Monuments and Site-Specific Sculpture in Urban and Rural Space

Monuments and Site-Specific Sculpture in Urban and Rural Space

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INTRODUCTION

INBAL BEN-ASHER GITLER

I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways,
and the degree of the arcades' curves and what kind of zinc scales cover
the roofs; But I already know this would be the same thing as telling you
nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the
measurements of its space and the events of its past…"

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*[1]

A war memorial is perched on a hill on the outskirts of Be'er-Sheva, a city
in the (relatively) vast desert region of Israel known as the Negev.
Officially named the *Monument to the Negev Brigade*, it is usually referred
to as the *Negev Monument,* while the locals call it simply *the Monument*
(Ch. 4, Figures 1–4). The monument was created by the renowned Israeli
sculptor, Dani Karavan, between 1962 and 1968.[2] It commemorates the
fallen soldiers of Israel's 1948 War of Independence, who lost their lives
in battles in the Negev region. At the time of its completion, the Negev
Monument was one of the first site-specific sculptures created in Israel,
and has since become a landmark of Israeli art and of the city of Be'er-
Sheva.

Italo Calvino's opening lines echo the crucial role that the past and its
memorialization have in the construction of space itself. Site-specific
sculpture and monuments can be seen as artistic interventions in their
surroundings – interventions that inscribe, reveal, and shape memory and
its perception. They reflect specific historical events, the cultural and
ideological circumstances of their times, and the relation of those events or
circumstances to the space in which they are erected. The Negev
Monument is just such a memorial as it relates the battles that it

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[1] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities,* trans. William Weaver (Orlando: Harcourt Brace
& Company, 1974), 10.
[2] The monument was planned between 1962 and 1964 and built in 1968. See Adi
Englman (ed.), *Dani Karavan: The Negev Monument* (Tel Aviv: Marcel Arts
Project, 2016), 113, 160.

commemorates to the space of the city and the desert in which they took place.

In honor of the Jubilee of the *Negev Monument* and in honor of Dani Karavan, the Negev Museum of Art in Be'er Sheva initiated a series of programs and activities for the winter of 2014 that included an exhibition, a symposium, and public events at the monument itself. The museum mounted an exhibition entitled "50 Years to the *Negev Monument*/50 Years to Dani Karavan's Public Art," curated by Adi Englman, and the Department of the Arts in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in cooperation with the exhibition team, organized an international symposium entitled "Monuments, Site-Specific Sculpture, and Urban Space." The present volume is a collection of essays presented at the symposium and additional papers that relate to its theme.

Daniel Unger, the then head of Ben-Gurion's Department of the Arts, brought me on board for this symposium and constantly reminded me that site-specificity is not a twentieth-century invention. As an art historian of the early modern period, he pointed out that Baroque-era sculptors and architects thought no less about potential sites for their works than their more recent counterparts. This was also true, of course, for many ancient projects and locales. So what has changed? The relationship between the artist and society, as well as the perception of his or her role and authority when planning and creating a monument, has undergone significant transformation, as have the formal language and the theoretical premises of our times with regard to historical narrative, memory, and art. The essays presented here discuss these aspects of twentieth and twenty-first century monuments and site-specific sculpture. The subjects of the various chapters range from war memorials in Europe and Israel to commemorations of individuals and other large-scale projects.

Within this rich assemblage we also find discussions of theories of art as a producer of collective or individual memory, historical narrative, and cultural meaning. The scholars contributing to this volume open up new perspectives and propose novel frameworks for approaching and analyzing these artworks. They look at their relationship to urban, semiurban, and rural space, such as public parks or privately owned land, where art is not an intervention in purely natural arenas. They address formalistic aspects, as well as issues of memory and commemoration in light of changing environments and spatial transformations. Moreover, these essays develop in-depth consideration of the discourse between site-specific sculpture and its viewers.

With a view toward the individuals, communities, and tourists that experience these creations, both physically and virtually, researchers in

recent years have been addressing the complex interactions between monuments and their publics. Monuments are not only viewed, but are often discovered actively, creating an interaction wherein the viewer is also a visitor and, at times, even a user. Moreover, these new experiences are suggested by the immense impact that media processing in the Information Age, and more specifically in the Internet era, has had upon public perceptions of sculpture and monuments. All of these aspects are discussed in depth in the essays presented here.

The interrelationships among site, public space, and architecture have come under much scrutiny in recent years.[3] The modern, postmodern, and contemporary engagement with works that are planned or born out of a specific space and have been created and themed with relationship to that space has grown. In her seminal essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," Rosalind Krauss discusses these changes and attempts to formulate the new relationship among architecture, landscape, and sculpture in the works of artists who worked in the 1960s and 1970s.[4] In 'expanding' the definition of sculpture, Krauss considers the ways in which what we traditionally refer to as sculpture has developed to include earthwork, constructions in predefined architectural spaces or in relation to such spaces, and more. These creations, Krauss claims, are made "in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms."[5]

One such 'operation' that has developed as a consequence of new cultural circumstances is the public, academic, and intellectual discussion of monuments and counter-monuments. This development was engendered by memory studies and the postmodern methodological investigation into how public memory is formed and how history is told.[6] This discourse is especially relevant to monuments of commemoration, including those that evoke loss, such as war memorials and memorials to victims of the Holocaust.

