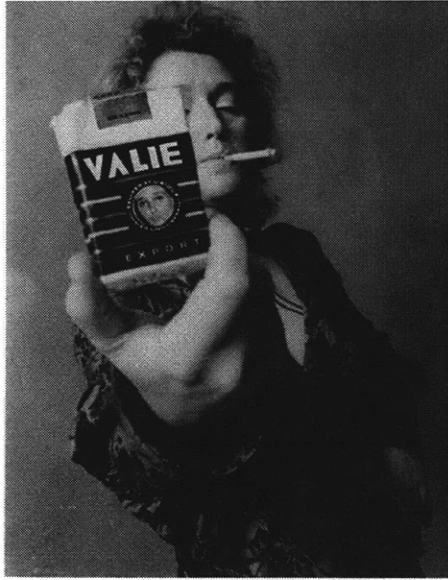


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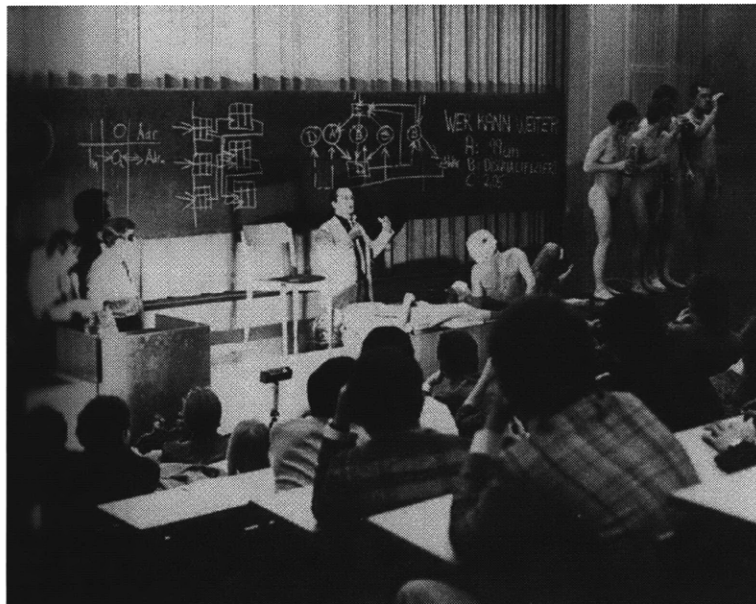


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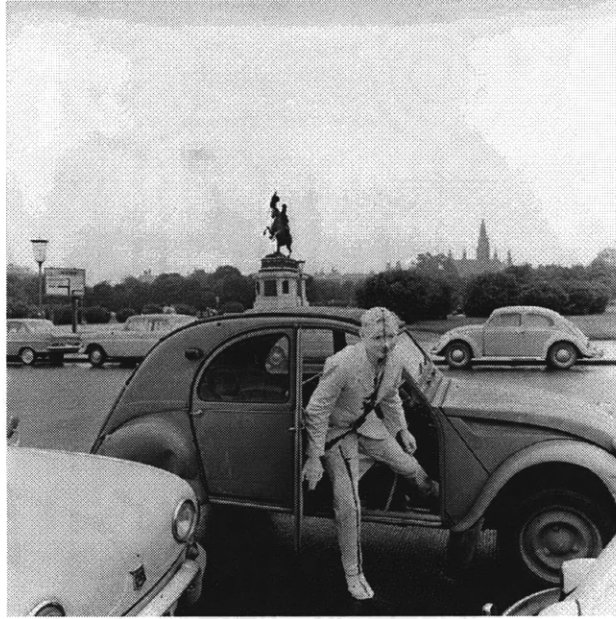


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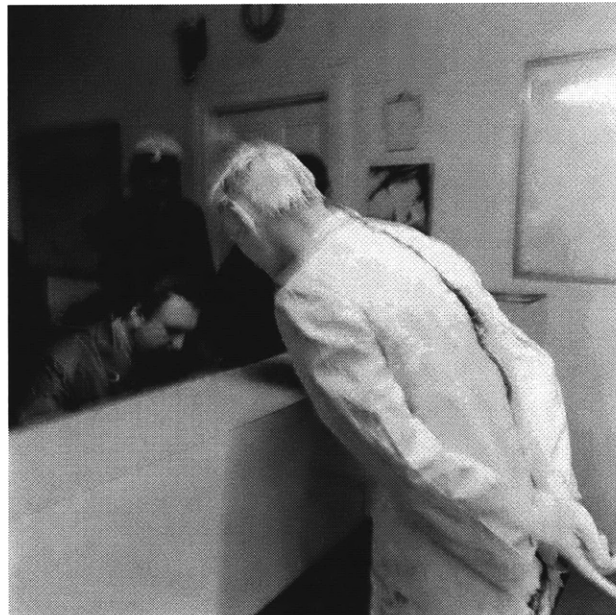


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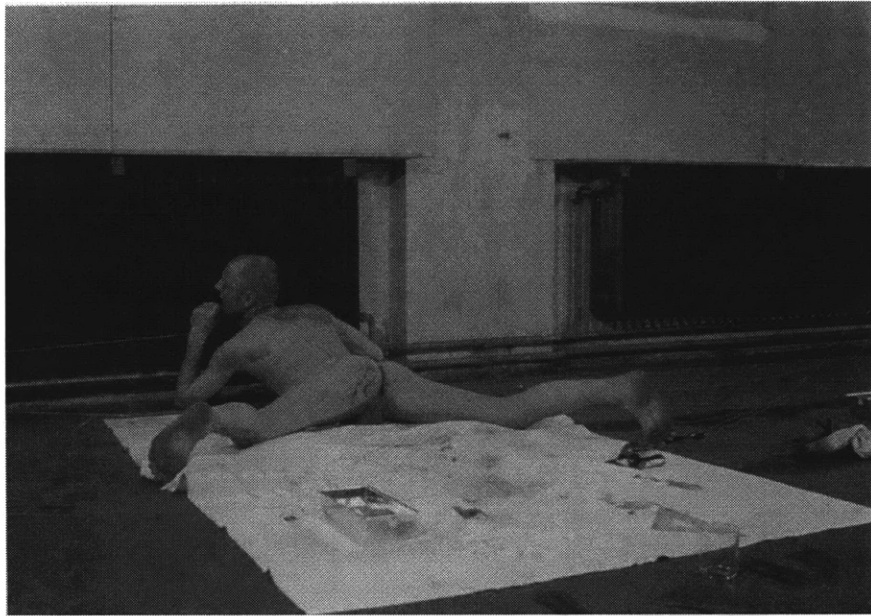


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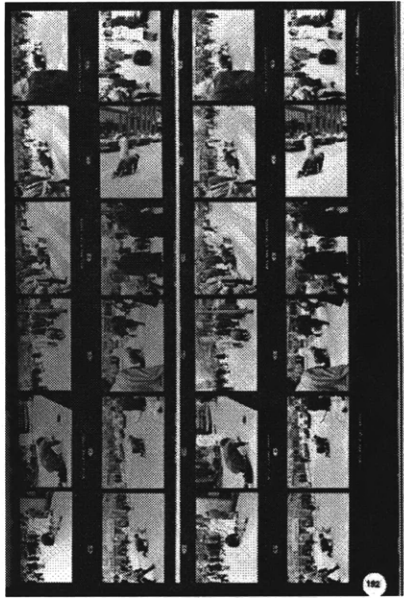


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Fig. 2.29 VALIE EXPORT, *Tapp- und Tastkino (Touch Cinema)* 1968 (photo: Werner Schulz)



Fig. 2.30 VALIE EXPORT, Peter Weibel, *Cutting*, 1967/68



Fig. 2.31 VALIE EXPORT, *Tapp- und Tastkino* (*Touch Cinema*) 1968 (photo: Werner Schulz)

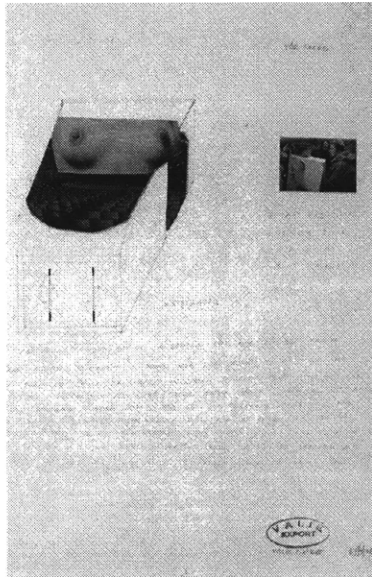


Fig. 2.32 VALIE EXPORT, *Tapp- und Tastkino* Concept paper, 1972



Fig. 2.33 Abendzeitung about *Tapp- und Tastkino*, November 15, 1968



Fig. 2.34, VALIE EXPORT, *Körperkonfigurationen*, 1972: *Aufhockung* (photo: Hermann Hendrich)



Fig. 2.35 VALIE EXPORT, *Körperkonfigurationen*, 1972:
Carceri (photo: Hermann Hendrich)



Fig. 2.36 VALIE EXPORT, *Körperkonfigurationen*, 1974:
Nachfügung (photo: Eric Timmermann)



Fig. 2.37 VALIE EXPORT, *Körperkonfigurationen*, 1976:
Elongation, (photo: VALIE EXPORT, model: Susanne Widl)

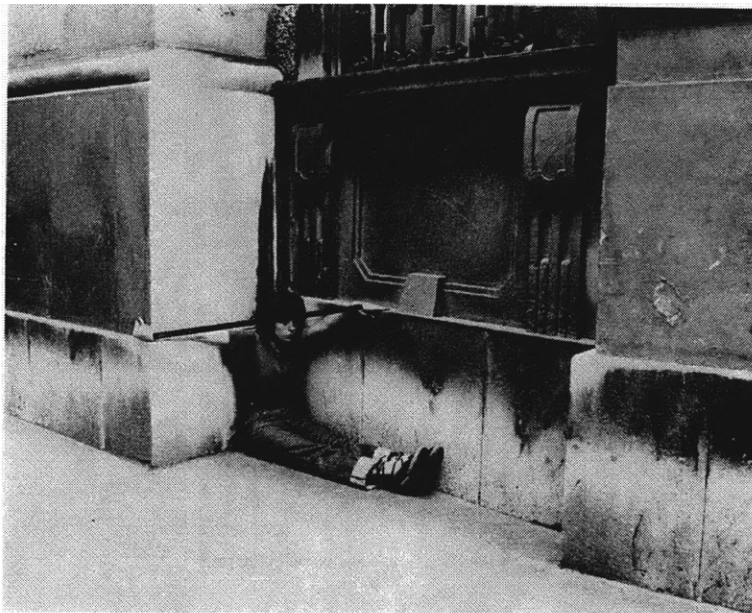


Fig. 2.38 VALIE EXPORT, *Körperkonfigurationen*, 1976:
Verfügung, (photo: VALIE EXPORT, model: Susanne Widl)



Fig. 2.39 VALIE EXPORT, *Körperkonfigurationen*, 1982:
Heldenplatz (photo: Hermann Hendrich)



Fig. 2.40 VALIE EXPORT, *Körperkonfigurationen*, 1982:
Heldenplatz (photo: Hermann Hendrich)

