

Countermonumental Strategies

Early German Countermonuments and their Applied Artistic Strategies

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Abstract

Monuments are historically concerned with claiming a ground that cannot be challenged – seeking to maintain assumptions of singularity, centralization, legacy and perpetuity. The Countermonumental perspective embraces and employs multiplicities, peripheries, dispersal and impermanence.

The emergence and effectiveness of Countermonumental practices in the sculptural arts portends the possibility of a broader response which seeks to exhume dormant pasts and offer alternate historical perspectives in the present experience of the viewer.

In this research thesis and its associated artworks, the study of early German Countermonuments has been undertaken in order to recognize their achievements in reactivating the practice of public memorials and to study the strategies developed by their creators. The research culminates in applied artistic experiments which seek to apply Countermonumental Strategies to other fields of visual art such as photography, moving images, performance, digital media and public art.

These works contextualize themselves within the concept put forth regarding monuments and memory by Jean-Francois Chevrier – a notion of territorial intimacy “constituted on the frontiers of public space, in the grey or forsaken zones of the sanctioned territory...an occasion for social and political experiment.”

Keywords: monuments, countermonuments, memory, photography, moving image, ritual performance, reflectance, mimesis, peripherality, impermanence, displacement, multiperspectivity, artistic research

Author's Note

In life, stay close to the ground. - Lao Tzu

As anyone who has engaged in the process of research and exploration knows, the main challenge when navigating as yet uncharted waters is to seize the opportunity for discovery, yet at the same time to remain aware of one's intentions so as not to let the boat founder along the way.

The creative processes with which I am familiar as a visual artist rely almost exclusively on wayward excursions, random insights and unexpected failures which result in unforeseen discoveries. As a result, the cliché exists that these moments of inspiration arise in proportion to the extent to which the artist allows themselves the freedom to "get lost" and alleviate the restraints of systemic forms. Therefore, the notion of an artist voluntarily placing themselves within the seemingly restrictive framework of a research practice seems at first glance to be a contradiction of methodologies.

It has been my pleasure to find, however, that within the practice of research, there exist the very same moments of levity, inspiration and discovery which invigorate and play a vital role in any creative endeavor. In this work, I have operated as a visual artist taking on the mantle of a researcher and made a conscious effort to trust the methodology of research work while respecting the nature of its parameters. In return, it has provided the necessary format for making a thorough and methodical inquiry into a specific field of artistic interest - in this case the history and practice of working with Countermonumental Strategies.

As a result, over the course of time in which I have pursued this research, I have been deeply impressed by the authors, historians, philosophers, artists, researchers, professors, librarians, and other devoted members of academia which I have had the pleasure and honor to collaborate with in person, on the written page and in cyberspace. In encountering the work of these dedicated individuals I have been greatly humbled and am grateful for the opportunity to join in this vast conversation across time and space which research work so elegantly fosters.

Nanos gigantum humeris insidentes. As paraphrased by Newton (and originated by Bernard of Chartres), this phrase expresses the profound notion that in all of our work we are but little people riding on the shoulders of giants. With this thought in mind, I have approached this work humbly as an artist - but also as one dedicated to the power of research to expand the field of historical inquiry and artistic practice.

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Section 1.0 / Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Since ancient times the traditions of monument-making have been well-established and their strategies have remained persistent. Even into the modern era, the practice of constructing traditional physical monuments has served as a way of attempting to dictate our representations of memory and identity.

Yet, during the decades of the 1980s and 90s, this practice of monument-making was fundamentally questioned in a powerful way by German artists determined to grapple with their nation's recent history - specifically, the challenge presented by facing the impacts of Fascism. Their unconventional artistic methods created a new direction for memorial and monument-making and ultimately suggested new strategies of artistic practice.

These strategies emerged as a result of the unique demands placed upon German artists to contend with the complex nature of memorializing the effects of National Socialism and contending directly with the bitter inheritance of the Holocaust. The resulting works which have since come to be referred to as a class of monuments known as *Countermonuments* heralded a reimagining of how to effectively memorialize a complex past while simultaneously acknowledging the ambiguity of present perspectives.

Traditional monumental strategies are historically concerned with claiming a ground that cannot be challenged while seeking to maintain assumptions of singularity, centralization, legacy and perpetuity. Countermonumental strategies, however, are concerned with expanding the function of traditional memorials and thus employ multiplicities, peripheries, temporality and impermanence.

In the past, traditional monuments represented the collective memory of a shared societal mythology whose purpose was to build a notion of collectivism, homogeny of purpose and a national identity. Countermonuments have emerged as a way to effectively reactivate memorials in an age which has seen a dispersion of responsibility for memory across networks which are non-physical, fluid and constantly changing.

The notion of the Countermonument represents a potential for approaching complex histories and acknowledges the existence of multiple narratives in flux. This is an important development that needs to be understood - both in terms of artistic practice and cultural memory. Countermonuments do not take for granted their own perpetuity. They acknowledge

that wars, politics, the atrophy of historical memory, forces of commerce, passing fashions, city planning or other shifting sands of time may eventually impinge on the meaning and even the very existence of a physical form.

By embedding in their design the requirement for initiating an uncommon interaction with the viewing public, they seek to imprint their memory in the viewer. Thus the Countermonument becomes dis-embodied and liberated in that it no longer requires a corporeal form - existing primarily as a remembrance within the mind of the viewer.

1.2 What is a Countermonument?

In the course of this research and work concerning Countermonumental strategies, it has come to be seen that the possibilities for considering this question are many and varied depending on the established parameters of the inquiry. Given an unlimited scope of reasoning, almost anything, especially objects which are human-made, can in some way reference notions of monumentality and thus countermonumentality since the latter is simply an evolution of the former.

However, for something to be considered a Countermonument, as we will see in the theoretical discussions which follow in this thesis, it is ultimately the viewer who generates this perspective - knowingly or subconsciously - and thus reclaims their own interpretation of the object and the subject it portends to portray.

This question of personal interpretive perspective is quite liberating in a purely artistic fashion, and has been effectively employed in the creative practice and artistic experiments which accompany this thesis. However, such an unlimited ground is exceedingly broad in scope and not especially conducive to the focused theoretical inquiry with which this thesis is concerned.

Therefore, a system of Countermonumental creative strategies will be presented which are derived from preliminary historical inquiry into the first works to be referred to as Early German Countermonuments (EGC's) which emerged in Germany during the final decades of the Twentieth Century (1986 to 1999).

In this way, and in the spirit of Countermonuments, the question of defining a Countermonument will be addressed and at the same time remain open to the viewer in order to allow the theoretical inquiries of this thesis to focus more specifically on the potentialities of working with Countermonumental strategies.

Theoretical inquiry will thus facilitate the transition into the practice-based second half of the thesis which extrapolates these definitive strategies of Countermonuments and applies them to creative practices beyond monument-making through the author's artistic experiments.

1.3 Disambiguation - Anti-monument & Countermonument

For purposes of clarity and in order to give readers a solid understanding of where we begin our inquiry, it is necessary to differentiate between some common terminology which arises when discussing Countermonuments.

The first disambiguation concerns the difference between the notion of *Anti-monument* and *Countermonument*. This is very important to distinguish as it establishes the nature of how a person will consider the goals and strategies of the Countermonument.

The first impression that many people have when considering Countermonuments is that they are "anti" or "against" the existence and traditions of monuments. Yet as we will see in our inquiry into the historical narrative of Countermonuments, they do not seek to destroy the traditional form of the monument. In fact, they frequently make use of monumental traditions in unique ways in order to transcend their limitations.

Countermonumental attitudes imply that one does not oppose the forces of the Monument directly. In these disciplines, instead of meeting force with force, one causes through unexpected movements of resistance and compliance in order to redirect the momentum of an opponent. This allows a potentially monolithic and fascistic force to be turned or *countered* in order to facilitate the act of reclaiming a potential balance of ground.

Anti-monumental attitudes are more clearly against the very existence of certain monuments. For example, this position frequently arises within religious beliefs that feel a monument or a representation of divinity becomes equivalent to an idol or a replacement of the inexpressible reality of the spiritual realm.

While Countermonuments will be seen not to be expressly "anti", we will find that they share some of the same concerns which an "anti" position seeks to address - namely the individual's responsibility in generating an active connection to the past. This attitude arises in the history of Countermonuments as they seek to work against the fading of memory by suggesting new forms of monument.

Countermonuments are Monuments. They do not stand against the monumental but seek to expand its parameters and functions in order to address a deeper and wider field of memory.

1.4 Disambiguation - Denkmahl, Mahnmal & Ehrenmal

Since our first inquiry in this thesis refers to the emergence of Countermonuments in Germany, it is important to also mention the distinctions which arise around monuments in the German language.

The eminent researcher and documentarian of the early history of German Holocaust memorials, Professor James E. Young, has been credited with first assigning the english name “Countermonument” to some of these memorials as it has no established direct translation in the German language.

While there is no formal German word for “Countermonument”, there are a number of words that distinguish different purposes in the function of traditional monuments. Through the course of my own research and in discussions with German artists and scholars, I have repeatedly been referred to the German terminologies of the *Denkmal*, the *Mahnmal* and the *Ehrenmal*.

These terms represent distinctions that are unique to the German way of thinking when it comes to identifying monuments. They serve to establish a specific utility when assigning them to describe a monument. In their meaning they help to identify a subtle difference of purpose which monuments may seek to provide.

Denkmal refers to any monument in general. This could be considered a word that would easily apply to traditional monuments. It emphasizes the act of meditating or thinking on the past as indicated by the root word *denken* or *to think*. The second part of the word *mal* translates as *time* and refers to the span of time between the memorialized subject and the time of the present viewer.

Mahnmal can also refer to a monument intended to activate historical memory, but with a specific emphasis on remembering past mistakes. The root of this term is the word *mahn* which comes from the word *mahnenn* meaning *to admonish* or *to warn*. This form of monument is deeply concerned with impacting the viewer in order to avoid repetition of past traumas.

In this sense, the *Mahnmal* in Germany is a specific type of monument that is mainly concerned with activating the process of past memory in regards to the potential effect it can have on the future. This term more closely approaches the original intentions of the early Countermonuments explored in this thesis which actively sought to confront German consciousness around issues of Fascism and the Holocaust.