James Young's work on these subjects has been groundbreaking and has provided important perspectives on the relationship among

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[3] Miwon Kwon, "Approaching Architecture: the Cases of Richard Serra and Michael Asher," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, State of the Art: Contemporary Sculpture* (2009): 44.

[4] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 30–44.

[5] Ibid., 42.

[6] Natasha Lehrer, "Working through the Memories" (Review of *At Memory's Edge* by James Young), *Jewish Quarterly* 47/ (2000): 81–83.

monuments, sites, and memory.[7] In his discussion of Holocaust memorials, Young exposes the unsolved dilemmas that characterize the processes of memorializing through architecture, sculpture, and monuments. He addresses the ways in which new approaches to memory, specifically approaches that evolved in Germany in the 1980s and 1990s, *countered* established notions of monuments as the preferred form of memorialization. He argues that these counter-monuments have the capacity to express loss and evoke memory by using voids and the sensation of emptiness in architecture, by abstraction, and by working below ground rather than above it. Such architecture and counter-monuments evolved as a response to public debates about what monuments should look like, as well as from the modern incentive to better accommodate individual as opposed to collective memories. Young's discussion and certain other studies conducted at the turn of the twenty-first century have contributed to our perspectives on, and understanding of, the role of counter-monuments, which more often than not are site-specific and indeed more strongly reflect the interplay between private and public memory.[8]

An additional aspect central to the discourse on monuments and site-specific sculpture is that of everyday life, which can perhaps be extended or explained by the centrality placed upon the visitors' experience by the artists themselves as well as by art historians. As Miwon Kwon has observed, architecture and site have become pivotal for an increasing number of artists as "a source of visual/formal vocabulary, models of production and an avenue for accessing a sociality of 'everyday life'"[9] In her research of commemorative site-specific sculptures/monuments created during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, Kwon has shown that elements of architecture and site-specificity are perceived as aiding the process of the socialization of sculptures and memorials. The use of architecture, site, and landscape is seen as an appropriate and efficient means of mediating both the event or the individual memorialized and the work of art to its publics.

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[7] James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).
[8] Tim Cole, "Review Article: Scales of Memory, Layers of Memory: Recent Works on Memories of the Second World War and the Holocaust," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 1 (2002): 129–138.
[9] Krauss, "Sculpture in Expanded Field," 42; Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 156.

Architectural elements were used for the creation of modern and postmodern monuments in many of the works discussed in this volume. These elements enhance visitors' sense of space or counter-space: pillars or a partial ceiling delineate the sky; walls create passages or voids; primitive or temporary dwelling spaces – such as tents or caves – mediate transience or relate to death. Industrial construction materials also constitute a central aspect of this architectural vocabulary: glass, steel, concrete, and lumber, appropriated from architecture, have either replaced or supplemented traditional sculptural materials such as marble, granite, and bronze. Elements relating to the urban realm, such as stepping-stones and street signs, have also been enlisted for monuments and memorials, as has nature in the form of water, trees, and earth. All of these have become key elements in monuments and site-specific sculptures since the mid-twentieth century. When conceiving the *Negev Monument*, Karavan incorporated architectural elements, as well as concrete, water, trees, and the desert sand to create the memorial. The integration of these elements in the 1960s locates this monument at the forefront of these novel ideas in site-specific sculpture and memory making through art.

An important issue that relates to memory making through site-specific sculpture, as well as architecture, is that of historical context. As Richard Crownshaw has observed, the predominance of memory in postmodern discussions of history, which deconstruct the "grand" historical narratives, runs the risk of decontextualizing sculpture and architecture from their historical moment.[10] In continuing this critical stance, a memorial such as the *Negev Monument* can be perceived as constructing both collective and private memory, but it should not be discussed solely in these terms. It must also be interpreted in the context of its sculptural and architectural moment – a moment of an Israeli artist's adoption of an evolving abstract vocabulary, a moment of embracing site-specificity, at a time when architecture and sculpture were connecting in new ways. The *Negev Monument's* cultural framework should also be considered and explained by investigating Israeli cultural production of the time. In the context of the *Negev Monument*, the desert, perceived as a no-man's land and a wilderness to be settled territorially and culturally, became the backdrop for commemorating those who have set out to conquer it (militarily). The architecture of the town of Be'er-Sheva, which embodies the aspirations of nation building in the recently nascent state, prominently exhibited exposed concrete. The gray, bare, pliable material used for constructing

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[10] Richard Crownshaw, "The German Counter-monument: Conceptual Indeterminacies and the Retheorisaton of the Arts of Vicarious Memory," *Forum for Modern Language Studies,* 44, no. 2 (2008): 212–214.