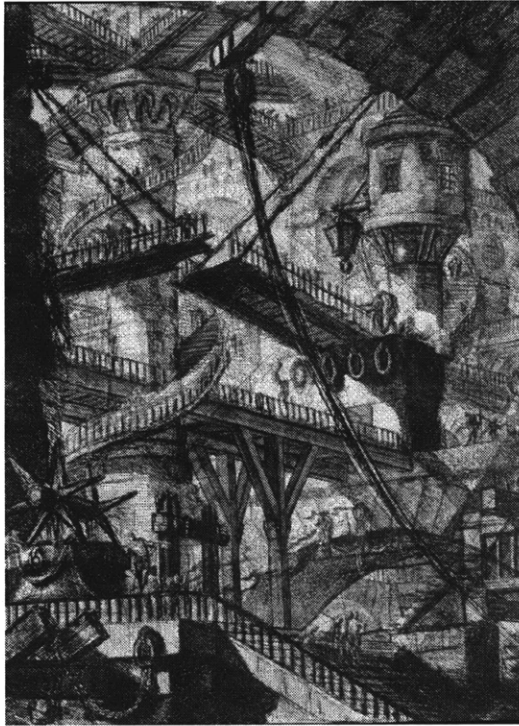


Fig. 2.41 Piranesi, *Le Carceri d'Invenzione*, 1745



Fig. 2.42 Peter Weibel, *Anschläge, Polizei Lügt*



Fig. 2.43 Peter Weibel, *Anschläge*, O schandesgericht



Fig. 2.44 Peter Weibel, *Anschläge*, Rechtsgewalt



Fig. 2.45 VALIE EXPORT, *Self-portrait with Staircase and Skyscraper*, 1989

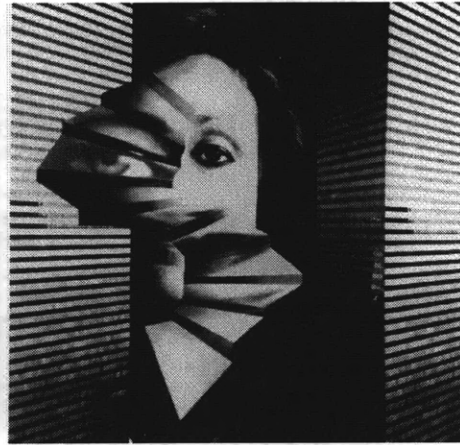


Fig. 2.46 VALIE EXPORT, *Self-portrait with Two Skyscrapers*, 1989



Fig. 2.47 Alfred Hrdlicka, *Memorial against War and Fascism*, 1988

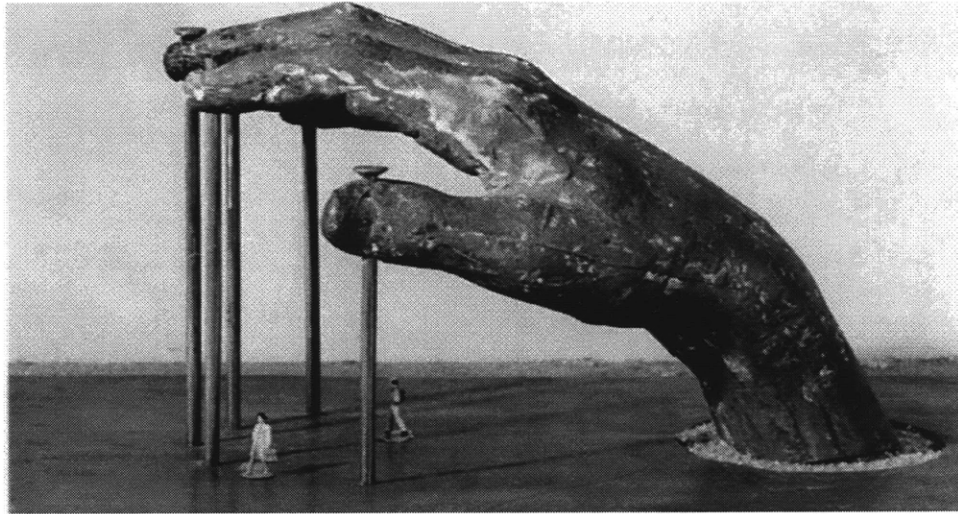


Fig. 2.48 VALIE EXPORT, *Der Ort des Menschen*, 1974

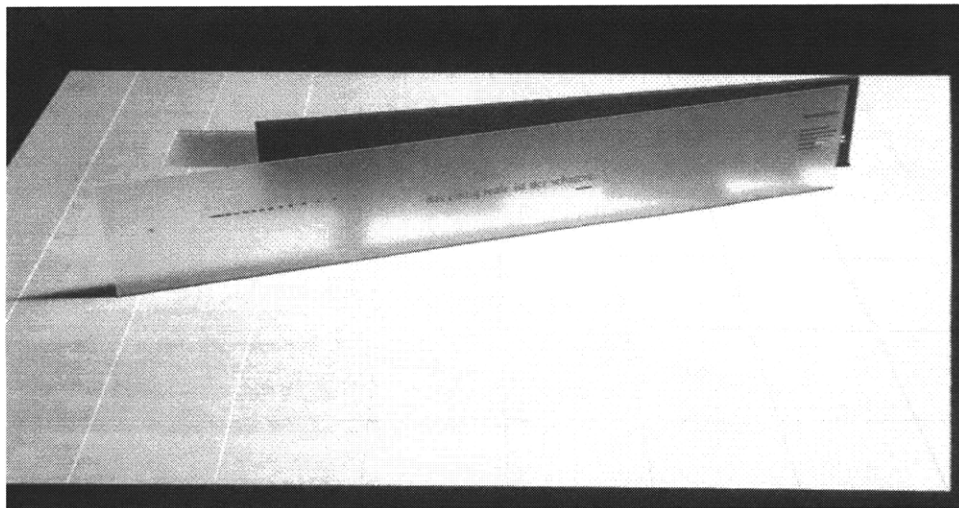


Fig. 2.49 VALIE EXPORT, model for *Passage of Remembrance*, Judenplatz, Vienna, 1995

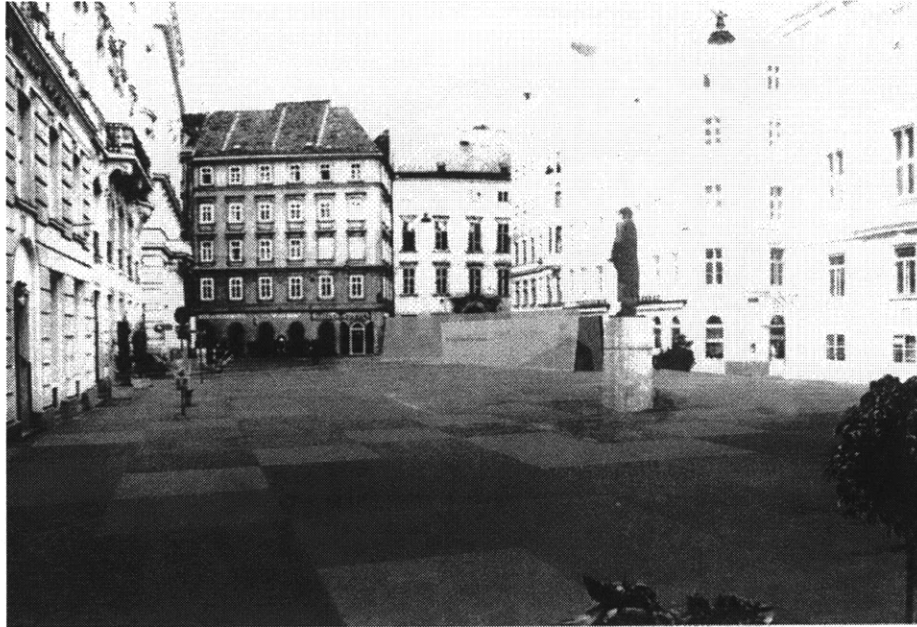


Fig. 2.50 VALIE EXPORT, photo-montage for *Passage of Remembrance*, Judenplatz, Vienna, 1995

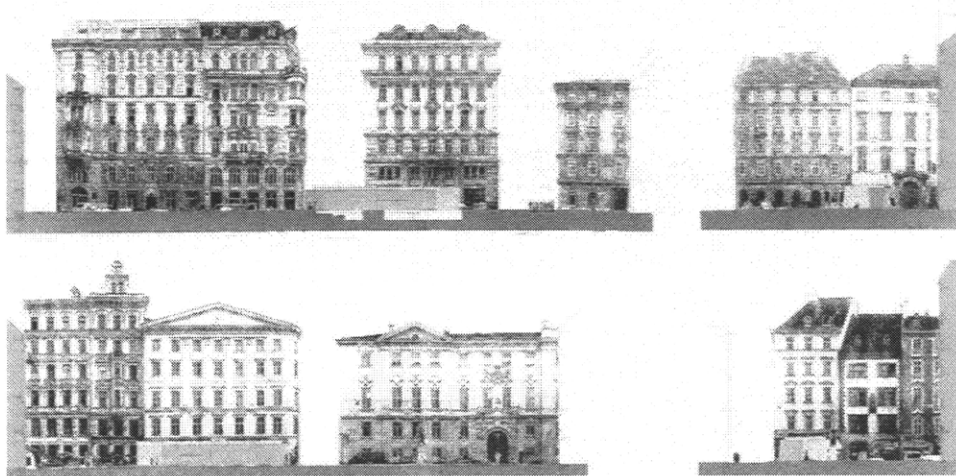


Fig. 2.51 VALIE EXPORT, sketches for *Passage of Remembrance*, Judenplatz, Vienna, 1995

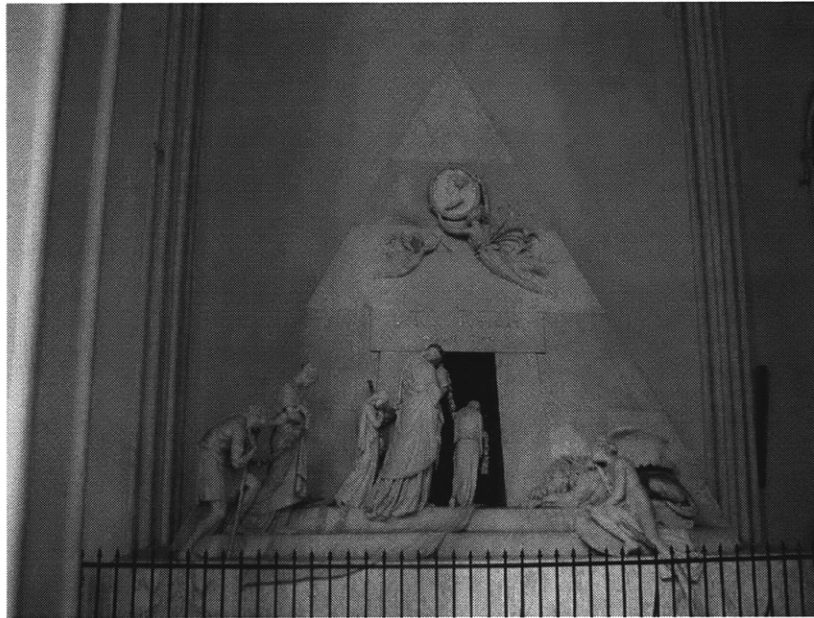
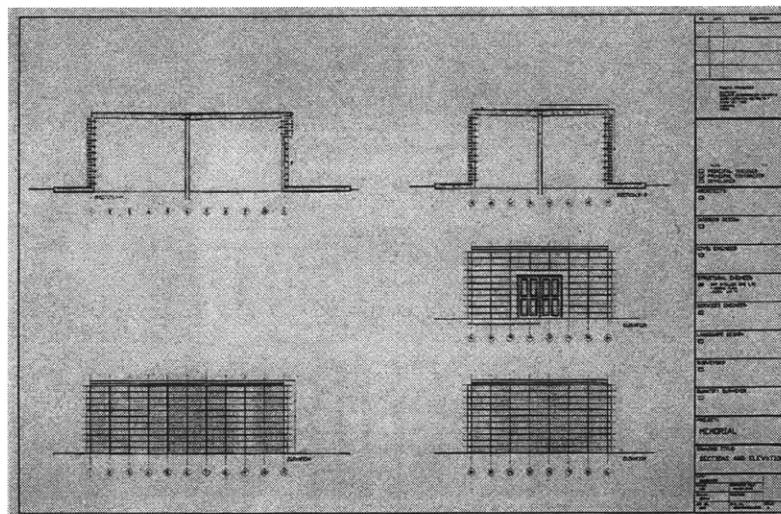