Finally, the *Ehrenmal* is a German term meaning *Cenotaph*, or an empty tomb or monument which is built to represent the remains of a person or many persons whose remains are elsewhere. From the root word *ehren* which means *to honor*, these monuments frequently commemorate the dead and serve to keep the memory of fallen fighters and war dead visible in a physical way for the viewer.

All of these terms can be applied to Countermonuments as we will see in the case studies which follow in this thesis. However, none of these terms alone can fully describe the new form of monument which emerged from the 1980's through the 1990's in Germany.

These *Countermonuments* defied definition when they first appeared since their specific purpose was newly relevant for their time. By utilizing the traditional forms of monumentality against themselves, these new monuments sought not only to commemorate or warn or honor, but to also raise the fundamental question of who bears personal responsibility for the power of memory itself.

1.5 Thesis Structure

In order to present a clear picture of the development of Countermonuments and the strategies they employ, we must first understand precisely the histories which made them necessary. This thesis and research therefore begins by presenting an in-depth exploration of the historical contexts which gave rise to the need for Countermonuments and in which they were first conceived.

After establishing this historical ground, the thesis will explore definitive examples of Countermonuments and then enquire into the range of specific creative strategies employed by the artists in order to grapple with and effectively counter the limitations of traditional monuments.

What new strategies did these artists incorporate into their work to activate an expanded functionality beyond the original parameters of traditional Monuments? In what ways did they retain and use traditional characteristics of Monuments to create effective Countermonuments?

After answering these questions the thesis will focus on how the working strategies developed by early German Countermonumental artists may potentially be transferred into a broader artistic practice. The ensuing practice-based section of the research will thus apply these strategies to artistic disciplines outside the purview of physical monuments.

To further address these questions, the author will also present the results of artistic experiments which employ these Countermonumental strategies in the interest of exploring how they might expand the traditional boundaries of art forms such as Photography, Moving Images, Performance, Public Art & Print Media.

How can these Countermonumental strategies be successfully applied beyond the field of Monuments? Do they have the potential to expand the functionality and purpose of other artistic fields traditionally regimented by singular perspectives and prescribed boundaries?

While it will be seen that Countermonuments represent a unique and specific development in the field of monuments and memorials, the core inquiry of this thesis is to display the potential for their strategies to transcend the field of monument-making and make an impact on the broader field of artistic practice.

As a result of this research and its conclusions, a theoretical foundation will be laid for further work to develop a notion of Countermonumental artistic practices. The intention will be to address the ways in which an artistic process can remain relevant by restoring the power and responsibility of interpretation, participation and remembrance back to viewers themselves.

Section 2.0 / Countermonuments & Fascism

2.1 Responsibility for Remembrance

In order to effectively understand why it was necessary for German artists to create the first Countermonuments of the 1980's and 90's, we must first understand that in some form or another they were all attempting to address, directly or indirectly, the incredibly complex effects of Fascism on German culture and thus grapple with its ripple effects through past history into the present day.

Therefore, before embarking on a description of case studies of the early Countermonuments themselves, it is essential that we establish a clear, if somewhat abridged, understanding of the rise of Fascism. It is only through this preliminary inquiry that we can truly understand the inception and relevance of the Countermonument itself.

It has been this author's experience that while the term Fascism is used quite often in relation to people, politics, and current affairs, the fact is that many people have adopted a general impression of the term. Most people know very little about the fundamentally dangerous and deadly nature of this system of political power beyond what they have been exposed to in Hollywood films depicting the events of World War II.

Indeed, it is for this very reason that the original Countermonuments were created - to remind the public not only of the past impacts, but also of the ongoing existence and contemporary impacts of Fascism. Therefore, it is by inquiring into the historical impetus of Countermonuments that we can more effectively take part together in an action which fulfills a principle goal of Countermonuments - to return responsibility of memory and historical inquiry back to the viewer,¹ or in this case, the reader.

For our exercise of remembrance, we will explore the origins of Fascism as an ethos in early twentieth century Europe and examine the subsequent rise of National Socialism in Germany. These are the political developments which led to events that ultimately made it necessary for German artists to create the first Countermonuments in the late twentieth century.

1. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000.

2.2 Before the Great War

We begin our inquiry into the roots of Fascism by returning to the years immediately preceding the First World War - also known as “The Great War” to those generations who experienced its effects. Yet this time is also intrinsically linked in retrospect to the ensuing years which led to the onset of World War II. Historian Enzo Traverso speaks of viewing these years between 1914 and 1945 as a single era including both world wars and regarded as a sort of European “civil war”² era. For our inquiry we will also adopt this long view of history and examine the development of Fascism across this time.

While Fascism is associated most obviously with Hitler and his Nazi party, the advent of this ideology came about prior to the German incarnation of Fascism known as National Socialism. The ideas and attitudes that were to eventually coalesce into Fascism were present long before this time and the forming of its roots as an ethos began even further back before the world wars. But it was during these years that it would emerge as an operative, yet unnamed force in many European political theaters of the time.

Reasons for this were many, one of which was that despite the relative stability enjoyed between European states since the Franco-German war of 1870, power struggles between the industrializing countries of formerly-agrarian Europe began to develop again toward the end of the century.

The Industrial Revolution brought great upheaval within cultures and ways of life which had not changed in some cases for thousands of years. In Germany’s case, the sheer scale of its population and its determination to conduct a successful transition into the industrial arts from a primarily agrarian society, had provided the nation with a superior position in relation to most other European powers.

This upset the balance of power and increased the sense of relative vulnerability among Germany’s neighbors. Examples of this imbalance could be seen in the condition of France, who had not as quickly adapted to the forces of industrialization (and therefore possessed a less robust economy), as well as in the position of Britain who, while being one of the first industrialized nations, still suffered from instability and upheaval within its own working-class.³

2. Traverso, Enzo, and David Fernbach. *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War 1914-1945*. English-Language edition. London; New York: Verso, 2016.

3. Roberts, J. M. *History of the World*. London: Penguin Books, 1995. Book 7. Ch. 2.

2.3 A Place In The Sun

Within Germany itself the attitude was expressed politically that the nature of this new dynamic would need to be reckoned with in terms of a new order of power, especially in terms of reorganizing the agreements and intertwined political interests that existed within Europe at the time.

In 1897 German chancellor Bernhard von Bulow told the Reichstag, “We do not want to put anyone into the shade, but we demand a place for ourselves in the sun.”⁴ This sort of thinking formed the basis of the creeping sentiment among certain strata of the German population that, as a result of Germany’s dominant position, it should be entitled to a more privileged political power in comparison to other nations.

This way of thinking inevitably led to a more sinister and ruthless political concept. One such expression of this came to be referred to as “Lebensraum” or “Room for living” which justified the claim upon the lands of other nations by advocating settlement activities beyond the established borders of the burgeoning German frontier. This notion formed the basis of territorial over-reach by Imperial Germany during World War I.

Consequently, the notion of Germany having inherent rights to lands other than those within the established borders would be further developed and employed by Hitler as a justification for the invasion of the so-called “Sudetenland” of Central and Eastern Europe by Nazi Germany during World War II.⁵

In 1914, the mounting political gridlock and resulting tensions of many years of complicated political maneuvering between nations inevitably led to the outbreak of the First World War. This development was naively welcomed by many who saw the war as a way to break free from the past and quickly settle all the entanglements which had so frustrated the political processes for so long.

4. Holmes, James. “Mahan, a ‘Place in the Sun,’ and Germany’s Quest for Sea Power.” *Comparative Strategy* 23, no. 1 (January 2004): 27–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495930490274490>.

5. Giaccaria, Paolo, and Claudio Minca. “Life in Space, Space in Life: Nazi Topographies, Geographical Imaginations, and Lebensraum.” *Holocaust Studies* 22, no. 2–3 (July 2, 2016): 151–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2016.1148876>.

And yet, through four long bloody years, its relentless horrors only served to deepen the feelings of division and anxiety, while adding a powerful subtext of misfortune, mistreatment, and abuse to the individual psyche and the national political narratives of each country involved.

These themes of betrayal, suffering and struggle would eventually come to define the main aspects of formalized Fascism. They would also indirectly define the strategies adopted by Countermonuments in order to undermine their function and question the legacy and legitimacy of a ruthless power system manipulated by thuggery and brute force.

2.4 A Fascist Crucible

The devastating events of World War I, or The Great War as it was referred to by those who took part in it, played a key role in providing the necessary events to prepare the ground for Fascism's future. Although Fascism itself would not be formally given name until 1919 in Italy, it had existed in its mercurial form long before, in the crucible of events leading up to and involving the Great War and continuing through its devastating impacts.

The Great War was the first fully-industrialized war on a massive scale. It was a completely new phenomenon and its effects were unexpected and overwhelming to all those who witnessed the sheer brutality and horror of industrialized warfare.

The result of the war was a massive, collective trauma in the general population at large, however, there existed even deeper wounds in the psychological impact felt by survivors of the battlefield, especially, where so many of the horrific events of the war took place.⁶

In considering World War I as the formative period when Fascism's origin story began, it is important in retrospect to note that the major embodiments of state Fascism in Italy and in Germany were conceptualized and instituted by men (Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany) who were physically and psychologically wounded as surviving soldiers of the Great War.

In the years after World War I there was an intense debate and struggle between opposing political ideologies purporting to lead the way forward from the devastated organizational frameworks of European states.

6. Higonnet, Margaret R. "Authenticity and Art in Trauma Narratives of World War I." *Modernism/Modernity* 9, no. 1 (2002): 91–107. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2002.0009>.

Fascism was just one of the political positions which arose in part from the resurgence of a strong nationalist sentiment after the Great War in conjunction with a widespread appearance of political movements featuring a strong rejection of liberal capitalist ideologies.

In 1919, the same year which saw the end of hostilities in Europe with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, a perfect climate existed in post-war Italy which had suffered much economic and human losses on its own soil during World War I. This inevitably led to more visible differences between those of the more fortunate social and economic classes which could survive the effects of the war and those who were forced to suffer more directly and brutally its consequences.