Be'er-Sheva's new neighborhoods, built during the 1960s and 1970s, was thus also used for the town's memory making in the construction of the *Negev Monument*. The town – and Karavan's – material of choice was very much present in all of Israel's built environment at the time.[11]

Today, Israeli architecture, urban elements, and sculptures executed in exposed concrete are receiving their overdue historical analysis and assessment. Concrete's cultural and structural connections to, for example, *béton brut* and New Brutalism are revealed. Moreover, in the spirit of current ideas regarding place-making and the fostering of local identity, Be'er-Sheva is recognized as a place where exposed concrete has had a significant impact on urban space. As a result, the material is now revisited both structurally and culturally, so as to solidify and suggest a distinct urban identity.[12]

While planning the jubilee symposium, the small committee formed for its organization discussed what it means to commemorate, and even in this small assembly the answers varied, probing issues such as: How does the current use and negotiation of a monument affect its meaning? How did different monuments' relations to architecture and urban space propel modernism into new directions? Do monuments and site-specific sculpture construct or deconstruct their surrounding space? To what extent do monuments created decades ago, such as the *Negev Monument,* remain a part of a national narrative? Does this aspect wane over time?

These questions can perhaps be sifted through by applying three paradigms for site-specificity, which were identified by Miwon Kwon: the physical, or phenomenological paradigm, which relates to the physical site itself and its relation to the work, the artist, and the viewer; the social/institutional paradigm, which relates to the cultural sphere in which the sculpture is conceived; and the discursive paradigm, wherein site-specific sculptures are 'expanded' beyond their physical and cultural

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[11] In Karavan's work, the adoption of concrete could be detected in a slightly earlier nation- and town-building project – the Tel-Aviv courthouse, built in 1965. There, Karavan used white exposed concrete in square slabs for wall reliefs and placed a three-element sculpture of pure geometric forms in the courtyard. The Tel-Aviv courthouse was built by architect Ya'acov Rechter (1924–2001), who was among the most prominent architects working in Israel from the 1960s. See: Dani Karavan, "The Art Within: The Tel Aviv Courts," in *Ya'acov Rechter: Architect,* ed. Osnat Rechter, Exh. Cat., Herzeliya Museum of Art (Herzeliya: Herzeliya Museum of Art and Tel Aviv: Hakkibutz Hameuhad Publishers, 2003), 84–91.

[12] Kwon discusses the creation of urban identity as part of the discursive process of negotiating site-specific sculpture. See Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October* 80 (Spring 1997), 105–109.

circumstances and are distributed through various media, becoming part of critical and historical discussion, investigation, etc. [13] These artistic, cultural, and theoretical aspects are explored and analyzed in the essays presented here.

The first section of this volume is devoted to counter-monuments. Moran Pearl researches Holocaust monuments in Germany. She analyzes the differences in monument making between East and West Germany prior to their reunification and discusses the emergence of the counter-monument, posing new questions pertaining to the works she studies. She traces what she terms "site processing" to analyze the way in which counter-monuments induce a complex and multifaceted reaction on the part of visitors in an extended space and time, rather than at a single, isolated moment of remembrance.

In "A Ubiquitous Memorial," Adachiara Zevi discusses Gunther Demnig's *Stolperstein* project, an ongoing counter-monument that consists of placing memorial stepping-stones all over Europe. She analyzes the unique phenomenon of ubiquitousness that underlies the project, adding an additional dimension to the concept of counter-monument. In this framework, she also provides a succinct account of the discursive aspects of site-specific monuments, as seen in the Italian discourse surrounding Demnig's project, as well as other Holocaust memorials that have been the subject of public debate in Italy.

Vincent Marquis's essay takes us through a different memorial lane – that of Thomas Hirschhorn's commemoration of philosophers. Marquis studies the role of traditional monuments in creating collective memory within the cultural contexts of nations and shows how Hirschhorn's monuments to philosophers reject these on multiple levels. Although, as Marquis points out, Hirschhorn has not used the term counter-monument to describe his works, their temporality, location, and function, which constitute an ongoing invitation to social interaction and contemplation, create one of the clearest inversions of the idea of the monument and are among the most prolific forms of resistance to traditional memorials.

The second section includes two essays that discuss monuments of the modern period and deal with some of the most important precedents for the monuments and counter-monuments of the past three decades. Katya Evan explores the art-historical roots of the connection between Minimalism and memorials, a connection that today seems almost inherent and taken for granted. Evan relates to Dani Karavan's *Negev Monument* in light of the art-historical discourse on the sculptor's site-specific works as

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[13] Ibid., 95.

well as new research on Minimalism as an art movement of the 1960s and 1970s. She shows that Minimalism's heightened engagement with the viewer/visitor experience is a central aspect of the *Negev Monument* and is a key component of its innovative approach, which launched novel directions in memorial design not only in Israel, but worldwide. This engagement, when interpreted culturally both as an exponent of the modernist art of its time and in the context of its national meaning as a memorial, exemplifies the breadth of content and interpretations that can be created by abstract memorials.