Fig. 2.52 Antonio Canova, Cenotaph of Marie Christine of Austria, Vienna (photo: Urlunkwill/Wikimedia)



Längs- und Querschnitt, Seiten-, Vorder- und Hinteransicht; Planzeichnungen (M 1:100): Atelier One
 Sections and elevations, technical drawing (scale 1:100): Atelier One

Fig. 2.53 Rachel Whiteread, project Judenplatz Vienna, sketches, 1995



Fig. 2.54 Rachel
Whitread, project
Judenplatz Vienna, model,
1995



Fig. 2.55 Rachel Whitread, *Holocaust Memorial*,
1995-2000



Fig. 2.56 Robert Adam, Syon House, Long Gallery



Fig. 3.1 Steinplatz Berlin, Memorial to the Victims of National Socialism, 1953



Fig. 3.2 Steinplatz Berlin, Memorial to the Victims of Stalinism, 1951



Fig. 3.3 Auschwitz Memorial, 1960s (photo: James Young)

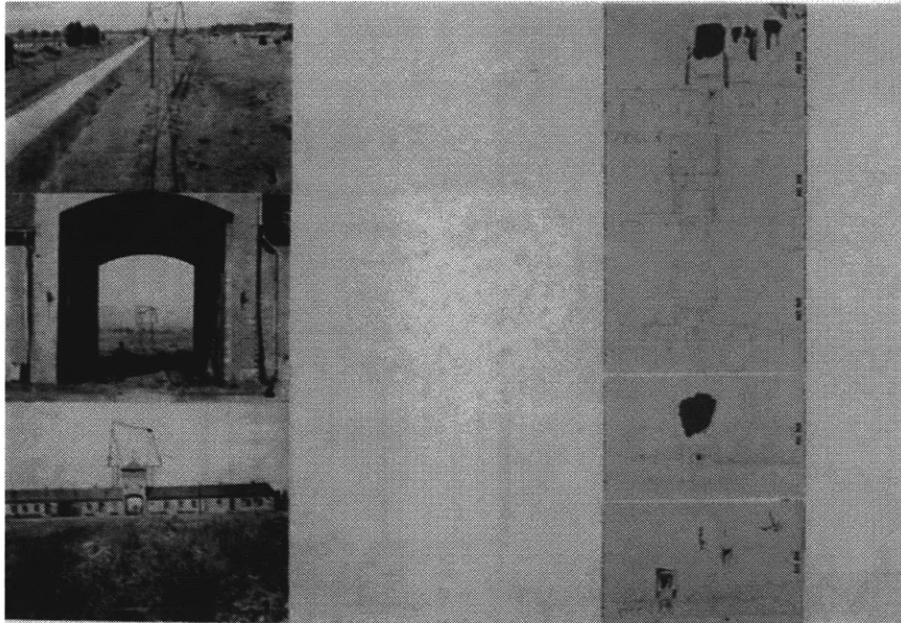


Fig. 3.4 Joseph Beuys, Collage for competition of Auschwitz Memorial, 1957

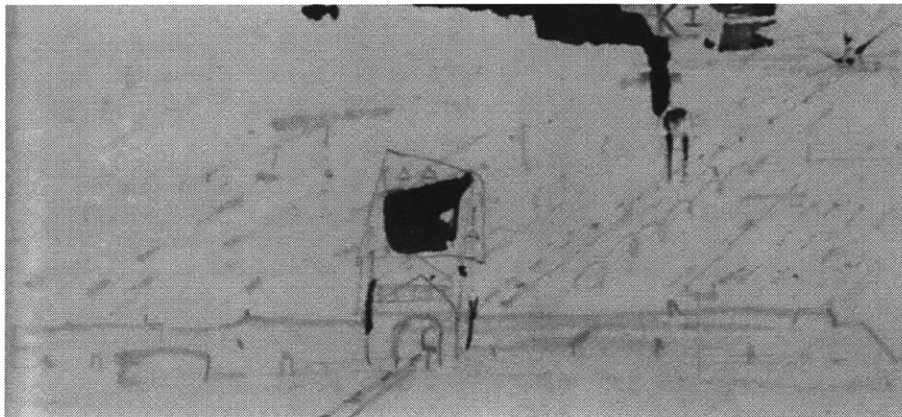


Fig. 3.5 Joseph Beuys, sketch for Auschwitz memorial, no date (1957/58)



Fig.3.6 Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International*, model

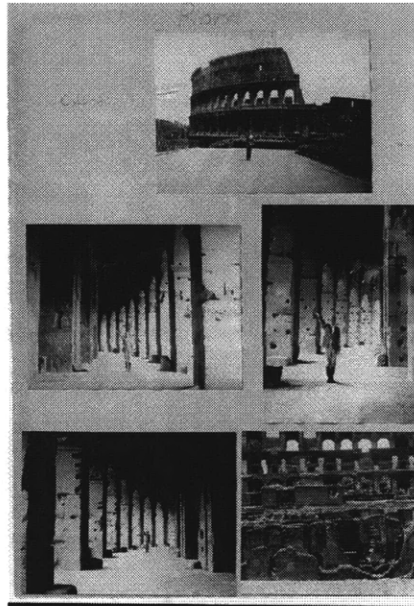


Fig. 3.7 Anselm Kiefer, from the book *Heroische Sinnbilder II*, page 20, 1969



Fig. 3.8 Anselm Kiefer, *Besetzungen, Interfunktionen*, 1975

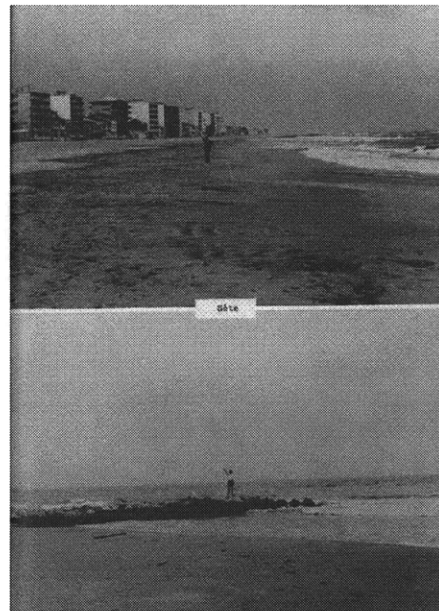


Fig. 3.9 Anselm Kiefer, *Besetzungen, Interfunktionen (Sète)*, 1975

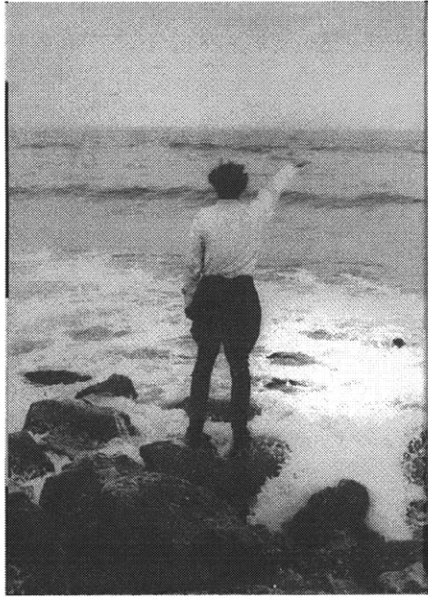


Fig. 3.10 Anselm Kiefer, Besetzungen, *Interfunktionen*, (no location)1975

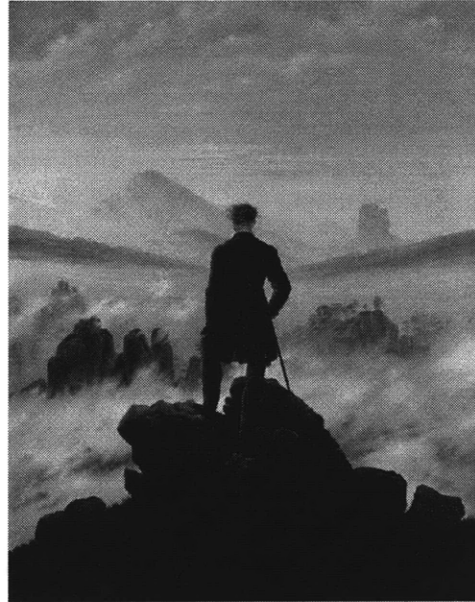


Fig. 3.11 Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*, circa 1817

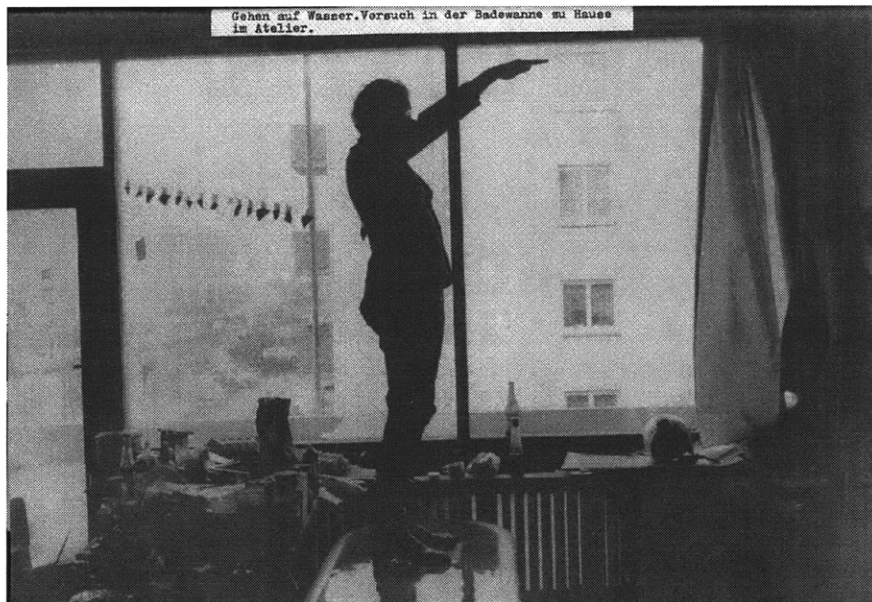


Fig. 3.12 Anselm Kiefer, Besetzungen, *Interfunktionen* (*Walking On Water. Attempt in the Bathtub at Home in the Studio*), 1975