The post-war environment in Italy was ripe for nationalist sentiment and it led a former infantryman turned political figure by the name of Benito Mussolini to introduce his ruthless brand of national socialist political party under the name of “fascio di combattimento” or “union for struggle”. Under Mussolini Fascism became recognized as a formal political doctrine. It emerged as a distinctly ruthless form of political activism which blurred the line between theoretical politics and physical battle or “struggle”.

Within these early evolutions were always elements of totalitarianism in that Fascism forcefully imposed dominance of its own narrow-position within the political sphere. As a political strategy it had thus defined itself within this assumption of singular authority, often violently achieved by prohibiting and controlling all perspectives other than its own in matters of public and private life.

Fear, intimidation and terror came to embody the key aspects of the character of Fascism. In the hands of its followers it employed brutal thuggery and outright gangsterism to promote its aims. And Fascists began to boldly and without restraint attack democratic constitutional foundations of equal representation and justice under the law while simultaneously physically terrorizing its political enemies.

2.5 Rise of National Socialism in Germany

The most brutal aspects of Fascism were no more evident than in the rise of Hitler’s Nazi party in Germany otherwise known as “National Socialists”. At this point, many of the fundamental tenants of Fascism as a political method were firmly established. In Germany, these tenants became most obviously associated with the Nazi party which fueled its rise as a political force by relying heavily on propaganda and myth-making.

This most often took the form of borrowed theories - many fabricated from whole cloth or at the very least, faulty interpretations of events from World War I that were then re-appropriated to justify the aims and methods of the National Socialists.

A particularly powerful myth expropriated from its origins during the first World War was the idea of a *Volkgemeinschaft*⁷. This implied the notion of single national identity which cut across political, social and economic divisions for the purpose of uniting the people of Germany.

This notion had originated out of necessity during the early years of World War I when Emperor Wilhelm II had proclaimed the notion of *Burgfrieden* or "the peace within a castle under siege" thus preserving a sense of peace within the kingdom even during the events of the great war.

Even after World War I came to an end, citizens who had experienced the benefits of a communal culture which had set aside its class divisions were inspired to maintain this way of thinking so that the feeling of camaraderie which had arose during the war could continue.

The power of this passionate, nation-wide mindset proved to be a central point of control exploited by Nazi Party fascists when they commandeered the narrative surrounding the idea of *Burgfrieden* and reinterpreted it to their own ends. According to German historian Detlev Peukert, "...the goal was an utopian *Volkgemeinschaft*, totally under police surveillance, in which any attempt at nonconformist behavior, or even any hint or intention of such behavior, would be visited with terror."⁸

That this national feeling of goodwill and community could be perverted and manipulated so effectively by a ruthless political elite did not occur to the bulk of the population until well after it was too late to reverse its effects.⁹

7. Griffin, Roger. "Three Faces of Fascism." *Patterns of Prejudice* 30, no. 3 (July 1996): 65–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.1996.9970195>.

8. Peukert, Detlev. *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987. p. 220.

9. Evans, Richard J. *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939*. New York: Penguin Press, 2005. pp. 422,432.

2.6 Racism and anti-Semitism

Hitler had determined to secure the strong support of the working class for the Nazi agenda in order to avoid what he saw as their abandonment of support for the armed forces in World War I. In order to accomplish this it was necessary to continue and expand the beneficial social programs begun during the democratic Weimar Republic.¹⁰

The myth of a *Volksgemeinschaft* thus provided an incredibly effective and efficient structural framework to implement helpful social programs and yet constrain their parameters to reward only those who supported the Fascists and to facilitate “selection and exclusion”. The myth of a “people’s community” could thus provide a perfect justification for the Nazi party to defend its mass murder of Jews and other “undesirable” elements of society as being done in service to protecting the purity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹¹

The undermining of these social systems by using them to profile members of society racially, physically, sexually or otherwise for singling out and eventually eliminating was one of the most successful perversions of social systems that Fascism accomplished in its rise to power in Germany. Through the expansion of such policies the Nazi party fascists steadily began to change the law itself and introduce insidiously racist laws. One of these laws put into force by the Nazi party was the “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor” which prohibited sexual relations between Germans and Jewish peoples.

An additional measure was “The Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People” that made it illegal for a German to marry anyone other than groups which the Fascists decreed were accepted as having descended from the Nazi’s mythic Aryan nation of “original” German people.¹² What is especially important to understand is that the main perversion of the otherwise edifying principle of a “people’s community” was that it relied chiefly on the determination of race as a way of determining who was and who was not a part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

10. Kunstreich, Timm. “Social Welfare in Nazi Germany: Selection and Exclusion.” *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 14, no. 2 (June 2003): 23–52. https://doi.org/10.1300/J059v14n02_02.

11. Weiss-Wendt, Anton, and Rory Yeomans, eds. *Racial Science in Hitler’s New Europe, 1938-1945. Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. p. 352.

12. Majer, Diemut. (2013). “Non-Germans” under the Third Reich: The Nazi Judicial and Administrative System in Germany and Occupied Eastern Europe, with Special Regard to Occupied Poland, 1939-1945. Texas Tech University Press.

These developments represent one of the darkest hours in the evolution of Fascism and its dominance as a ruthless and life-threatening political force. These formal statements of racist theories and their subsequent enforcement in law were to pave the way for one of mankind's greatest atrocities against itself: The Holocaust.

2.7 The Holocaust

The Holocaust was a direct and premeditated result of Fascist policies regarding race and preservation of the supposed purity of the German national bloodline. When considering the overwhelming horror of this history, the reality which the Jewish people found themselves in during the years of Fascism's rule in Germany can hardly be imagined or fully described in words.

The threat and force of mass exterminations of Jewish peoples in all occupied territories during the war were carried out ruthlessly by Hitler's soldiers and special forces in service to his plan for a *Final Solution*. This involved nothing less than the cold-blooded elimination of the Jewish people.

Of all the terrors unleashed by Fascism during its rise and fall in Germany, the efficiently-organized, attempted extermination of the Jewish race remains the most gruesome and horrifying of all - a testament to the outcome of a nation allowing their political will to be concentrated in a demagogue, possessed of a passionate bloodlust and conducting war with an impatient primal madness.

The fact that these policies were often planned, organized and executed with utmost secrecy means that the scope of the tragic work was not fully understood until after the war ended and the Nuremberg Trials were held to present in a legal fashion the prosecutions of remaining members of the Nazi regime responsible for carrying out the slaughter.¹³

At these trials, what quickly became apparent was the extent to which all levels of German society had directly or indirectly been involved with the full-scale attempted extermination of a race of people. Evidence presented at the Nuremberg trials established that while the extermination was conducted discreetly, it was something of an open secret among the general public.

13. Bankier, David. "The Germans and the Holocaust." *Jewish Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1990): 7.

An example of this was most evident in the vast amount of products produced and sold to the Nazis for use in the gas chambers of their death camps. As just two examples, Didier Works of Berlin actually bid to produce the crematory ovens at a camp in Belgrade and massive amounts of Zyklon-B gas for killing victims was delivered to Auschwitz in enough quantities to kill millions of people by Tesch & Stabenow of Hamburg.¹⁴

These entities and many other established businesses with thousands of employees were considered to be the pillars of German industry and their owners and managers were considered upstanding leaders of their community.

Yet they took part in capitalizing on the outright murder of millions, and in a seeming displacement of justice, many of these firms, such as Krupps, Siemens & Mercedes which helped to engineer the formidable war machine of the Nazi regime still dominate the industrial manufacturing sectors of Germany today.

2.8 Post War Years & German *Historikerstreit*

What was found to be evident after the war was that there had been a great level of knowledge and apathy among citizens concerning their reactions or lack thereof to the Holocaust. This was evidenced and further proven in the Nuremberg Trials which revealed that there was almost no area of society blameless in the genocide conducted under Fascism during the Nazi era.

In the years immediately following the end of World War II and even into the 1960's and 70's, many of the general population of German people who were alive at the time of Fascist Germany maintained that they had not known the Holocaust was being carried out.

The prevailing thought was that Germany must face its past regarding the Holocaust, but that it would do so in a way that considered the events of the Holocaust as a new revelation which the general population at the time of the war had not known.

Slowly, this attitude began to change - first in West Germany and then later in the former East German territory. What became painfully apparent upon examination of the evidence was that in all ways and at all levels, the entire nation had colluded either in willful ignorance or in outright fanatical support of the systemic murder of millions of people in cold blood.

14. Shirer, William. Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. Ballantine Books, 1991. Pg 1156-1157

A major force in this shift in historical narrative was a movement among German historians known as *Historikerstreit* or the *historian's controversy*. A central figure in this effort was the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas and his writings which sought to foster a sense of communal *self-reflection* and push back against emerging narratives from conservative historians seeking to downplay responsibility for the effects of National Socialism.¹⁵

This then was the also the serious task which faced German public sculptural artists of the 1980's and 90's who wished to ensure that such events could not simply be relegated to the static effects of traditional monuments which are so easily forgotten.

That the entire country was culpable in some way for the events of the war and the Holocaust was one of the most difficult facts to accept and one that demanded a response which would make it even more difficult to forget.¹⁶ Nothing short of a complete rethinking of monuments could hope to engage effectively such a complex and difficult history.

By the era of Countermonuments, attitudes among the general public had again begun to change through the discovery and examination of records compiled by Nazi Germany itself such as the *Meldungen aus dem Reich* (Public Opinion Surveys). These reports made it clear that the general population at the time of the Holocaust were intimately aware of the plight of the Jewish People.¹⁷

In his research on this phenomenon David Bankier writes that the question which then arose during the time in which the first Countermonuments were being constructed was one that now concerned “not so much the knowledge of ignorance as the knowledge of knowledge.”¹⁸

This further complicated national efforts to exhume for reconsideration a history which many wished to see as very distant from themselves and their heritage. It was much more difficult to face the fact that people had known and not taken action en masse against the events of the Holocaust.

15. Leaman, Jeremy. “The Decontamination of German History: Jürgen Habermas and the ‘Historikerstreit’ in West Germany.” *Economy and Society* 17, no. 4 (November 1988): 518–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085148800000022>.