Giuliana Altea and Antonella Camarda present one of the few essays written about Sardinian sculptor Costantino Nivola in the English language. They discuss the unrealized projects of this major Italian artist, who also worked in the United States for many years. The monuments he planned in the 1950s and early 1960s, such as the memorial to Antonio Gramsci and World War I and II memorials, anticipated the turn to the renewed emphasis on site-specificity, on integrating architectural elements in memorials, and on concern with the visitor's experience. Although they remain only in the form of drawings and models, Nivola's projects were publicized and known through his involvement in the international milieu of modern sculptors. Altea and Camarda show that the interaction between Nivola and his more famous colleagues was mutually influential. The similarities between Nivola's work and Karavan's *Negev Monument* are striking: Both artists were deeply involved in working with the physical site and embedding their sculptures within it; both made use of tunnels and enclosed voids; both possessed a vision of their monuments' role in the daily life of the communities where they were placed. Such similarities in idea and form call for further reflection upon the broader issue of how modern artists interacted internationally and how they defined their role in society.

The final section deals with the way site-specific sculpture functions within the cultural and institutional sphere and the changing approaches to producing memory in physical sites with the advent of cyberspace. In "Reassessing Site-Specific Artworks of the American Southwest in the Information Age," Mira Banay studies Land art as a social product of American culture and its institutions, analyzing the transformations and developments in the discourse surrounding these works. She argues that the physical spaces of site-specific artworks, being ideological products in their own merit, remain of crucial importance in our time. Not only has their centrality not diminished, but specific cultural content can never be fully comprehended through communication media, and the proliferation of publicizing site-specific artworks through these channels makes this all

the more clear. In her reassessment of the cultural and discursive "sites" that the famous Land art creations of the Southwest have become, Banay also unearths what these sites conceal – the displacement of Native Americans, economic and military interests, and more.

Shelly Hornstein analyzes the new phenomenon of digitally or virtually enhanced memorials. She asks the very timely question of how new digital environments can enhance memory processes and the remembrance of events that site-specific memorials seeks to commemorate? She provides answers through her case study, *Mapping Ararat,* which is a mediatized and transmedial memorial dedicated to a place in New York State that was proposed as a site for a Jewish Homeland nearly two centuries ago. In analyzing virtual augmentation as an apparatus that can expand memory and create more layers of cultural heritage for the user/viewer/visitor, Hornstein presents the other side of Banay's advocacy of the physical: she argues that digital interactions can function as a revelatory apparatus for constructing the cultural context and memory of architecture, sculpture, and their in-betweens and connects these recent developments to Krauss's idea of an "expanded field."

Finally, Dalia Manor's epilogue discusses how the *Negev Monument* has acquired significance in the individual memories of its visitors – a significance that is remarkably different from its commemorative function. Manor addresses these differences and shows how personal and private memories have been reflected in drawings, photography, and video art inspired by Karavan's creation.

The very diverse case studies presented here elicit further discussion on the differentiation and specification of sites and the events that they commemorate, as well as about what makes them geographic, cultural, and discursive products that embody the similarities engendered by the mutual flow of histories, events, ideas, and human invention. Whether intended as commemorative monuments or as a site-specific artworks, these creations should be considered as embodying both a presence – of ideas or of history – and an absence – of cultures and individuals that are gone. Whatever the case, these artworks, which indeed reside between art, architecture, sculpture, and human interaction with nature affect and construct our past, present, and future and lend themselves to both individual and personal contemplation, as well as collective interpretation.

A friend recently sought my advice regarding a personalized way of conveying the historical import of the memory of the Holocaust to her son. He was joining a Masa, the Israeli youth voyage to Poland, made by thousands of Israeli high school students every year so as to preserve the

memory of the Holocaust and transmit it to future generations.[14] Before entering Auschwitz, my friend explained, the young students get a gift from their parents as a token of their participation in the voyage from afar. Most parents, she continued, give their son or daughter a necklace with a Star of David. Her 16-year-old son had already heard of this and blatantly rejected the idea of jewelry.

The gift that I suggested to my friend instead, and which she indeed gave her son, was derived directly from my engagement with the monuments, the counter-monuments, and site-specific art discussed in this volume with all their richness and multilayered meanings; thinking about Jewish burial traditions and Demnig's *Stolperstein,* I said to her: "Give your son a stone from home, to place upon the earth or on one of the monuments, so as to leave a part of his everyday physical space in that distant site of memory and absence."

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[14] There is extensive discussion pertaining to the youth trips to Poland, and they have been subject to much critical debate. See, for example, Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008).