Fig. 3.13 Anselm Kiefer, *Besetzungen, Interfunktionen*, (Montpellier) 1975



Fig. 3.14 Jochen Gerz, *EXIT - The Dachau Project*, 1974

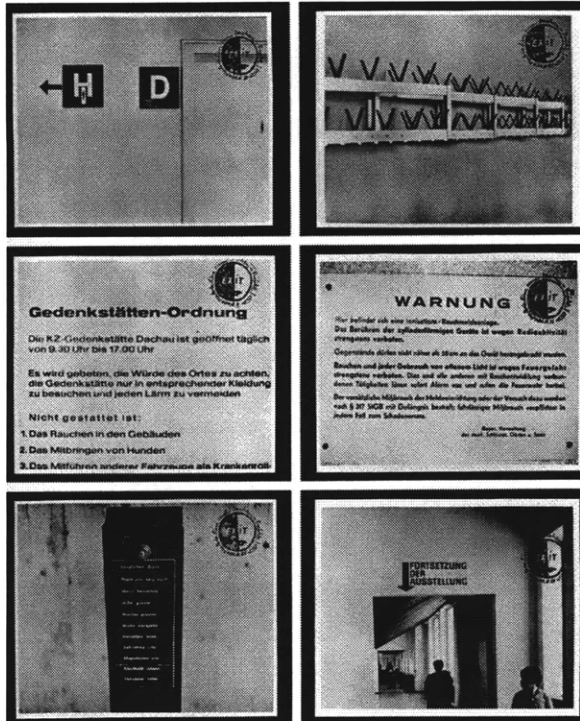


Fig. 3.15 Jochen Gerz,
EXIT - The Dachau
Project, 1974

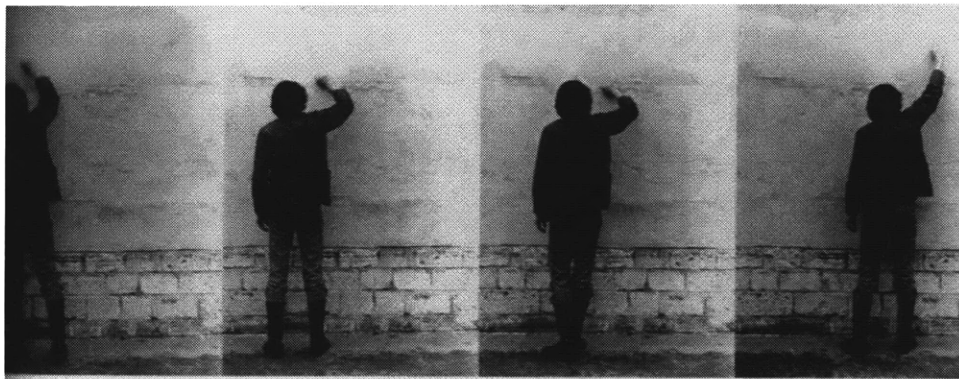


Fig. 3.16 Jochen Gerz, *Schreiben Mit der Hand*, 1973



Fig. 3.17 The German Pavilion in Venice in 1938

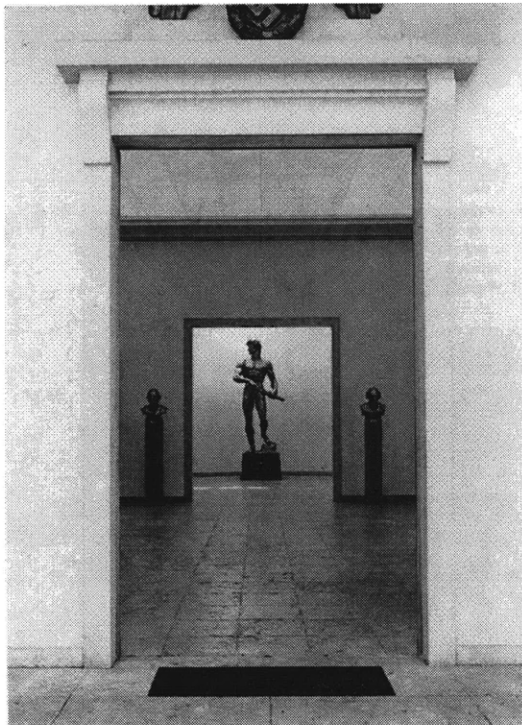


Fig. 3.18 Arno Breker's *Readiness* at the German Pavilion, 1940

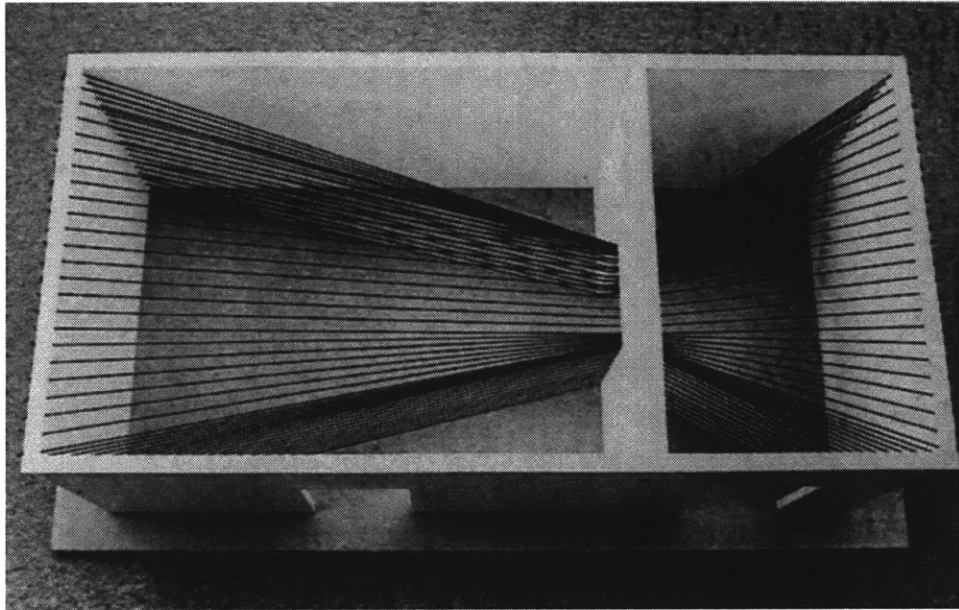


Fig. 3.19 Ruthenbeck, Doorway, model, 1976



Fig. 3.20 Monument in Kleve next to Tram Stop in
1952/53

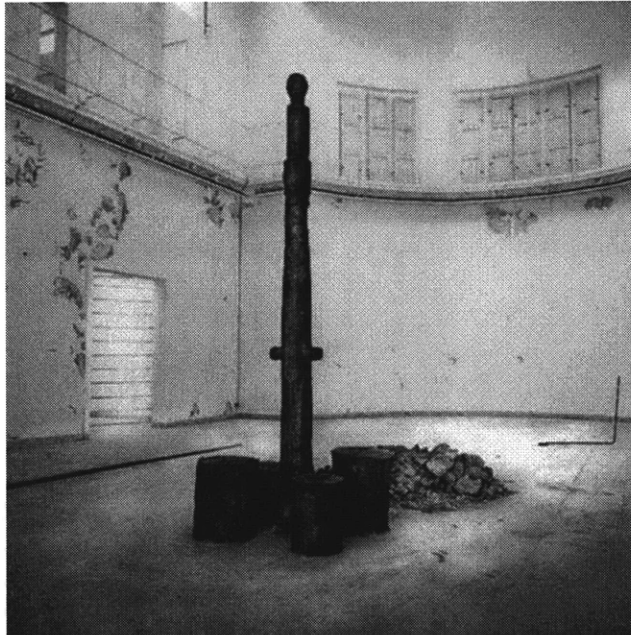


Fig. 3.21 Beuys, *Tramstop* at the German Pavilion, 1976



Fig. 3.22 Beuys, *Tramstop* during installation, 1976



Fig. 3.23, 3.24 Beuys during the installation of *Tramstop* in Venice



Fig. 3.25, Joseph Beuys and workers in Venice

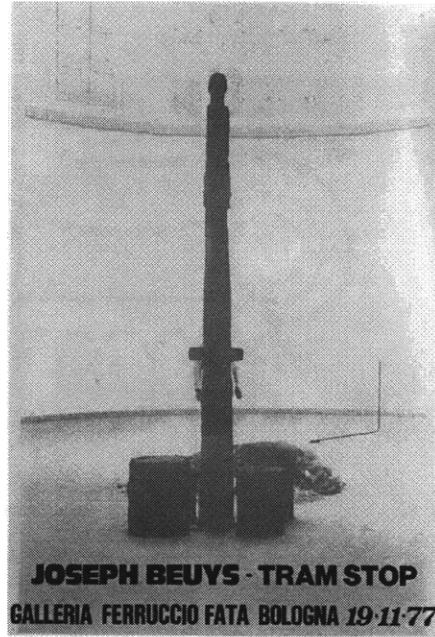
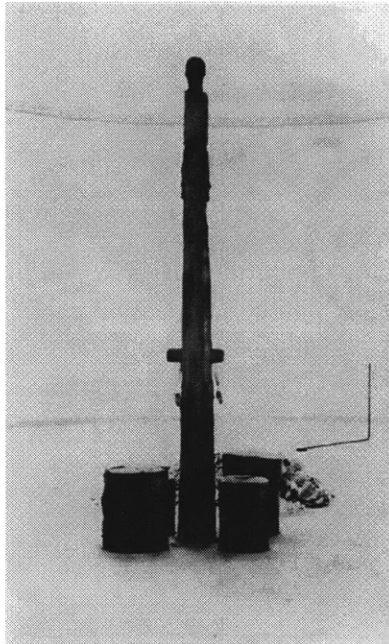


Fig. 3.26 *Tramstop*, silk screen, 1977 (photo: Buby Durini)
Fig. 3.27 Poster for show in Bologna, 1977