16. Loewy, H. “A History of Ambivalence: Post-Reunification German Identity and the Holocaust.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 36, no. 2 (April 2002): 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/003132202128811402>.

17. Roberts, J. M. *History of the World*. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

18. Bankier, David. “The Germans and the Holocaust.” *Jewish Quarterly* 37, no. 3. 1990.

The artists working in public sculpture who would eventually develop the strategies of Countermonuments faced a long, complex history of mixed public opinion regarding these inconvenient and incriminating facts. Even so, they wished to identify the ongoing evidence of these histories by in effect turning a mirror on the viewer and thus directing the discussion back to the public.

In order to face this challenge they would choose to not simply forego the medium of working with public monuments, but to evolve the traditional strategies of monuments themselves in order to expand their capabilities for reanimating histories and instigating the viewer toward personal critical thought.¹⁹

19. Gerz, Jochen, and Simon Baker. "Interviewed by Simon Baker, Paris, February 2001." *Oxford Art Journal* 24, no. 2 (2001): 27–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600406>.

Section 3.0 / Early Countermonument Case Study I

3.1 The Monument Against Fascism (1986-93)



Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz, *Monument Against Fascism*, Harburg, Germany. 1986.

The German people are one of the few in history that have themselves memorialized the victims of their war-making. This act in itself can be considered Countermonumental in spirit and intention. It disrupts an ancient pattern of memorials being erected by the victors for themselves or by the victims for themselves. Rarely have such monuments been erected by a defeated nation in remembrance of those killed by its own actions during a war.

At first, this process of self-examination by Germany came about immediately following World War II through the forced exposure of German citizens by the Allies to the evidence of horrors perpetrated in the Nazi concentration camps. These actions were undertaken while grappling with denial on one side of the popular response and acknowledgment on the other.²⁰

20. Gallagher, Shaun. "The Historikerstreit and the Critique of Nationalism." *History of European Ideas* 16, no. 4–6 (January 1993): 921–26. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-6599\(93\)90241-H](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-6599(93)90241-H).

There are multiple perspectives from which to consider this unique situation which Germany found itself in after the war. In a sense, Germany maintained a position of relative strength even in defeat by recognizing itself as a victim of its own actions. On the other hand, the crushing and total defeat suffered by the German people would continue to serve as a shared psychological wound which always threatens to resurface in the national consciousness.

The sheer weight and abstract horror of the historical record surrounding this period constantly threatens to undermine its effective memorialization. There are so many complex issues involved for all stakeholders in the public sphere that just the process of constructing the monument can be fraught with its own shadow-play of emotion and relived trauma.

In fact, as Professor James Young states in his writings on the subject of Holocaust memorials, it may well be that “the best German memorial to the Fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all - but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end.”²¹ Yet in terms of actual physical actions undertaken by artists toward the goal of facing this history, a definitive example of the early German Countermonuments is the *Monument Against Fascism* in Hamburg, Germany by Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz.²²

While they were not yet perhaps aware of the impact that their monument would have on the practice of public monuments, Shalev-Gerz seemed to understand that they were creating a new form of monument. As they called it - a *Gegen-denkmal* or Counter-monument. This was the term they coined to describe the intention behind this Monument Against Fascism. They intended that it would not only stand against Fascism but also stand against itself - against the idea that monuments could replace the living power of conscious human memory.

There is an inherent dynamic within many artistic practices which is the interaction with the viewer - whether through consideration, provocation, or ignorance. In traditional Monuments, this was addressed by employing all possible strategies to direct the viewer into the experience of a single linear narrative and to thus lead them to clear interpretations prescribed by the monument-makers themselves.

21. Young, James Edward. “Germany’s Vanishing Holocaust Monuments.” *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought* Vol. 43, no. No. 4 (Fall 1994).

22. Gerz, Jochen. *Mahnmal Gegen Faschismus*. Hatje/Cantz, Stuttgart (1994)

While Countermonuments do not completely abandon the use of set traditional forms, they simultaneously accept and reflect the reactions and interactions of the viewers themselves. In doing so, Countermonuments effectively address the necessity of recognizing unpredictable multiplicities of interpretation when honestly approaching historical and personal narratives.

James Young sums this attitude up beautifully when he describes the Countermonument as being "against the authoritarian propensity in all art that reduces viewers to passive spectators". Jochen Gerz stated that "What we did not want, was an enormous pedestal with something on it presuming to tell people what they ought to think." This sentiment is a key trait in the understanding of counter-monumental thought and work.²³

3.2 The Gegen-denkmal

Raised in 1986, this 12 meter tall obelisk was created by the artist couple as a public response to Fascism. At the same time, it successfully presented a counterpoint to the assumptions surrounding the functions of traditional monuments. By doing so they came, perhaps unexpectedly, to re-define the genre of public monuments and question some of their oldest and most established characteristics.

Shalev-Gerz began by introducing principles of collaboration, ritual and temporality into the work. Viewers from the local community were encouraged to write their names on the lower-most exposed portion of the obelisk which was skinned in soft lead. Once covered with writing, each section was then periodically lowered into the ground during a series of public ceremonies over the course of seven years until the obelisk disappeared from view.

Such strategies had the intended effect of restoring responsibility for action back to the public. James Young states that these countermonuments effectively displaced the function of memory. The memorial role and its dissemination was transferred to the public, placing the viewer themselves in a position of power.

23. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000. Pg. 28



City Map of Hamburg (Northern Territory)
Monument Against Fascism in the Southern Suburb of Harburg (red arrow), 2016.

3.3 Peripheral Location

From the beginning of the work which occurred to bring this Countermonument into existence, it was apparent that nothing about it would be acceptable or approved of by everyone. In their efforts and conviction to face an impossible memory, Shalev-Gerz set out to create a monument that would implicate and force the community to face its own history - an often uncomfortable and even unwanted process.

Shalev-Gerz sought to place the *Monument Against Fascism* in a distinctively commonplace location in the local community. This choice identifies one of the defining characteristics that Countermonuments would come to utilize which is their acknowledgement and utilization of the Periphery.

The monument was instead installed outside of the city in the suburbs, in the common area of an outdoor shopping mall in the working class district of Harburg - a short commute by train across the Elbe River from the more affluent downtown areas of the Hamburg old city center.

The context of a working class neighborhood also acknowledged a populist imperative within the function of the work and constituted a reclaiming of the discursive ground seized by the fascist Nazi Party through propaganda and intimidation during World War II.

As the Nazi party created a singular discourse for the population of the commons, Shalev-Gerz would place their *Gegen-Denkmahl* in the same space to reopen the dialogue among the working and middle classes.

The same class of German citizen who, through their support, resistance or silence, had engaged the rise of Fascism in Germany would thus be challenged in the present day. The *Monument Against Fascism* would ask the viewer to choose if they would be a part of the generation with whom the future watchful memory or the forgetful risk of repetition rests.



Monument Against Fascism Participant, Harburg, Germany. 1988.

3.4 Mark-making and Multiplicities

While the monument was internally constructed from aluminum, the exterior portion of the obelisk was skinned in soft lead. This surface could be easily marked and manipulated by four metal styluses that hung on a wire from each corner of the column.

The original intention by Shalev-Gerz was that members of the community would add their names to the side of the monument in order to reference the common aesthetic of lists of names in traditional monuments commemorating the war dead.

For this purpose the Styluses were hung at a height that would allow marks to be made over the general area of the lower portion of the column when a viewer would stand on the viewing platform to confront the monument. However, what Shalev-Gerz found to their surprise was that the marks made to the column were anything but organized or regular in their application.

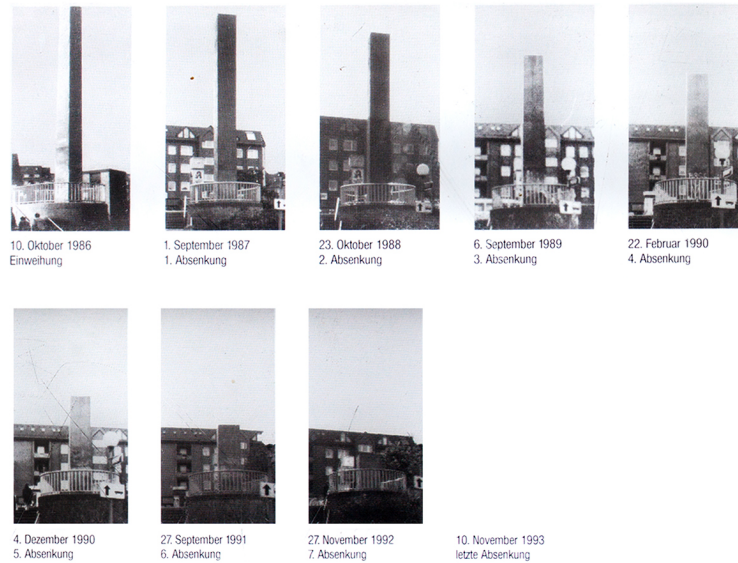
All kinds of marks and text were made on the lower portion of the monument - from full names to angry scratches and from protests against Neo-Nazis to racist slogans encouraging the removal of non-Germans from the country. A layer of graffiti-like marks began to build up on the lower portions of the monument and sometimes appeared more as an abstracted record of the layers of frustration stirred up by the monument than any cohesive or readable text.

Shalev-Gerz made the decision to allow the work to proceed under its own momentum and accept this unexpected development as a relevant expression of the participants. This brings forward another key aspect of Countermonumental work which is a willingness to allow an artwork to contain simultaneously more than one perspective or viewpoint, including those which may seem incongruous to the original intentions of the work.

3.5 Lowering: A Ritual Vanishing Act

Over the course of the next seven years, from 1986 to 1993, as each subsequent section of the Obelisk was marked and covered by the actions of the community, the same community was called together to lower it further into the ground. Once the lowermost portion of the monument had been completely covered with enough marks, writing and graffiti that it could no longer hold anymore expressions from the community, a public “lowering ceremony” was arranged.

Local politicians, community members, business owners, tourists and passersby were all invited to attend and take part in the ritual of lowering the excoriated section of the Obelisk into the ground. These series of public ceremonies continued until all that remained of the column was the square outline of its pinnacle which still to this day sits flush with the paving stones surrounding it on the floor of the former viewing platform.