SECTION I:

SITE-SPECIFIC ARTWORKS:
MONUMENTS AND COUNTER-MONUMENTS

PROCESSING MEMORY: THE SPECTATOR AS ARCHAEOLOGIST[1]

MORAN PEARL

Introduction

The Nazi book burning of 1933, in which some 20,000 books were consigned to the flames, was a watershed in German history. Yet, standing on Bebelplatz, the site of this traumatic event, one could easily be unaware of what had once transpired there. Only a small window on the pavement opens a symbolic door to this past when the persistent passerby catches a glimpse of the *Empty Library*. This installation exemplifies one phenomenon that I deal with in this chapter: sites that encourage individual spectators to actively process the memory of a given place and situate them in the position of an archaeologist.

In the past three decades, our perception of monuments has been utterly transformed. Once, symbolic monumental figures, unconnected to their locational context and looming large above the viewer, were found throughout city spaces. Today we find more and more "silent monuments," monuments on a smaller scale, which are hidden from the casual eye. Earlier generations of monuments were meant to be visited on specific days of the national calendar, in a ceremony or on a memorial day by some sort of group. These new monuments, by contrast, are designed to engage individuals and to create a dialogue with their unique spaces. Thus, the spectator is given an opportunity to process the particular memory hidden in the site's past. This approach, which continues to gain ground, began in Germany at the end of 1980s, toward the beginning of the 1990s.

In this chapter, I look at the roots of this phenomenal change and try to understand why, of all places, Germany served as the ground for such a development. The present essay analyzes several case studies through which I trace the character of those new monuments. I suggest a multivalent relationship among the monuments, the public, and politics,

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[1] In memory of my beloved mother-Batya and grandfather-Yoav, who left a void in their absence.

and I demonstrate that monuments can sometimes shift the discourse on collective memory. Within this context, this study will contribute to our understanding of the diverse ways in which monuments engage spectators and become sites for processing memory.

I deal here with several monuments that commemorate World War II and the Holocaust: the *Empty Library*, the 1995 Berlin memorial by Micha Ullman; Horst Hoheisel's 1987 Kassel monument titled *Aschrott-Brunnen*; the *Stolpersteine* project (Stumbling Stones), created by Günter Demnig in 1994; Christian Boltanski's *Missing House* 1990, located on Grosshamburger Strasse in Berlin; *Gleis 17* in Grünenwald Berlin; and *The White Rose* monument, created in 1998 by Robert Schmidt-Matt at the University of Munich. My exploration sheds light on "negative aesthetics," a new way of commemorating the past that leverages the absence of monuments or monuments that require discovery, and I suggest a shift in the discourse on memory and monuments that points to creating sites of processing that address individuals instead of collectives.

Shifting Paradigm – East versus West

Between Individuality and Collective Memory

Today, as in other fields, the individual holds a prominent place in much memory scholarship. Nonetheless, collective memory remains a core object of inquiry. The notion of collective memory has been attracting scholarly attention for several decades, and there is a growing interest in visual commemoration in monuments and museums. However, the classic studies, such as those of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann, were limited to political interests and practices, focusing on acts of commemoration as top-down actions, which ultimately convey, by those in power, a unique memory of a singular event.[2] In 1989, the French historian and sociologist Pierre Nora published a pioneering paper on monuments titled "Realm of Memory" (*Lieux de mémoire*).[3] In that work, Nora defines a new perspective for understanding monuments and their relationship to space, society, and political practices. He contends that, owing to the struggle among different memory agents, history and memory are in constant flux.

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[2] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Hand Book*, eds, Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 2008), 109–18.
[3] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989): 7–24.

In this essay, I engage with multiple memories by asking how art, artists, and private agents influence memory codes as bottom-up processes. Following research by James E. Young and Aleida Assmann, for example, which drew attention to a new kind of relationship among the artist, the monument, and the public, artists and designers have enjoyed a kind of academic heyday. Young foregrounded the work of German artists who wanted to involve the viewer actively by simultaneously establishing and dissolving the monument, thus challenging basic assumptions about traditional forms of commemoration.[4] Assmann, for her part, has stressed how a new chapter on memory work began in the 1990s with a new generation of young people wanting to rediscover the past about which their parents had remained silent.[5] Interestingly, she also points out that, "in Germany [these were] artist[s] of the generation of 1968 (who challenged the complicit silence of their parents with the Nazi past) and not a research group of academic historians funded by the state."[6] This memorial work, she notes, was stimulated and carried out on a local level by the younger generation, which had neither an official mandate nor financial support. Much of what they initiated was eventually taken up by the state; nonetheless a great deal is still based on their personal efforts.[7]

Assmann's research has opened up a new perspective that spotlights the role of individuals as carriers of memory, but it has also left us a new set of questions: Do those monuments effectively engage with memory and the spectator? Do they serve their original purpose and create a more dynamic memory, or are they also doomed to be forgotten? Can a "silent monument," which displays emptiness and absence instead of materials, serve successfully as a vehicle to transfer memory? The present study addresses these issues by examining monuments' ability to engage with the spectator. I discuss the case study monuments as "sites of processing"; hence, monuments that were created to be site-specific, connected to a particular location and time and designed to dialogue with individuals through active engagement physically and cognitively. I consider them in light of their historical, cultural, and theoretical backgrounds as well as the