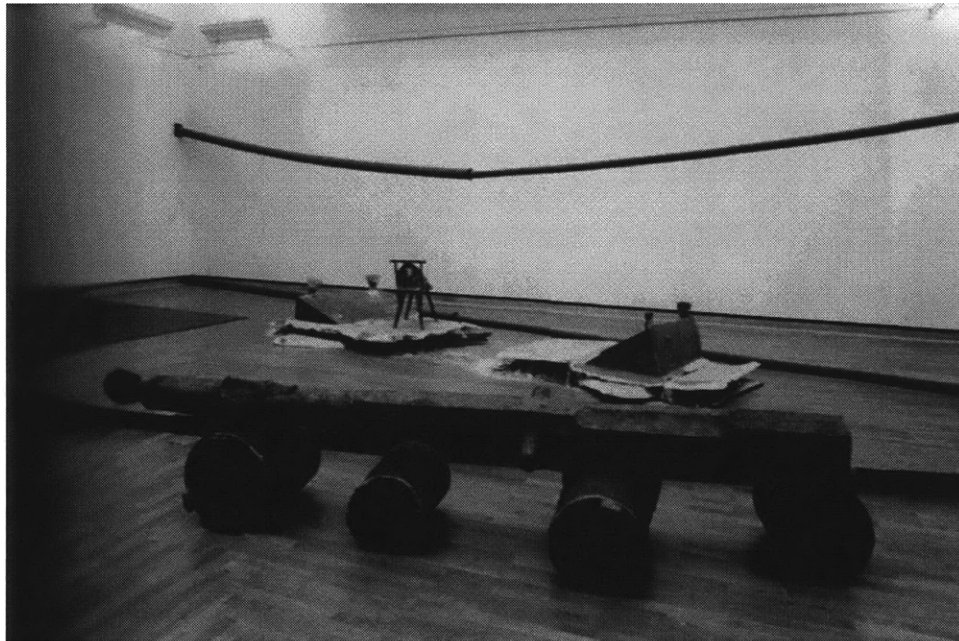


Fig. 3.28 Joseph Beuys, *Tramstop* at the Kröller Müller Museum in 1986



Fig. 3.29 Joseph Beuys, Auschwitz Demonstration,
1968

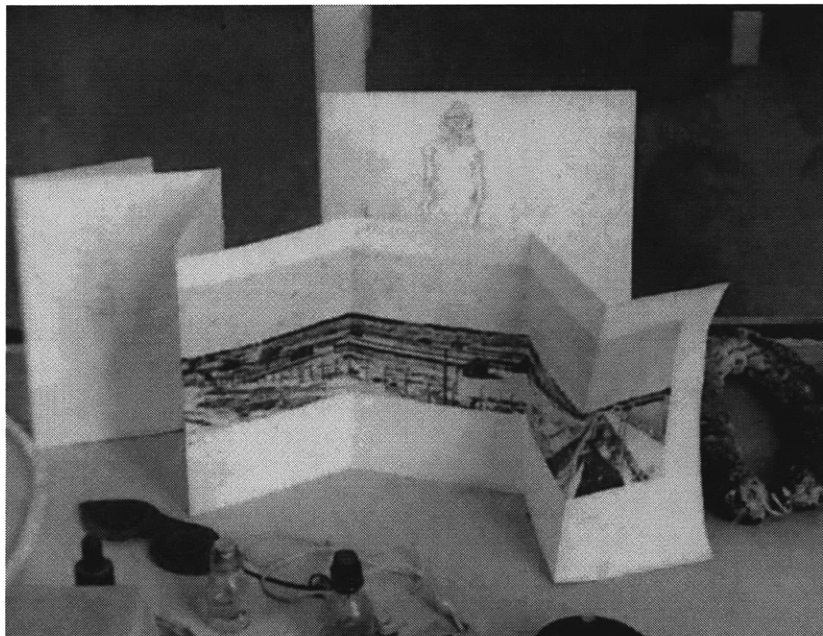


Fig. 3.30 Joseph Beuys, Auschwitz Demonstration,
Detail, 1968

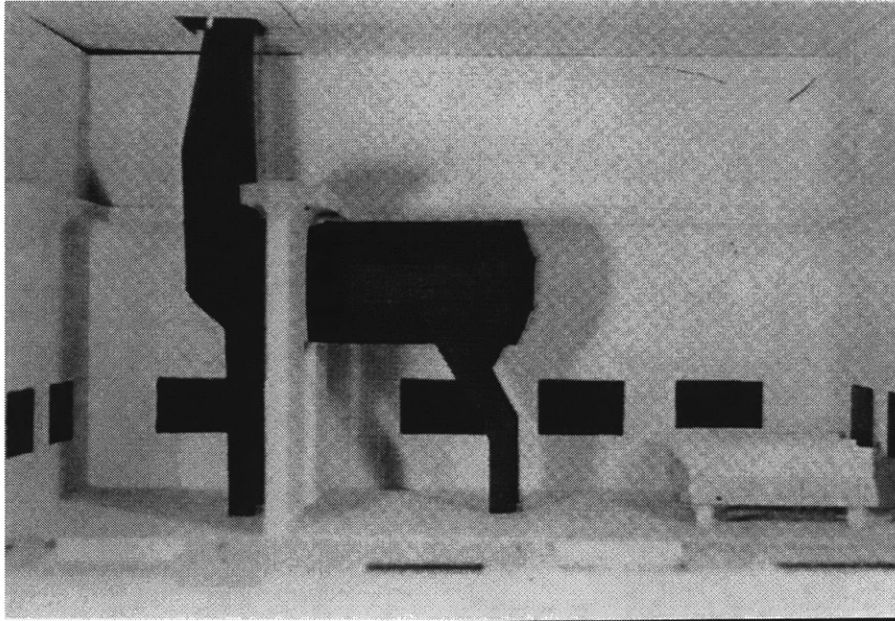


Fig. 3.31 Jochen Gerz, Model for the *The Centaur's Difficulty When Dismounting the Horse*

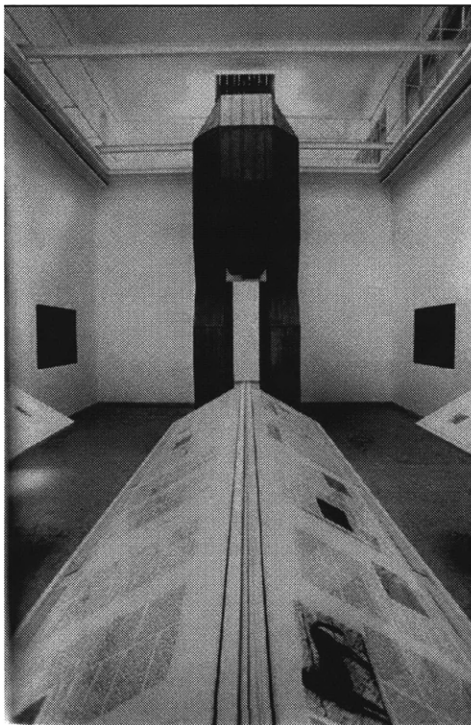


Fig. 3.32 Jochen Gerz, *The Centaur's Difficulty When Dismounting the Horse*, 1976

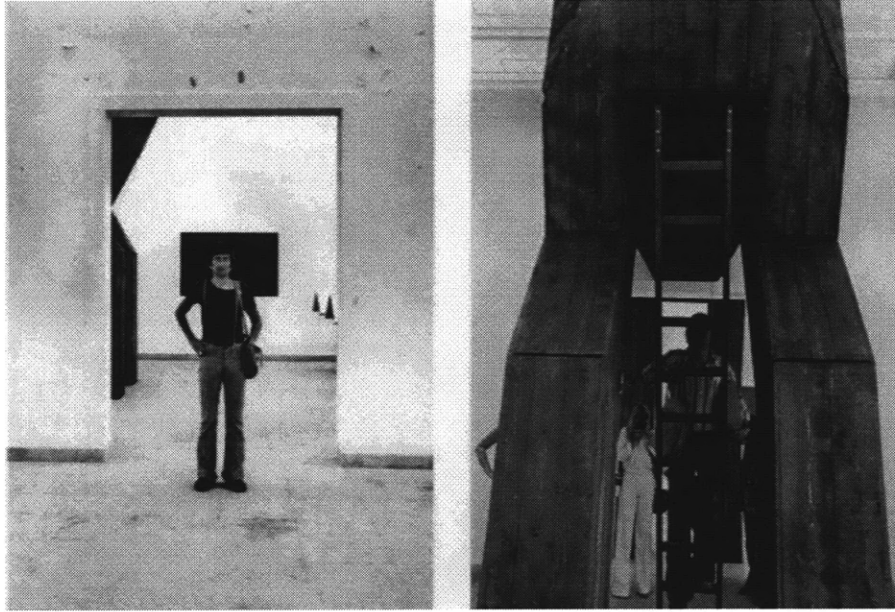


Fig. 3.33 Jochen Gerz, *The Centaur's Difficulty When Dismounting the Horse*, 1976



Fig. 3.34 Hans Haacke, *Germania-Bodenlos*, 1993



Fig. 3.35 Hans Haacke, *Germania–Bodenlos*, 1993

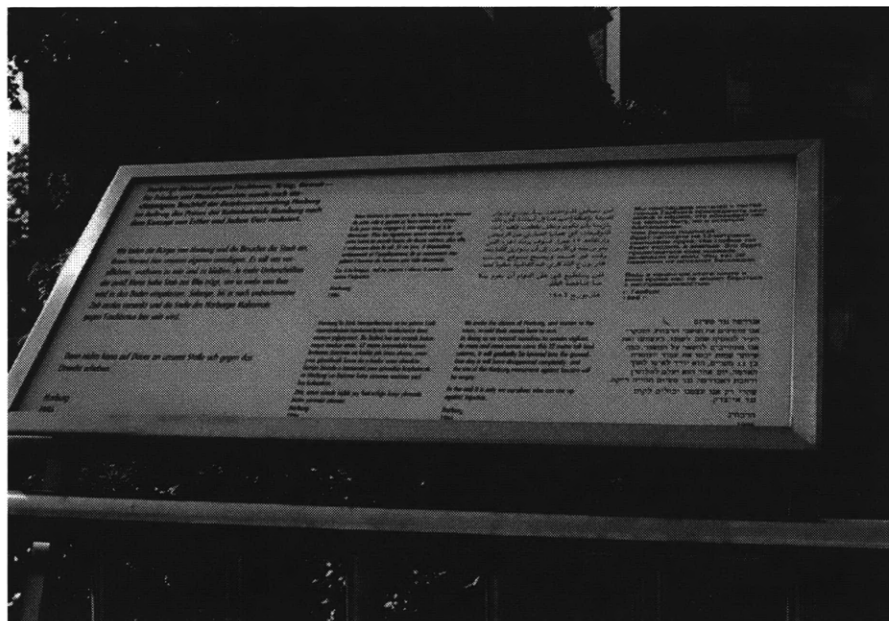


Fig. 4.1 Jochen Gerz, *Board at Monument against Fascism*, 1996-93

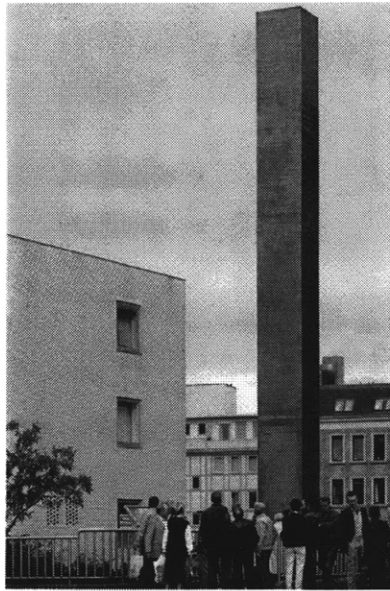


Fig. 4.2 Jochen Gerz, *Monument against Fascism*, Inauguration, 1986



Fig. 4.3 Gerz, Site of *Monument against Fascism*, with window and underpass, 2009



Fig. 4.4 Jochen Gerz, *Monument against Fascism*, Detail with Swastika, "SS"-emblem (*Schutzstaffel*) and "FAP" (*Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, an extremist party operating in the 1980s and '90s), 1988