Monument Against Fascism, Disappearance Sequence. (1986-1990)

A direct reference to the act of lowering was also defined as coming from a desire to confront and antagonize those who may still sympathize with Nazi attitudes. In this case of Jochen Gerz has claimed that in part the lowering of the monument could be seen as a “stab in the back” of the German nation. The Nazi myth of the *stab in the back*, referenced Hitler’s theory that Germany would have won the First World War if the army had not been called home by German politicians.²⁴

The Nazi party could effectively utilize this myth in order to undermine the authority of the newly-formed democratic Weimar Republic and eventually affect its demise. Hitler himself would employ this argument in *Mein Kampf* to accuse socialists involved in the munitions strike of 1918 as traitors and later after his ascent to power accuse with this same terminology those who organized a failed attempt on his life.²⁵

Therefore, this formal Countermonumental strategy of lowering or deconstructing the monument can be seen to function on a metaphorical level - communicating a deeper meaning that relates directly to the narrative surrounding the artwork which the artists wished to emphasize.

24. “New ‘Stab in the Back’ Propaganda.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 17, no. 2 (April 1983): 38–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.1985.9969703>.

25. McGuire, Michael. “Mythic Rhetoric in *Mein Kampf*: A Structuralist Critique.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63, no. 1 (February 1977): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335637709383362>.



Monument Against Fascism, Harburg, Germany. 1990

3.6 Memory Tourists

Not only could the lowering or “disappearing” of the Monument Against Fascism be understood as an attack against Fascism but Shalev-Gerz intended further for it to serve as an example of how traditionally static monuments could fail their purpose of sustaining a memory by becoming commonplace and familiar.

This strategy of planned-temporality had the intended effect of restoring responsibility for action back to the public. Once the monument disappeared, there would only be the memory of its presence. This plays on the point that a monument is actually very easy to forget about or at least take for granted - especially when it is in plain view and repeatedly experienced every day. By removing its presence purposefully the artist's sought to give it an active life in the memory of the community beyond its physical form.

James Young states that the *Monument Against Fascism* effectively displaced the function of memory back to the viewer. The memorial role and its dissemination was again transferred to the public, placing the viewer themselves in a position of power. “One day the only thing left standing here will be the memory tourist, forced to rise and to remember for himself.”²⁶

26. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000. Pg. 30



Obelisk of Pharaoh Senuwret I, Heliopolis.

3.7 The Obelisk as Traditional Monumental Form

Shalev-Gerz successfully presented another counterpoint to the character of traditional monuments by cleverly appropriating their classical forms in order to use them as a departure point for a new kind of memorial. They began by choosing to work with one of the most common and recognizable forms of the ancient megalithic monuments; the Obelisk. Since the time of the Egyptian pharaohs, the obelisk has represented one of the most fundamental (and phallic) monumental forms. The traditional form of this type of monument consisted of a four-sided pillar normally constructed from a single piece of stone.

They were often placed beside the entrances to Egyptian temples and through carved symbols on their surfaces served the purpose of communicating to Egyptian people the stories and mythologies of their history.²⁷ In the Egyptian experience, these monuments commemorated the sun god Ra and their stone forms were seen as the embodiment of an actual petrified ray of the Sun which had come to be present on the earth. The traditional idea that a monument contains in itself the power of memory which then emanates outward to the viewer is powerfully established in the history of Obelisks.

27. Lewis, M. J. T. "Roman Methods of Transporting and Erecting Obelisks." *Transactions of the Newcomen Society* 56, no. 1 (January 1984): 87–110. <https://doi.org/10.1179/tns.1984.005>.

Egyptians considered Obelisks to be more than simply monuments. They were thought to actually house the spirit of the deity which they commemorated. In this sense they not only stood as symbols to the deity but became the present incarnation of the deity in physical form - effectively creating a bridge between the memory of a thing and the thing itself.

Many Obelisks were damaged during unsuccessful attempts at raising them and have been found in states of never having been raised at all. It is said that the artist and engineer Domenico Fontana had teams of relay horses ready to make his getaway if the enterprise of raising the 331-metric-ton obelisk at Saint Peter's Square in Rome failed to be successful.²⁸

As such, one may see a subtext in the Monument Against Fascism not only to lower itself in opposition to the traditional role of monuments, but to sub-consciously challenge the almost comical subtext of the column - the metaphorical stand-in for the male libido. The intentional deflation of the column in this first Countermonument presented a foil against all the pressures of the traditional gender roles of male self-perception.

The Monument Against Fascism was to take this ancient assumption of dominance in the Obelisk's monumental form and challenge it directly by effectively and eventually making the monumental form itself impotent and no longer relevant to its continued functions.

A definitive aspect of traditional monuments is that they must effectively influence the public in a way that is controlled and targeted. Almost every decision that goes into the construction of a monument takes this singular focus into account. Countermonuments, however, while seeking to address the public, do so in a way that is more dispersed and open to the variances of the unpredictable and ever-changing dialogue in public space.

In the case of the Monument Against Fascism, Shalev-Gerz came to understand as they worked through each stage of the marking and lowering of the monument that what they were doing was an open experiment in many ways. They proceeded to expand on this traditional monumental form using strategies of collaboration, ritual, temporality and even irresolution and unpredictability.²⁹

28. Curl, James Stevens. "Egypt in Rome – an Introductory Essay I: Isis, Obelisks, and the Isaeum Campense." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 25, no. 1 (January 2000): 53–64. <https://doi.org/10.1179/isr.2000.25.1.53>.

29. Shalev-Gerz, Esther. *The Contemporary Art of Trusting Uncertainties and Unfolding Dialogues*.



Monument Against Fascism, Harburg, Germany. 1989.

3.9 Unending and Unfolding

One of the great accomplishments of the Monument Against Fascism was that it was able to relinquish control over its narrative to such an extent that it ended up reflecting itself in its surroundings by accepting their influence and allowing for future change. In this way, it continues to have an impact even after having disappeared beneath the surface of the earth many years ago.

Evidence of this strategy can be found not only in the attitudes of Shalev/Gerz toward allowing public sentiment to become a part of the monument's narrative, but also in the conditions one finds upon visiting the site of the monument today. The perpetual ongoing nature of a monument, which in a traditional sense no longer exists in its original form, continues to evolve in ways that could never have been predicted or planned by the artists.

Upon visiting the site of the monument today, one would be hard pressed without archival photographs to quickly find or identify the location of the monument itself. When entering the open-air platz one notices that it is still surrounded by shops of fundamentally working-class origin - a fish market, a tailor, a shoe store, and other providers of basic necessities.



Oak Tree at Site of Monument Against Fascism, Harburg, Germany. 2016.

Nothing but a solitary oak tree stands in the center of the platz and no prominent way-finding signage indicates where to find the site of the monument. The cast of people one encounters in this space also speaks to the working class nature of the setting for this monument. One notices pensioners sitting and talking on benches. Owners of the shops standing in the doorway watching for or welcoming customers. Students just out of school and working people stopping by the local shops for a drink or a snack before heading home.

Upon asking passersby where to find the Monument Against Fascism one is likely to be met with blank stares and a “Keine ahnung.” At first it might seem that the monument and its narrative have faded into the past. Yet, there is a towering oak tree which draws the eye toward the center of the platz and when approaching it one can discern a large, ivory covered brick structure behind flanked by a stairway leading up to the next higher street level.

Upon circling this platform of red brick one will find a locked doorway and a small plaque stating that this is the site of the Monument Against Fascism. Behind the door lies the workings of the lowering mechanism and up the stairs to the next street level on top of the red brick structure is the platform on which the Monument Against Fascism once stood.

Along the silver hand rail which runs along the upper edge of the platform overlooking the shopping mall below, a simple silver framed plaque is placed with a short text and five photographs of the monument at its full height and then progressively through it's gradual lowering over the course of five years until disappearing beneath the ground.

By comparing archival photographs to the present day view of the plaza, one can see that the shopping plaza area seems bleak and washed out with almost no evidence of greenery or nature within it. At that time, the plaza could certainly be referred to correctly as Jochen Gerz had described to be “an uglyish place.”³⁰

What was once a bleached sun-drenched concrete plaza, is now a lush, shady green space where the Obelisk of the Monument Against Fascism now rests in its subterranean crypt - a reflection of similar memorial spaces employing natural settings for comfortable reflection such as memorial parks and graveyards. The small shrubs and trees planted when the shopping center was new are now full grown and create a canopy of greenery over the entire plaza.

Effective in its relevance, the young oak tree planted in 1986 has almost now grown to reach the former height of monument Obelisk. Fittingly and in a further expansion of the Countermonument's intentions, this tree now stands in place - replacing and visually obscuring from immediate view the place where the Monument Against Fascism first stood on its pedestal in 1986.

The Monument Against Fascism now exists in a setting that feels more like a memorial park than a cold, “uglyish” urban space - a space for reflection on the effects of Fascism and a burial ground for one of the first examples of German Countermonuments.

30. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000. Pg. 28



Photo Plaque. Monument Against Fascism, 2016.

3.10 Photography As Countermonumental Document

It is interesting and relevant to the future trajectory of this thesis that we here take special note of the role which Photography plays in the Monument Against Fascism.

While a plaque with only text would have served the purpose of explaining to the curious passerby the story of the monument, Shalev-Gerz chose to incorporate a sequence of eight black and white photographs.

This sequence of images stand in place for the now-vanished monumental Obelisk. They also serve to explain completely and in a split-second the concept of the monument to the viewer. Each image depicts a different position of the Obelisk in its seven year cycle of being lowered into the ground.

The photographs depict the monument first at its full height, then progress through time to show the gradual demise of the column and implicate the notion of the monument's embrace of constant change. In addition to these photographs, a short text describes the project and its intentions in German, Turkish, English, French, Hebrew, Cyrillic, and Arabic. And that is all.

And yet the photograph here is unchanging. It stands in place of the monument. In a sense, for the viewer, Photography has replaced the Countermonument simply by serving its classically photojournalistic and documentarian role - that old monumental gatekeeper of the frozen moment.