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[4] James E. Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267–96.
[5] Aleida Assmann, "The Whole Country Is a Monument: Framing Places of Terror in Post-War Germany," in *Space and the Memories of Violence: Landscapes of Erasure, Disappearance and Exception*, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, eds. Estela Schindel and Pamela Colombo (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 135.
[6] Ibid., 136.
[7] Ibid.

psychological and physical experiences they offer to the spectator. In order to learn what distinguishes these sites of process from traditional monuments, I begin by exploring the different cultural and political milieux in East and West Germany. I demonstrate such divergent environments by presenting traditional monuments: one from the East and another from the West.

East Germany and Traditional Monuments

World War II ended in Europe on May 8, 1945, with the unconditional surrender of Germany. The Potsdam Conference divided Germany among the Allies: the Soviet Union received roughly the eastern part of the country including part of Berlin and Britain, France, and the United States were awarded the western sections. This laid the groundwork for the subsequent division of Germany into two states: the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which was part of the Soviet Bloc in the East, and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the West, a division that lasted until 1990. Both German states were for years preoccupied with recovery and reconstruction, and their respective World War II monuments reflect their relationship with the recent past. As we shall see, there is a connection between the political system, on the one hand, and social values, on the other, found in each society and their respective memory discourses.

The GDR was highly influenced by Soviet policy in the Cold War: anti-Fascist, anti-capitalist, pro-Arab, and so on,[8] which in turn shaped the GDR's memory culture. The Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and Nazi ideology were marginalized to analyses of economic and social conflicts.[9] The GDR viewed the Holocaust as merely one Nazi Fascist atrocity among many. The East Germans highlighted Soviet resistance and courage against the Nazis, who were, in their eyes, some sort of abstract Fascist enemy with which they had no direct connection. The struggle of East Germany against Fascism had less to do with the Nazi past and more to do with the Cold War and an interest in justifying its then current policy.[10] Under the GDR government, dozens of massive stone and bronze monuments were constructed and multiple memorial days were designated. These monuments celebrated the victory of the Socialists and the Red Army over Hitler. Typically, the monuments depicted figures of leaders in an event

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[8] Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 362–63.
[9] Ibid., 348.
[10] Ibid., 163–64.

related to the workers' movement, anti-Fascist movements, or the GDR.[11] The monuments were built in a top-down process designed to create a collective memory, which is in essence a comprehensive structure, common sphere, and convention based on shared memory and experience.[12] The collective memory created by this common sphere or shared identity was embodied by symbols, images, texts, practices, and monuments.[13]

One example of such a monument is Soviet artist Lev Kerbel's 1986 portrayal of Ernst Thälmann (Fig. 1). Thälmann was the leader of the German Communist Party (KPD) and an outspoken and active anti-Fascist who was murdered in Buchenwald in 1944. His figure was used as a symbol of the GDR leadership. The monument, which marked a century since Thälmann's birth, is located in the center of a residential neighborhood project on Prenzlauer Berg. Resting on a platform, Thälmann's figure towers above the crowd. His face is in profile and his fist extends to the side; a flag flies behind him, completing the image of a mythical figure and a national hero. This monumental depiction exemplifies the prewar traditional monument in its figurative style and ideological aims. Notably, GDR Prime Minister Enrich Hooncker chose a Soviet artist for this project, demonstrating a lack of confidence in East German artists' abilities to carry it out.[14] Such a decision, in my view, might have been motivated by a fear that East German artists did not share the same values. Perhaps, too, it related to a desire to create a top-down collective memory, one that was designed by the Soviet authorities and not by local or individual memory agents or by other groups with a different concept of his character. Despite the attempt to integrate the monument into everyday life as a model of hope and inspiration, the work remained alienated from the local inhabitants. It thus joined the myriad other heroic monuments that both fail to inspire in the present and appear destined to a similar fate in the future. Thus, it cannot be assumed that collective memory imposed by the political echelon will be embraced by the public.

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[11] Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 192.
[12] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 109–10.
[13] Jan Assmann, "Ancient Egyptian Anti-Judaism: A Case of Distorted Memory," in *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 365–78.
[14] Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin,* 202.

Figure 1

West Germany and Sites of Processing

As in the case of East Germany, the Cold War also affected the Western approach to memory prior to the unification in 1990. The postwar desolation and hunger were blamed on the Allies' occupation, which enabled the FRG to avoid shouldering its share of responsibility for the war's dire results.[15] The longing for a brighter future, even at the price of forgetfulness, was partly supported by the United States, which wanted to keep West Germany on its side in the Cold War.[16] However, in order to gain legitimacy among other free nations and rebuild diplomatic relations, West Germany felt obliged to assume full responsibility for World War II and the Holocaust. This encouraged politicians and individuals to assert that "more democracy required more memory and more justice."[17]

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[15] Josef Foschepoth, "German Reaction to Defeat and Occupation," in *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 74–75.
[16] Ibid., 76.
[17] Herf, *Divided Memory*, 334, 370–72.