Fig. 4.5 Jochen Gerz, Vandalism against *Monument against Fascism*, 1988

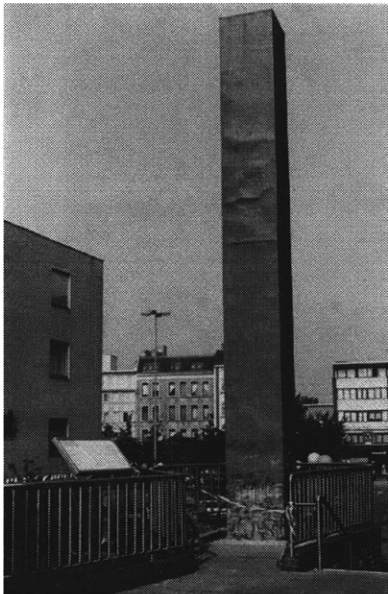


Fig. 4.6 Jochen Gerz, *Monument against Fascism* after second lowering in 1988



Fig. 4.7, Jochen Gerz, *Monument against Fascism*, detail of column through window, 2009



Fig. 4.8 Jochen Gerz,
*Monument against
Fascism*, 2009



Fig. 4.9 Neue Wache
Berlin

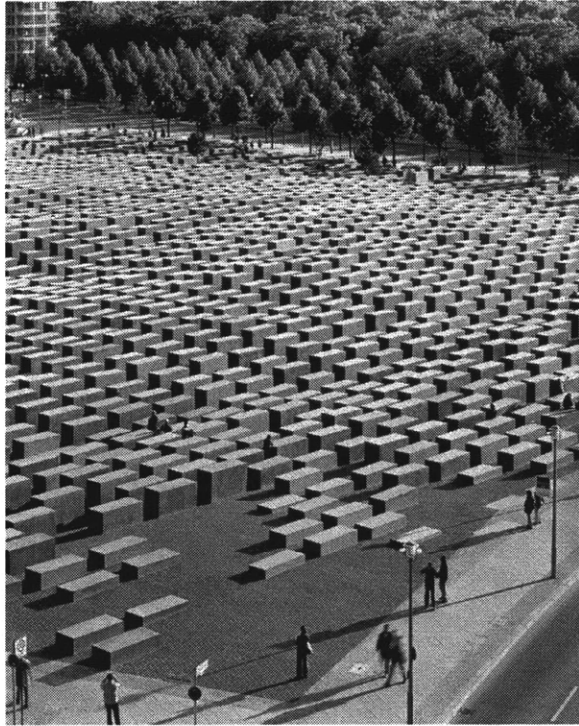


Fig. 4.10 Peter Eisenman, *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, aerial view



Fig. 4.11 Peter Eisenman, *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, photo 2007

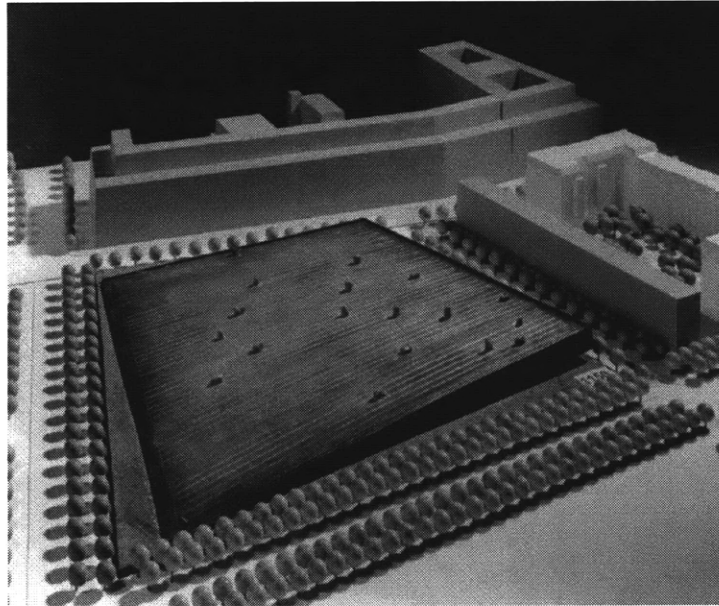


Fig. 4.12 Christine Jakob-Marks (with Hella Rolfes, Hans Scheib, Reinhard Stangl), proposal for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1994



Fig. 4.13 Christian Boltanski, *The Missing House*, 1990

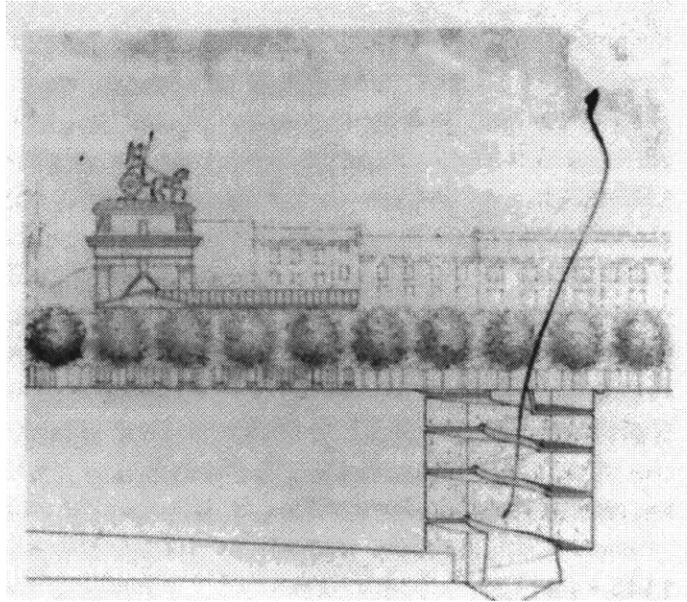


Fig. 4.14 Rebecca Horn, Proposal for first competition of the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1994



Fig. 4.15 Rebecca Horn, Proposal for second competition of the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1997

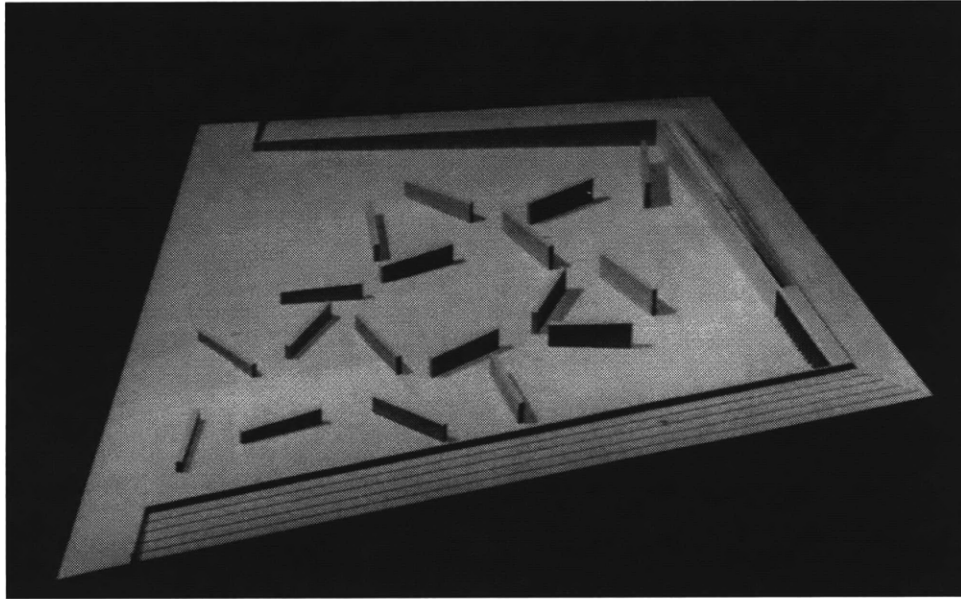


Fig. 4.16 Gesine Weinmiller, proposal for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1997

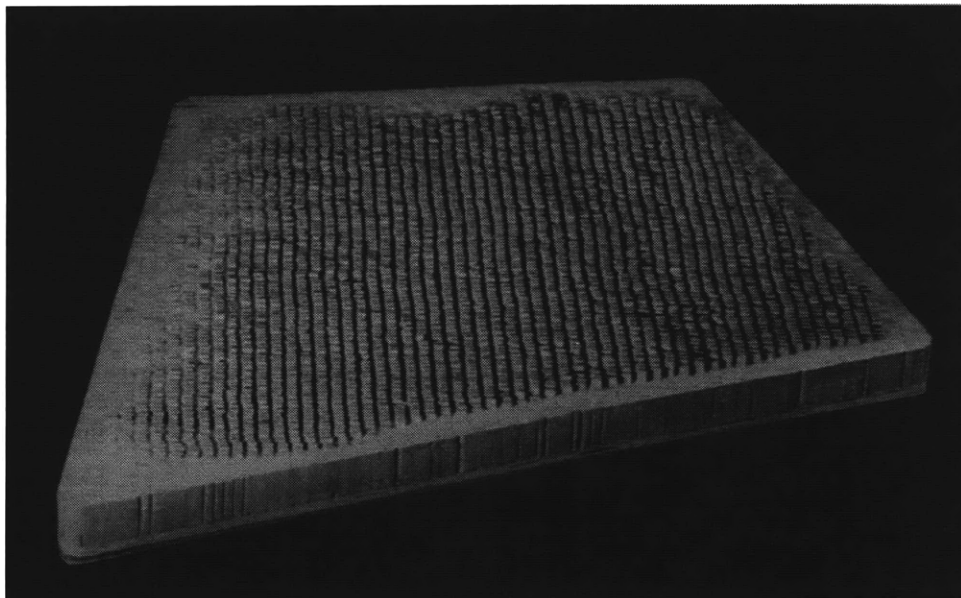


Fig. 4.17 Eisenman Architects and Richard Serra, proposal for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1997

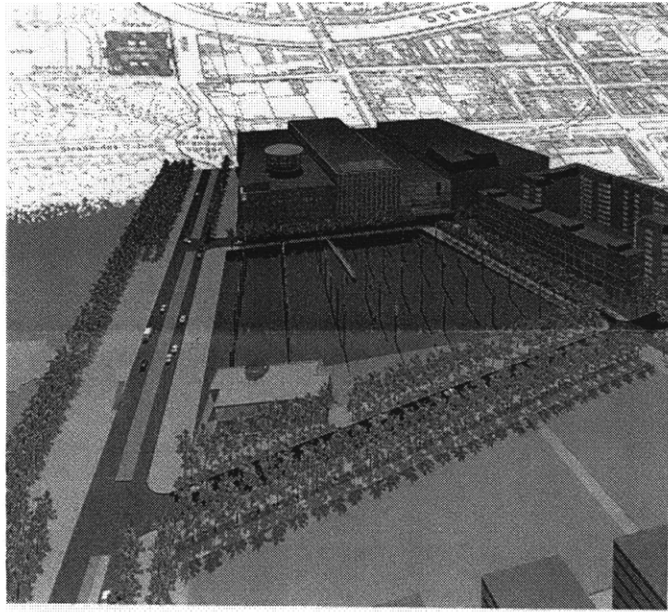


Fig. 4.18 Jochen Gerz, Proposal for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1997



Fig. 4.19 Jochen Gerz, Proposal for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1997