It is appropriate that here we find in one of the very first Countermonuments the fundamentally powerful and problematic function of Photography being called upon - its ability to seemingly stand in for reality and transport the viewer back in time - in this case a time when the Monument Against Fascism was visible and above ground.

Finally, while viewing the photographs, one finds they are now standing on the monument's pinnacle itself. For there in the pavement just below one's feet, is the clear outline of a simple gray square the size and shape of the monument column lowered into the earth so many years prior.



Site of *Monument Against Fascism*, Harburg, Germany. 2016.



Craig Havens. *A Knife In The Back*. 2016. Archival Photo Print on Rag Paper, 110 x 148 cm.

Section 4.0 / Early Countermonument Case Study II



Aschrott fountain. Kassel, Germany. 2017.

4.1 Aschrott Fountain (1984-88)

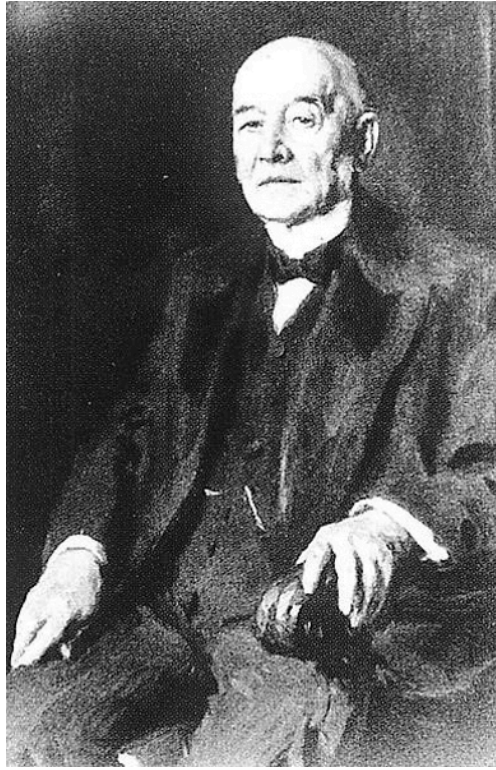
In the winter of 1987, the citizens of Kassel, Germany were witnessing the birth of one of the first German Countermonuments in the form of an ever-deepening hole which was being dug in the ground in front of their City Hall. To the side of this gaping black hole was a ghostly white cast-concrete obelisk surrounded by four miniature versions of itself. This fountain sculpture was cast by in the form of the original fountain “folly” which had first been erected on that spot in 1908 by Kassel citizen and Jewish businessman Sigmund Ashrott.

The hole and the fountain sculpture were the work of German artist Horst Hoheisel and the hole was being excavated to conform to the exact shape and size of the fountain destroyed in a fit of anti-semitic anger by the citizens of Kassel, Germany in 1939.³¹ The monument was being built on the very same ground where this act of destruction had occurred and would be one of the first in Germany to openly and boldly address the roots of Fascism.

This was dependent on identifying strategies of sculptural artistry that would make it possible to resurrect the memory of a forgotten history which was definitive for the artist and the city of Kassel.

31. Taylor, William. “Lest We Forget: The Shrine of Remembrance, Its Redevelopment and the Heritage of Dissent.” *Fabrications* 15, no. 2 (December 2005): 95–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10331867.2005.10525213>.

In order to understand the artistic choices and strategies originated by Horst Hoheisel during the creation of this early Countermonument we must return to the inception of the monument itself which was begun almost 70 years earlier - not by an artist but by a civic-minded Jewish textile merchant of Kassel.



Sigmund Aschrott. Kassel, Germany. 1905.

4.2 Roots of a Countermonument

In 1905 the City of Kassel commissioned its new city hall. This was to be a structure that communicated the stability and authority of the burgeoning town. Swelled by the ranks of new citizens drawn to the city during the years of the Industrial Revolution, Kassel had become a growing and important hub for business and commerce in Germany.

At this time, one of the prominent Jewish businessmen of the city was Sigmund Aschrott who had made his fortune in the weaving industry. Having inherited a traditional weaving company from his father, he began transitioning its production structure into a *Verlagssystem*.

This was a widespread form of new business model in the eighteenth-century which relied heavily on home workers who produced items in their own places of residence thus saving the sales company a great deal of expense.

This system provided little security for the worker and paid menial wages while generating greater returns for the companies which allowed them to amass far more profits than in the past.³²

Sigmund Aschrott used these *Verlagssystem* profits by then investing heavily into modern machinery and industrializing the production of linen in Kassel for national and international markets - much of which he sold to the military for tents and other essential linen products. This allowed him to explore further business opportunities outside the realm of textiles and in the late 1800's he began to expand his investments into real estate development.

He was a proponent of city planning that promoted "upscale living" and his civil designs abounded with parks, well-engineered streets and elegant housing for the bourgeois classes seeking new homes in the growing cities. He bought large tracts of land around the area of Kassel with the notion to expand the city and build outlying neighborhoods and housing as the city grew.

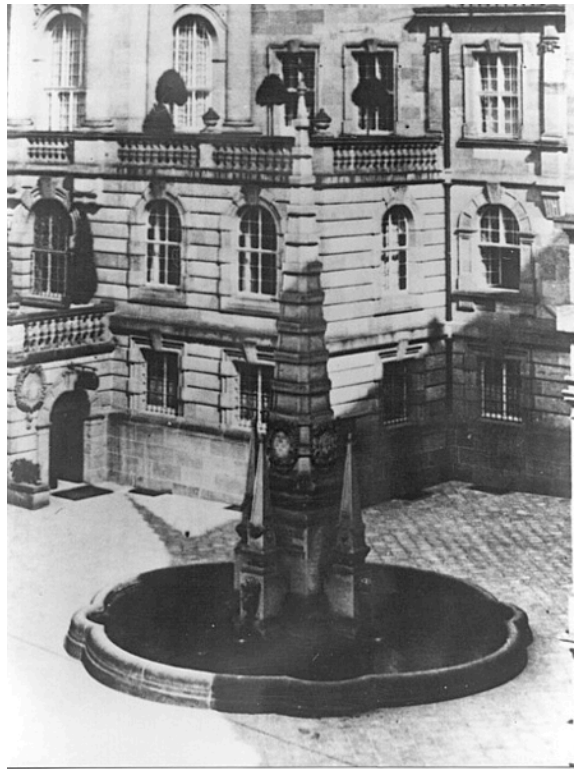
The district which Sigmund Ashrott eventually succeeded in developing is today known as the "Front West" and is one of the most affluent and desirable neighborhoods in Kassel. Successful in this venture, he expanded his methods into holdings in other cities such as Berlin-Pankow, Chemnitz and Frankfurt. While successful in business, Sigmund Aschrott was also active in local social and political circles. He showed great generosity in his charitable giving - supporting and in some cases establishing health programs, public monuments, Jewish orphanages, and even the transferring of lands for the construction of churches.

However, despite his charitable activities and civic generosity, and perhaps because of his immense success, Sigmund Aschrott would consistently throughout his life be troubled by Antisemitic attacks against him and his businesses. His actions in leveraging the exploitative, yet massively profitable wave of industrialization had allowed him to become a major landowner and developer in Kassel as well as other German cities.

He had reached a level of success which would inevitably lead to fierce competition from other business and political parties. The anti-semitic Berlin press would accuse him of all manner of financial misdeeds which could not be proven but served to raise anxieties.

32. Grimm, Claus, ed. *Aufbruch Ins Industriezeitalter. Veröffentlichungen Zur Bayerischen Geschichte Und Kultur*, Nr. 3/85-Nr. 5/85. München: Oldenbourg, 1985.

The resulting pushback from civil administrations and even fellow Jewish community members were driven by plain jealousy and also fear of his accumulated financial and political power.³³ Yet, even in the face of these personal attacks, Sigmund Aschrott showed immense fortitude and a willingness to remain steadfast in his public work and civic duties and in 1908, he made the decision to donate funds for the construction of the new Kassel town hall.



The Original Aschrott Fountain. Kassel, Germany. 1908.

4.3 The Ashrott Fountain

The German architect Karl Roth was commissioned to create the new town hall and in the process of design and construction, two fountains were eventually installed on either side of the courtyard flanking the main entrance stairway. The fountain to the viewer's right of the main stairs was proposed and financed by Sigmund Aschrott himself with the specified purpose of having his name associated with it in his memory.

33. Demme, Roland. "The Jewish Merchant, Publisher and City Planner Sigmund Aschrott - a 19th Century Personality." Kassel University, 2006. <https://kobra.uni-kassel.de/handle/123456789/2006110715503#>.

The so-called “Sigmund Aschrott Fountain” consisted of a central Obelisk on a main pedestal surrounded by four smaller Obelisks of similar design on smaller pedestals. This sculpture sat in the center of a large stone basin filled with water surrounding its base. It was designed by Karl Roth in a somewhat-generic style which he referred to as an *architektonischen Spielerei* (architectural folly).

Such Architectural *follies* as they came to be called in the eighteenth-century were decorative constructions that served to romanticize the styles and architectural conceits of bygone eras. Their aesthetic function was less historical and more intended to revisit and loosely interpret architectural styles which would be considered nostalgic to the viewer of their day.

Many of these follies were purposefully commissioned to look older than they were. Ruins of medieval castles, for instance, were constructed from new materials and worked over to appear as if they had naturally deteriorated over hundreds of years. These treatments were considered essential to the style and design especially of eighteenth-century English country estates and to some extent French landscape gardens.³⁴

While the traditional use of the term *folly* could at times indicate whimsical or humorous intent, the word itself suggests that something has been undertaken which, while intended to achieve a certain positive effect, rather culminates in an unexpected and perhaps very unwelcome result. This was unfortunately what would transpire to define the evolution of Aschrott’s Fountain and its prominence in the history of Germany.

It was only a short 7 years after the fountain’s completion that Sigmund Ashrott himself would pass away and thus allow the fountain to fulfill its intended purpose of preserving his civic memory. Yet while Sigmund Ashrott had most certainly intended for this memory to be a positive recognition of his many contributions to the city of Kassel, the political developments which were to follow between the First and Second World Wars would fundamentally undermine his intentions.