Alongside the development of individualism and responsibility in the late 1980s and the beginning of 1990s, artists began questioning whether the monument in general was a suitable vehicle for memory in a democratic society.[18] They also criticized the very essence and aesthetic of a monument as a static object that fails to reveal the past and encourages the spectator to shed the responsibility of memory. For these artists, memory is a dynamic entity that undergoes modification with the discovery of new historical information. Others raised questions regarding the aesthetics of monuments that in some respects echoed the victory monuments of earlier Fascist periods,[19] contending that new monuments ought to have a modern, abstract or minimalistic aesthetic. Philosopher and urban theorist Lewis Mumford and art critic Rosalind Krauss both argued that modern monuments are inherently incapable of referring to anything but themselves, and therefore "if it's modern it's not a monument."[20] Against this background, a new form of commemoration called "Counter-Monument," "Anti-Monument," or "Vanishing Monument" was launched.[21]

Further on in this chapter I deal with those kinds of monuments and their specific style: I define them as a "site of processing" memory and "site specific." I argue that these sites are products of the postwar German democracy, which expresses aspects of individualization and democratization of the Holocaust collective memory by designing a bottom-up memory. One example of this new type of monument is Hamburg's *Monument against Fascism*, created by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz. This work, which, like Thälmann's, was completed in 1986, reflects the opposing position by rejecting the tradition of heroic and monumental monuments. A 12-m-tall column made of soft metal, this structure invited viewers to write their names on it in order to protest against Fascism: "We invite the citizens of Hamburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names here next to ours. In doing so we commit ourselves to remain vigilant."[22]

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[18] James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 5–6.
[19] Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938), 434–438.
[20] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 273.
[21] James Young coined the terms "Anti-Monument" and "Counter-Monument": See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust, Memorial and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 5–8.
[22] "Jochen Gerz Public Space": Jochen Gerz Official Site, accessed June 9, 2016, http://www.jochengerz.eu/html/main.html?res_ident=5a9df42460494a34beea361e835953d8&art_ident=76fdb6702e151086198058d4e4b0b8fc

As more and more names covered the column, it sunk lower and lower into the ground. After 6 years it disappeared completely, leaving only a metal square and, to the signatories, the memory of the act itself.[23] The aim was to convey the idea that monuments can raise a symbolic protest against injustice, but the duty to act lies with the viewer. The Gerzes stated as much: "In the end it's only we that can stand up against Fascism."[24] The monument functions as a memory process that impacts individuals at the site and invites them to take responsibility. This is a democratic approach toward memory sites, representing the freedom of individuals to choose to engage with responsibility and the site itself. Spectators actually help to "design" the monument, determining its duration by the addition of comments. We see here no historic figure – only a clean sheet for spectators to offer their own contributions. In sharp contrast to the East German monuments, which attempted to engage with the society as a whole, the *Monument against Fascism* reaches out to each individual spectator. The sinking structure graphically depicts the dynamic nature of memory and the insufficiency of conventional monuments, frozen as they are in time.

Negative Aesthetics as a Trigger for Memory Processing

We have seen how the styles of the East and West German monuments reflected each of these societies' political cultures. Nevertheless, the question remains as to what caused the proliferation of those new monuments in West Germany and later in united Germany? In this section, I review the theoretical and cultural background that led to the creation of this new aesthetic form of sites of processing and examine how the relevant debates, theories, and techniques took shape in solid forms.

Unlike East Germany, which raised traditional monuments marking its victory, West Germany decided that it had to commemorate the victims of crimes perpetrated under the Nazi regime.[25] The ambiguity and an inherent conflict found in West German commemoration work is thus no surprise. The Federal Republic of Germany was constructed from Germany's own ruins and carried in its core an "open wound": on the one hand, the longing for recovery and rebuilding spurred the desire to leave the memory of past atrocities behind, but, on the other hand, Germany felt a moral commitment to remember its history. Holocaust survivor and

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Young, "The Counter-Monument: 270–71.

historian Saul Friedländer noted that: "Germans found themselves in the last two generations on the border between the lack of desire to remember on the one hand, and the impossibility of forgetting on the other hand."[26] This conflict was graphically demonstrated in 1985, on the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II[27]: German President Richard Karl von Weizsäcker asked the public to look bravely into the German past and to take responsibility for it,[28] whereas Cardinal Joseph Höffner insisted that the public should look to the future of the German people, rather than dwell on its past.[29]

The opposing forces of memory and oblivion engendered vigorous debate concerning "appropriate" modes of remembrance. In 1945, poets and intellectuals such as Theodor Adorno contended that, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is a barbaric act."[30] Authors Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass joined him, saying that the "National Socialist ideology robbed the German language of its meaning and corrupted it and laid waste whole fields of words."[31] For Adorno, the solution was his "negative dialect,"[32]

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[26] Saul Friedländer, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 142.