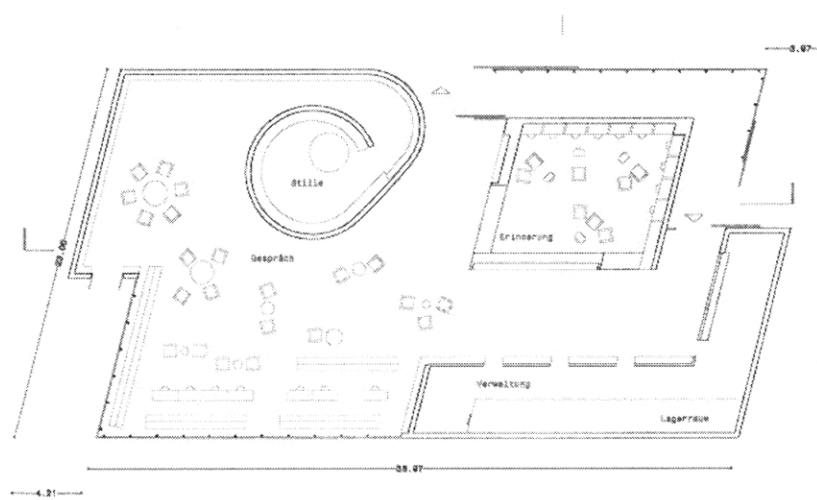


Fig. 4.20 Nasrine Seraji, "The Ear" (Information Center as part of Gerz's proposal), 1997

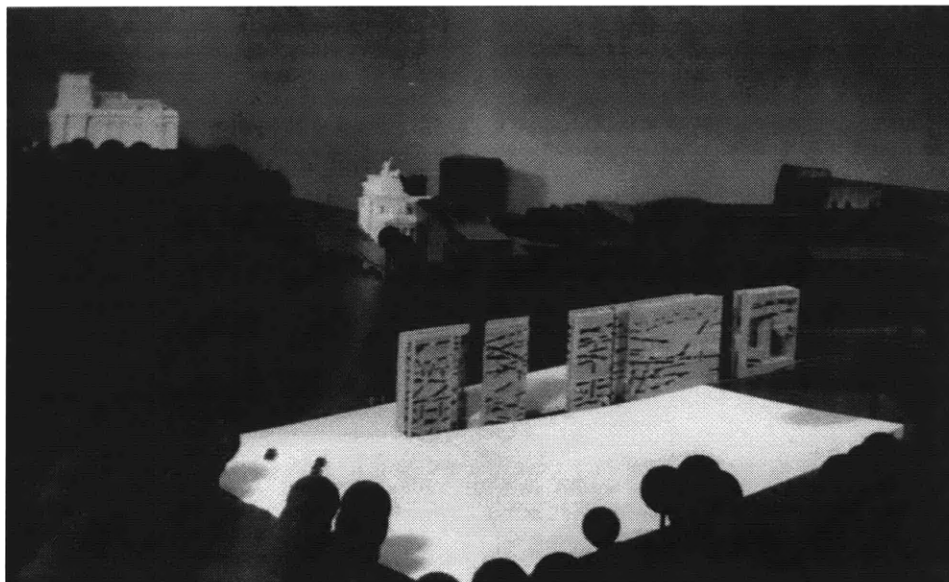


Fig. 4.21 Daniel Libeskind, Proposal for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 1997

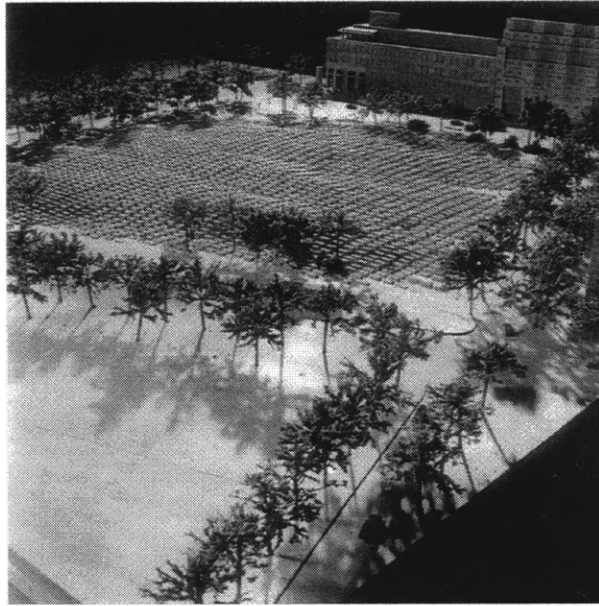


Fig. 4.22 Eisenman Architects, Proposal for the *Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, August 1998

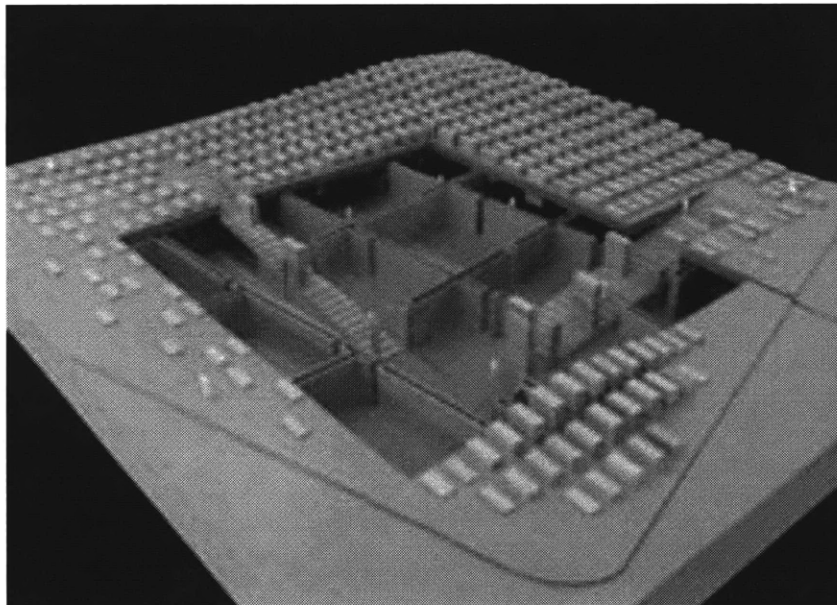


Fig. 4.23 Eisenman Architects, Information Site



Fig. 4.24 Jochen Gerz, *The Future Monument*



Fig. 4.25 Hans Haacke, *Der Bevölkerung*, 1999/2000



Fig. 4.26 Reichstag, Inscription, 1916

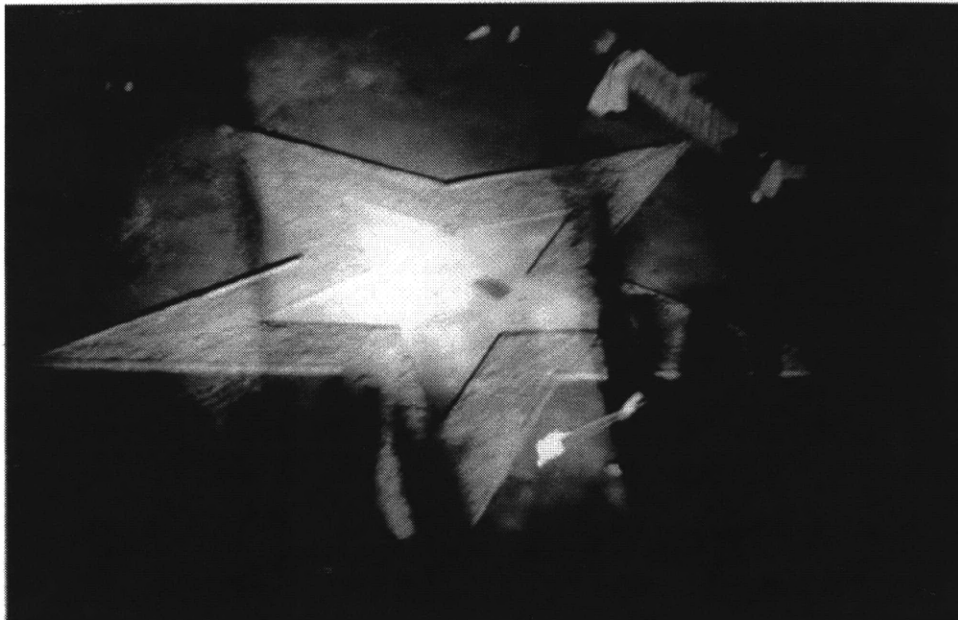


Fig. 5.1 Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 5*, 1974 (photo: Nebojša Canković)



Fig. 5.2. Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 5*, 1974 (photo: Nebojša Canković)



Fig. 5.3 Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 5*, 1974 (photo: Nebojša Canković)

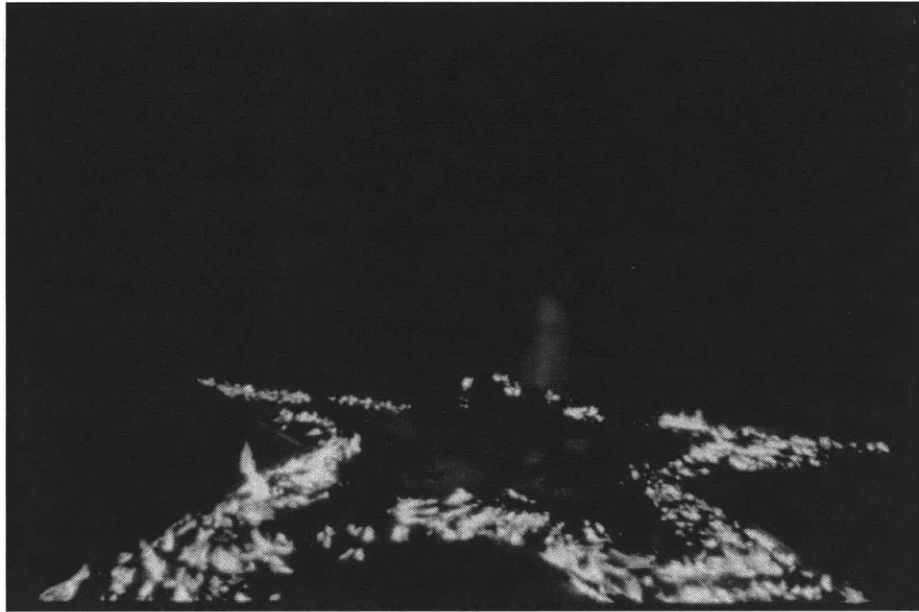


Fig. 5.4. Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 5*, 1974 (photo: Nebojša Canković)

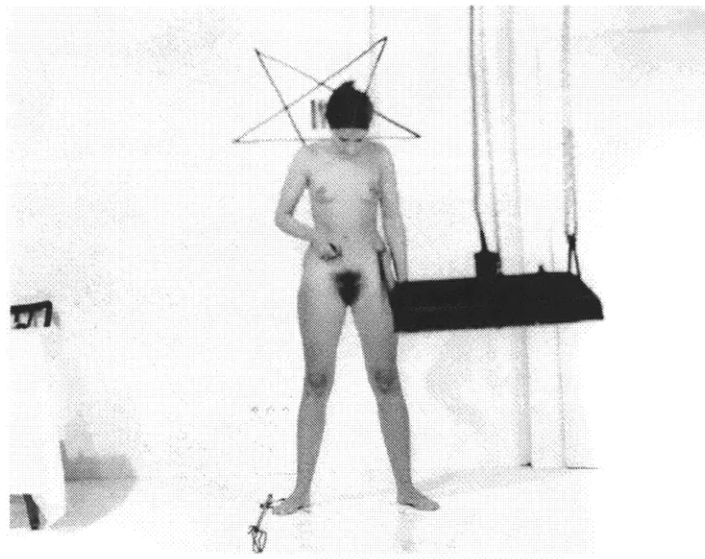


Fig. 5.5 Marina Abramović, *Thomas Lips*, 1975 (photo: Fritz Krinzinger)