34. Barlow, Nic, and Caroline Holmes. *Follies of Europe: Architectural Extravaganzas*. Suffolk: Garden Art Press, 2008.



Reichskriegertage Procession in front of the General Command. Kassel, Germany. 1937.

4.4 Fascist Influence

The rise of Fascism in Germany through the 1930's would inflame and reinvigorate the same anti-semitic forces and attitudes which Sigmund Ashrott had striven so successfully against during his lifetime. Though he would not live to see it, his fountain would become a symbol to the Nazi activists of Kassel to strive against and distort to serve their anti-semitic agenda.

Under the Nazi regime, the population of Kassel was heavily indoctrinated in National Socialist dogma and actively urged to join Nazi political organizations. The militarization of the city became a defining characteristic of civic life during the 1930's. The city was also an important manufacturing center for the armament industry (which Sigmund Ashrott had himself previously provided with textiles in his manufacturing heyday).

During the years leading up to World War II the militarization of the city reached such a fevered pitch that it became the seat for the "Generalkommando" (General Command) and the permanent venue of the "Reichskriegertage" (Kingdom Warrior Days) celebrations.

The Reichskriegertage brought together German military veterans under the banner of an ultra-nationalist federal organization with over 1 million members known as the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Reichskriegerbund (National Socialist German Kingdom Warrior Association). This organization included former military leaders and veterans from all the German wars of the past generations including the First World War.

From 1935-38, this organization served to display to the public that there was an active and standing “Second Army” of citizens within the German population at large who were not only loyal to the nation but specifically to the Fascist ideologies of the Nazi Party and Adolf Hitler himself.³⁵

To that end, the first Greater German Reich Warrior's Days were held in June 1939 in Kassel. Preparations for this event were in evidence for many months ahead of time and the city was stirred up in a passion to prepare for the honor. Not only would the first national Reich Warrior's Days be held in Kassel, but Adolf Hitler himself would attend and preside personally over the festivities.

It was this final crowning detail that pushed the frenzy of Kassel's already fanatical population of anti-semitic Nazi activists to devise a plan to cleanse their city of any signs of racial impurity that may offend the Führer upon his visit to their city.

And once again, as had been the case in Sigmund Ashrott's life so it was in his death and memorial. Almost 20 years after his passing, Kassel's fascist elements found a perfect point of focus for their seething anti-semitism, nationalism, pride and inner rage. Once again they turned their attention to the fountain *folly* that bore his name - the Sigmund Ashrott Bruinnen.

4.5 Destruction of a Folly

On the night of April 9, 1939 a group of enraged Nazi activists descended on the Kassel city hall Court of Honor and with masonry tools, bare hands and angry cries began to tear apart the sandstone sculpture which formed the central portion of Sigmund Ashrott's Fountain.

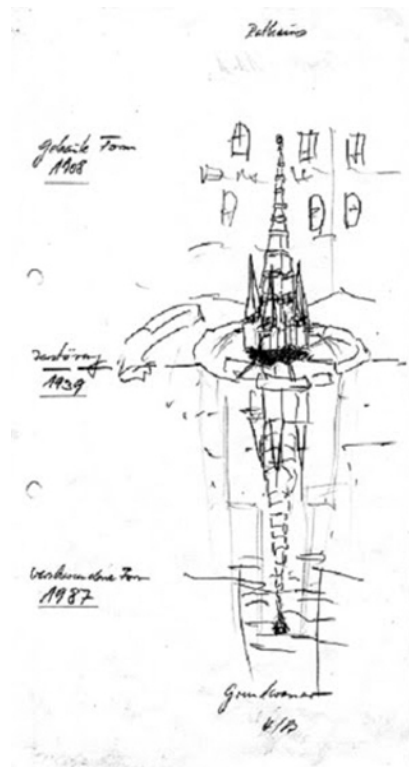
According to the Nazis, the fountain represented a “Jewish Well” and no fountain or monument raised by a Jewish citizen should be allowed to stand in such a place of honor - especially on the occasion of the Furor's visit and assuming he may pass by or even visit the grand edifice of the City Hall during his visit for the Warrior Days.

Thus the fountain was torn down in a fit of ecstatic anti-semitic nationalism and declared as a victory over the supposed conspiratorial corruption of Jewish merchants - a claim against which Sigmund Ashrott so often over the course of his life was forced to defend himself.

35. “NS Reichskriegerbund.” In Metapedia, June 9, 2019. https://de.metapedia.org/wiki/NS-Reichskriegerbund#Reichskriegertage_in_Kassel.

After this outburst of uncontrolled emotion on the part of the citizenry of Kassel a later attempt was made to defend more soberly the crime of defacing public property. In an almost comical farce, an official Talmudic researcher was commissioned to study the structure and retroactively justify the fountain's demolition.

According to the report, the destruction of the fountain was warranted since the *folly* design was judged not to be simply a harmless aesthetic amalgam of nostalgic classicism. According to the Talmudic researcher the monument was actually a cleverly-concealed monument to Judaism via what he claimed were references to Kabbalic numerology and Freemasonry.



Horst Hoheisel Sketch of Proposed Inversion of Aschrott Fountain. Kassel, Germany. 1985.

4.6 Horst Hoheisel's Proposal

The artist Horst Hoheisel (born 1944 in Poland) has made an artistic career of grappling with the difficult history of Fascism and the Holocaust. His works often take the form of public monuments that exhume lesser-known histories which have been buried in the historical narrative of Germany.

In October of 1984, the city of Kassel's Foundation for the Preservation of Public Monuments proposed an open competition for proposals to re-activate the site of the Ashrott Fountain. Of all the proposals received, Horst Hoheisel's was the one that was accepted.

He specifically proposed to cast in concrete the same form as the original "folly" designed by the city hall architect Karl Roth. This newly-cast, white concrete sculpture would be placed in front of the City Hall for a period of time to act as a visual signifier that the history of the Ashrott Fountain had returned as an apparition heralding a new chapter in the story of its evolution.

But what caused this artwork to emerge as a definitive example in the history of Countermonuments began with his proposal to recreate and then rebury the *folly* sculpture of the original Ashrott Fountain on the same location as the remaining basin - thus inverting the form and pouring water into its depths.

In December 1986, Horst Hoheisel was approved by the city of Kassel to execute his proposal during the days of the prestigious art exhibition know as Documenta 8 although it was not an official entry in the program. At the same time of the Documenta festival however, the hollow re-cast concrete "folly" sculpture reconstructed from photographs and blueprints of the original design of the Ashrott Fountain was sitting in front of the City Hall. It sat for many weeks there - a white, ghostly presence against the blackened stone of the Kassel City Hall marred by the effects of the intensive bombing raids on the city from 1943 to 1945.

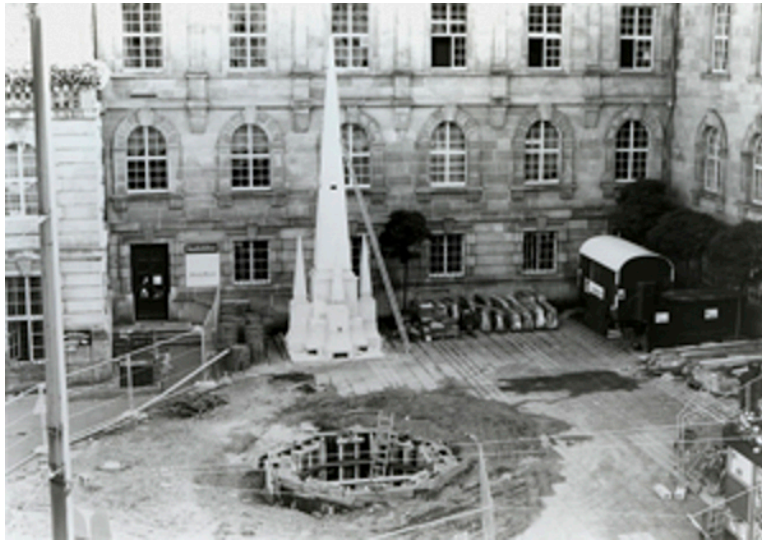
The original basin of the fountain was then disassembled and sent to a city storage facility, the ground beneath it excavated, and a hole in the dimensions of the Ashrott Fountain *folly* hollowed out. The hole extended down to the level of the subterranean ground water level beneath the city of Kassel itself. Paving stones surrounding the site were torn up in order to accommodate the widening and deepening hole which over many weeks began to open in the ground of the city hall Court of Honor in front of the watchful presence of the re-cast *folly* sculpture.

Finally upon the completion of the ground being prepared, crews of city workers upended the 30 ton re-cast *folly* sculpture and, turning it upside down, lowered it into the excavated hole in the ground. The sculpture was fixed in place - it's pinnacle submerged and touching the ground water and it's hollow, open base in position just below the ground level of the courtyard pavement.

The paving stones were replaced and rearranged around the hole to form a circular pattern with troughs for running water down into the hollow inverted *folly*. A metal grate was then placed over the deep hole to allow viewers to stand directly above it and look down into the inner structure of the *folly* sculpture.

At certain times of day via eight water channels that run beneath the area where the former basin rested, water runs across the courtyard and cascades deep into the blackness which the viewer stands above - suspended in time to contemplate their own position and the absence of a monument that once was there - straddling the past and the present while looking down into the chasm of history.

On December 10, 1987, the new Aschrott Fountain was inaugurated, and on November 7, 1988 a memorial plaque commemorating its history was set into the base.³⁶



Recast Form of the Aschrott Fountain Awaiting Inversion / Installation. Kassel, Germany. 1986.

4.7 A Definitive Countermonument

There are a number of ways in which the Ashrott Fountain mimicked and expanded on the possibilities of Countermonuments. First, the entire structure of the former fountain was inverted and embedded into the ground to make a statement about the *subterranean* nature of its history.

36. Hoheisel, Horst. "Hoheisel & Knitz - Aschrott Fountain [Kassel 1985]." Website of the Artist, Horst Hoheisel (blog), April 20, 2014. http://www.knitz.net/index.php?Itemid=3&id=30&option=com_content&task=view&lang=en.