[27] Ibid., 8–12.

[28] For the speech see: The German Federal President's website, Der Bundespräsident,
<http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/
1985/05/19850508_Rede.html;jsessionid=1D1F313C5339BD4043BC5E91B6559
98B.2_cid388> (20 March 2015).

[29] For the speech, see Kardinal Joseph Höffner, "Predigt im Ökumenischen Gottesdienst im Kölner Dom am 8. Mai 1985," in *Erinnerung, Trauer und Versöhnung: Ansprachen und Erklärungen zum vierzigsten Jahrestag des Kriegsendes*, ed. Deutsche Bundesregierung (Bonn: Bundesregierung Verlag, 1985), 101–06.

[30] The line was written in 1949 and published in 1951: Theodor Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," *Prisms*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Samuel Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 34. Original Source: "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft," in *Soziologische Forschung in untere Zeit*,1949.

[31] The quote is taken from *Headright*, Grass's 1982 autobiography, and he refers to those ideas throughout his work (see his novel *The Tin Drum* published in 1958). These notions were also cited and emphasized in Böll's work *Trümmerliteratur* (The Literature of the Rubble) and in his speeches when he was awarded the Georg Büchner Prize in 1967 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972.

[32] According to Adorno, negative dialect is: "'anti-drama' and the 'anti-hero,' all esthetic topics which might be called 'anti system.' It attempts by means of logical consistency to substitute for the unity principle, and for the paramountcy [sic] of the superordinate concept, the idea of what would be outside the sway of such

which is the critical possibility of writing poetry that reflects the tensions between culture and the different layers of memory. Grass, for his part, set the past as an obstacle to the present: "The past made me throw it in the path of the present stumble (sic). The future can only be understood on the basis of past made present."[33] He demanded from the arts and literature, "to remember Auschwitz as a traumatic event that constitutes the present and future as well as our own identity."[34] This led many artists to portray the Holocaust through what I call here "negative aesthetics,"[35] that is, a stylistic form influenced by Adorno's notion of "negative dialectics." Negative aesthetics is a form that is based on dialectic clashes, emphasizing an uncanny feeling through the use of unusual scales and locations, voids, and emptiness to convey what cannot be expressed in words or images. Artists using "negative aesthetics," evoke curiosity in the viewer; the void, unexpected placement, and a sense of surprise motivate a process of investigation of the past. This leads individuals to undergo a psychological and cognitive process of judgment and discretion that goes well beyond the site and the event it commemorates.

Under the Ground

We find an example of this approach in the *Empty Library* monument created in 1995 by Israeli artist Micha Ullman (Fig. 2). It is located in Bebelplatz for the commemoration of the "Night of the Burning Books," orchestrated there by the Nazis on May 10, 1933. The monument is in the heart of a large square surrounded by eighteenth-century buildings: the National Opera, the Church of St. Hedwig, Humboldt University, and the library from which dozens of professors and their students set out to burn 20,000 books the Nazis deemed "dangerous" and "degenerate." Two-thirds of the books that were burned were written by Jewish authors.

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unity." Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B Ashton (London and New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007) after the original edition (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1966),

[33] Cited in: Michal Ben Horin, *Musical Biographies: The Music of Memory in Post-1945 German Literature* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2016); Günter Grass, "The Destruction of Mankind Has Begun, 1982," in *On Writing and Politics, 1967–1983*, trans. Ralph Manheim (San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 137.

[34] Ibid., 140.

[35] In his book *The Texture of Memory,* in which he examines the new movement in Germany that created novel types of monuments from the 1980s, James Young uses the term "negative monument."

Figure 2

The monument, designed as an underground space, is covered with a 120-sq.-cm glass window set into the pavement. Peering through this window, pedestrians can glimpse the interior of the monument.[36] The underground space is permanently lit with white neon light and in cloudy weather and at night, the monument can be seen by the light emerging from within. There are two small metal plates set side by side next to the monument. One of these is engraved with the well-known statement by the German writer and poet Heinrich Heine: "That was but a prelude; where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people as well."[37] On the second plaque we read the following words, written by the artist: "In the middle of this square on 10 May 1933 Nazi students burned the works of hundreds of independent writers, journalists, philosophers, and scientists."[38]

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[36] Friedrich Meschede (ed.), *Micha Ullman, Bibliothek* (Amsterdam: Verlag der Kunst, 1999), 19.
[37] Memorial Transcript :"*DAS WAR EIN VORSPIEL NUR, DORT WO MAN BÜCHER VERBRENNT, VERBRENNT MAN AM ENDE AUCH MENSCHEN.* Heinrich Heine 1820."
[38] The original German text: "*In der Mitte dieses Platzes verbrannten am 10. Mai 1933 nationalsozialistische Studenten die Werke hunderter freier Schriftsteller,*