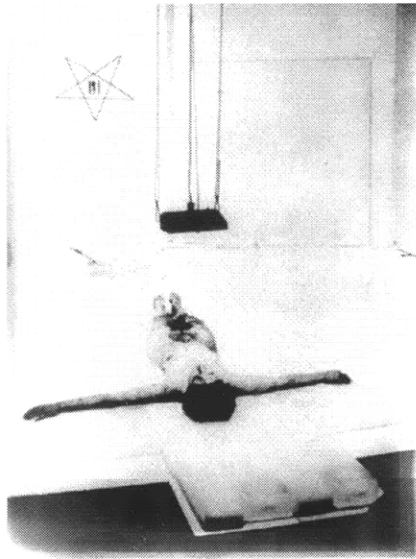


Fig. 5.6 Marina Abramović, *Thomas Lips*, 1975 (photo: Fritz Krinzinger)

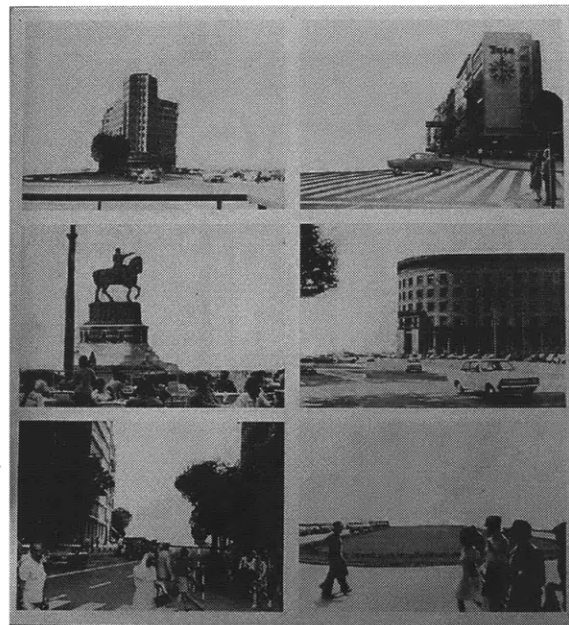


Fig. 5.7 Marina Abramović Handout *Freeing the Horizon*, 1973



Fig. 5.8 Marina Abramović showing *Freeing the Horizon* at the Student Cultural Center, June 1973

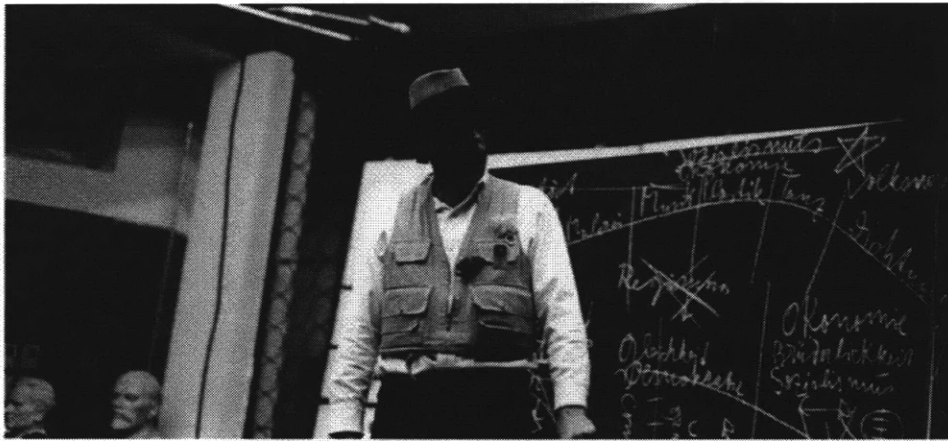


Fig. 5.9 Beuys lecturing at the 4. April Meeting, Student Cultural Center, 1974



Fig. 5.10 Marina Abramović showing *Freeing the Horizon* at the Student Cultural Center, June 1973



Fig. 5.11, 5.12 Belgrade, Republic Square, and City Hall, 2007

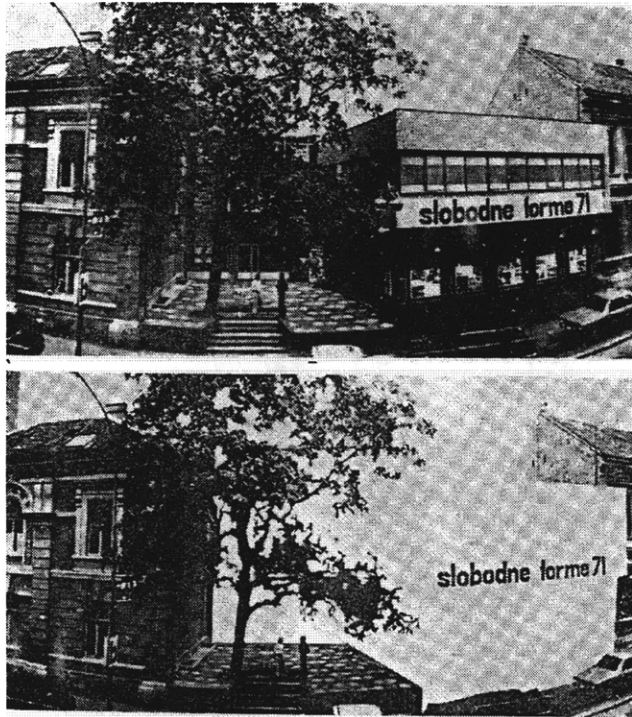


Fig. 5.13 Marina Abramović, *Project – Empty Space*, 1971



Fig. 5.14 Braco Dimitrijević, *Passer-by whom I met by chance at 1:15pm, 4:23pm, and 6:11pm*, Zagreb, 1971



Fig. 5.15 Braco Dimitrijević, *David Harper, the Casual Passer-By I Met*, London, 1972

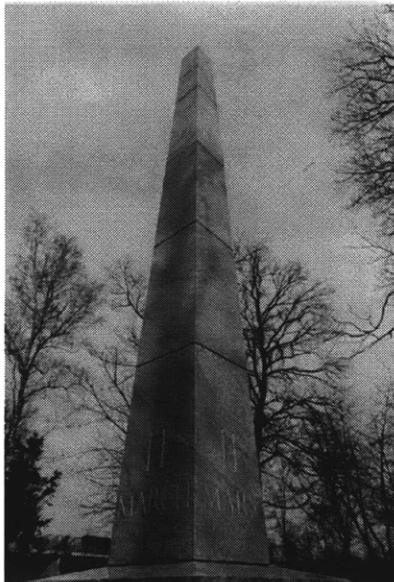


Fig. 5.16 Braco Dimitrijević, *This Could Be a Day of Historical Importance*, 1979 (photo: Hilde Deecker)
5.17 *The Casual Passer-By I Met at 1.49pm*, 1976

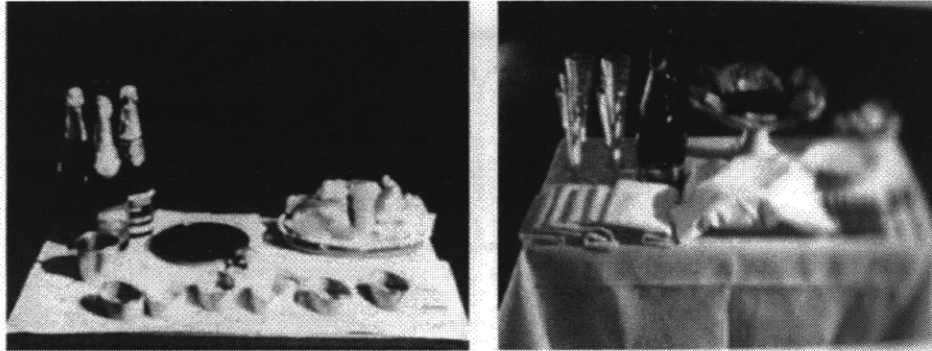


Fig. 5.18 Marina Abramović/Ulay, *Communist Body / Fascist Body*, 1979

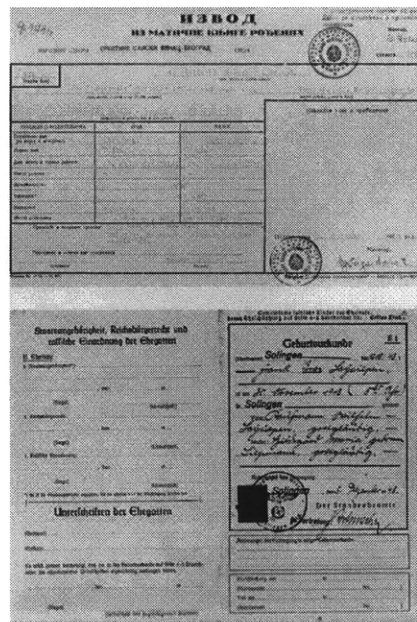
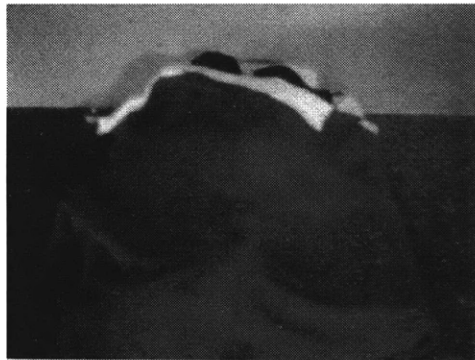


Fig. 5.19, 5.20 Marina Abramović/Ulay, *Communist Body / Fascist Body*, 1979

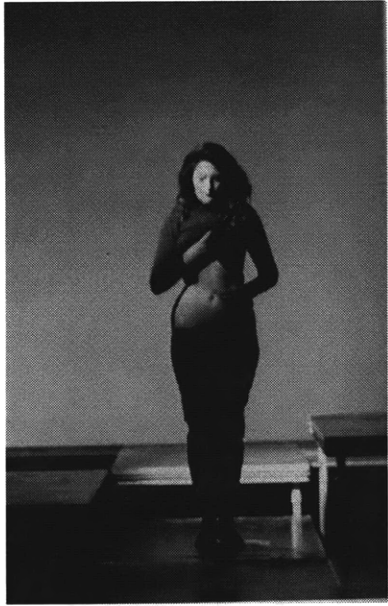


Fig. 5.21 Marina Abramović, *The Biography* (Thomas Lips), 1992



Fig. 5.22 Marina Abramović, *The Hero*, 2001



Fig. 5.23 Marina Abramović, *Portrait with Tito*, 2004



Fig. 5.24 Marina Abramović, *Balkan Baroque*, 1997



Fig. 5.25 Marina Abramović, *Balkan Baroque*, 1997



Fig. 5.26 Marina Abramović, *Balkan Erotic Epic*, 2005



Fig. 5.27 Marina Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces: Lips of Thomas*, 2005



Fig. 6.1 Santiago
Sierra, 245
Kubikmeter, 2006



Fig. 6.2 Santiago Sierra, *200 personas remuneradas para ser teñidas de rubio*, Venice, 2001

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