In describing this memorial in his definitive research on Holocaust memorials, professor James E. Young makes the salient point that Hoheisel has effectively implicated his own history by stating that the subterranean sculpture implies that “the groundwater of German history may well be poisoned - not by Jews, but by the Germans themselves.”³⁷

Hoheisel himself admits as much when he describes his artistic and theoretical intentions in creating this definitive Countermonument: *“I have designed the new fountain as a mirror image of the old one, sunk beneath the old place in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens so that such things never happen again. That’s why I rebuilt the fountain sculpture as a hollow concrete form after the old plans and for a few weeks displayed it as a resurrected shape at City Hall Square before sinking it, mirror-like, twelve meters deep into the groundwater. The pyramid will be turned into a funnel into whose darkness water runs down. From the architektonischen Spielerei, as City Hall architect Karl Roth called his fountain, a hole emerges which deep down in the water creates an image reflecting back the entire shape of the fountain.”*³⁸



The Horst Hoheisel / Ashrott Fountain. Kassel, Germany. 2017.

4.8 Multiple and Merged Narratives

In the Ashrott Fountain, there exists a firm example of how Countermonuments frequently address multiple histories at the same time. This extended even to the artist incorporating the narrative of his own family history into the work.

37. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000.

38. Horst Hoheisel, “Rathaus-Platz-Wunde,” in *Ashrott-Brunnen: Offene Wunde der Stadtgeschichte* (Kassel, 1989) unpaginated; Translation by James E. Young

Hoheisel had begun in the late 1960's to question his parents and specifically his father regarding their roles in participating in the events of the war years in Germany. While he had often heard his father describe stories of younger years he rarely heard him discuss the years of Fascist rule. Upon pressing his father, Horst came to understand that his own personal family history was directly intertwined with that of the Ashrott Bruinnen fountain.³⁹

Horst's father was a forester for the German state during the war and was responsible for administering the use and management of an area of land around the Latvian city of Riga. This was the same area where one of the largest Nazi operations for mass executions was conducted before the building of the death camps. Over 25,000 Jewish citizens were executed in these woods on November 30 and December 8, 1941.

The areas were easily accessible by train line which allowed easy transportation of Jews for execution. The soft, sandy soil made it easy for German soldiers to dig mass grave pits in which victims were made to lay on top of each other to be shot.⁴⁰

The fact that directly connected this tragedy and the family history of Horst Hoheisel to the history of the Ashrott Fountain was that only two years after Nazi activists pulled down the *folly* sculpture in 1939, many of the Jewish residents of Kassel were deported to Riga and subsequently murdered in the Rumbula Massacre in the woods that Horst's father managed for the German state.

The depth and complexity of this narrative is summed up best in Horst Hoheisel's own words describing his Countermonument: "*What did the artist have in mind?*" *Ten years after the inauguration of the Aschrottbrunnen, people in Kassel still ask me this question. I like to throw the ball back at them, countering with a question of my own: ,What crossed people's minds in 1939, when Nazi activists first demolished the fountain and then, by an official ordinance of the mayor of the city, the remaining pieces were cleared away? What crossed the minds of Kassel's citizens when, in 1941 and 1942, the deportation trains left from track 3 at the main railway station, deporting more than 3000 Jews from Kassel to Riga, Majdanek and Theresienstadt?*"⁴¹

39. Bloch, Ofra. "Dialogues in No Man's Land." *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 51, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 320–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2015.1036343>.

40. Fleming, Gerald (1994). *Hitler and the Final Solution*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN 0520060229 Riga trial verdict excerpts, as reprinted in Fleming 1994, pp. 78–9.

41. Hoheisel, Horst. "Hoheisel & Knitz - Aschrott Fountain [Kassel 1985]." Website of the Artist, Horst Hoheisel (blog), April 20, 2014. http://www.knitz.net/index.php?Itemid=3&id=30&option=com_content&task=view&lang=en.



Walter De Maria, *The Vertical Earth Kilometer*. Kassel, Germany. 1977.

4.9 Countermonument as Land Art

A final way in which Horst Hoheisel's fountain references and appropriates strategies of contemporary artistic practice exists in the fact that it engages not only the space of absence above ground, but the land itself by displacing the earth beneath the historic site itself.

In this sense, the work shares a relationship to the rich discipline of Land Art. There are a considerable amount of artworks in the history of contemporary art which made use of the earth itself to create interventions and sculptures from the land itself.

A definitive example of this is the Spiral Jetty constructed by Robert Smithson in 1970 on the Great Salt Lake in Utah. The project involved gaining access to the site and permission to intervene to construct a jetty consisting of 6,650 tons of rock which spiraled in on itself to create an experience for the viewer that places them in the center of the sculpture after walking its entire length.⁴²

In much the same way, the Ashrott Fountain displaces the earth beneath it and levitates the viewer above the resulting void in order to encompass them in the experience of the artwork. It is a fundamental function of not only Land Art but that of Countermonuments as well.

42. "A Finding Aid to the Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt papers". Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Retrieved November 29, 2012.

The viewer is always considered as a collaborative element of the work and not just a passive observer. In the case of early Countermonuments such as Horst Hoheisel's fountain, this extends further to implicate the viewer in the narrative and force a questioning of their own relationship to the history hidden beneath the place.

It is helpful in terms of comparison to mention another relevant contemporary artwork also located in Kassel which will help to distinguish artworks working with the land from Countermonuments such as the Ashrott Bruinnen which use the land to contextualize and reanimate a specific history.

The work known as Vertical Earth Kilometer by American artist Walter De Maria is located in the Friedrichsplatz Park in Kassel, Germany. It consists of a one-kilometer long brass rod five centimeters in diameter that has been inserted directly down into the earth by boring a shaft with a geological drill and then inserting the brass rod in lengths of 167 meters each which were then screwed together.

The view of this sculpture is deceptively low-profile and one could be forgiven for passing it by without even noticing that it is there. There are no plaques or signs to indicate its presence. The only contextualization of the end of the brass rod which sits level with the ground is a slab of red sandstone which surrounds it. The impression of the visible portion of this 1 kilometer long brass rod is that of a coin dropped on the pavement.

In this sense, Walter De Maria is playing with the formal considerations of absence of the artwork above ground and its more substantial yet unseen subterranean presence in much the same way as Horst Hoheisel. Yet the strategies of each of these artwork are playing out in a distinctly different way and to very unique ends. Walter De Maria did not choose this site of Kassel specifically to reactivate any history of place in terms of political or national sentiment. Indeed, the reason that the sculpture exists in Kassel at all is because it was commissioned as a part of Documenta 6 in 1977 which is an ongoing exhibition of Contemporary Art that takes place every 5 years in Kassel.⁴³

In the case of Hoheisel's Countermonument, the site has in some ways been predetermined by the events of history. The work could simply not function properly if it were to be located anywhere else on the planet as a result of the site-specific function which the work must play to accomplish the goal of reactivating a potentially forgotten history of the city of Kassel.

43. De Maria, Walter. Oral history interview with Walter De Maria, 1972 October 4, n.d. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-walter-de-maria-12362>.

Although his installation action was also carried out during an occurrence of Document 8 in 1987, it was not officially considered as a part of the exhibition. This speaks directly to the original “outsider” nature of the first German Countermonuments. They saw themselves as working against or on the periphery of the traditional and even implicated contemporary monuments for not addressing the urgency of historical issues.

In this effort however, one can not accuse Horst Hoheisel of any lack of self-reflection as evidenced not only in his willingness to delve into his own familial history but in his own exclamation that Countermonuments themselves are imperfect and only attempting to form a preliminary response to the inadequacies of memory work.

The practice of trying to pin down the past and sustain its memory in the population is something of an impossible work undertaken to draw attention to the mercurial nature of memory itself. As Hoheisel himself states in his ‘Reflections about the Art of Memory and the Memory of Art’:

‘Everything produced by artists to remember the crimes of the past is wrong, including my own work!’⁴⁴

44. Horst Hoheisel, ‘Algunas Reflexiones Acerca del Arte de la Memoria y la Memoria del Arte’. In *Políticas de la Memoria: Tensiones en la Palabra y la Imagen*. Ed. Sandra Lorenzano and Ralph Buchenhorst (Mexico, D.F.: Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana, 2007), 121. Translation by Juan Felipe Hernandez

Section 3.3 / Early Countermonument Case Study III



Stolperstein Monuments, Berlin, Germany. 1992.

5.1 Stolperstein (1992-Present)

By the early years of the 1990's the original German Countermonuments of the 1980's such as the Monument Against Fascism and the Aschrott Fountain had begun to make their impression on a small yet growing group of German artists - many of whom were just beginning to develop their practice in monuments and memorials. One of those artists was Cologne-based sculptor and educator Gunter Demnig.

Demnig had been born into the shattered remains of the city of Berlin in 1947 - just two years after the war came to a close. At this time Berlin resembled more a pile of rubble and stones than a City due to the intensive bombing of the Allies during the final years of the war. Demnig grew up amid this backdrop of cultural and physical upheaval - the streets themselves filled with holes and piles of paving stones for many years even after the end of the fighting.

Demnig was a part of a young generation of German artists who were the first to move into the formal setting of the art academy without having directly experienced the events of the war, having only lived through its aftermath.

His training included not just the practicalities of art-making and the craft of industrial design at the revered art institution HfbK, Berlin, but he also went on to train and be certified as an educator of art - specifically in area of sculpture at the University of Kassel.

It was during this time and through his subsequent continuing studies at the University of Kassel (where the Aschrott Fountain was to later be constructed by Hörst Hoheisel) that he became interested in monuments and began working in the field of restoration, planning and site supervision for numerous public projects.

In 1985, after completing his studies and first work experiences with monuments in Kassel, Demnig relocated his studio practice to Cologne and began what was to be a long-term artistic relationship with the history of that city. A formative action which Demnig took in his early years in Cologne was to seek recommendation and be accepted for membership into the *Internationales Künstlergremium* - a group of working German artists that included none other than the co-creator of the Monument Against Fascism - fellow German Countermonumentalist Jochen Gerz.⁴⁵

For some years after moving to Cologne, Demnig had been occupied with working in a collective manner with the public and other artists. He began organizing temporary workshops, installations and performances that took advantage of the city's vibrant artist's spaces such as the *Fuhrwerkswaage*, Cologne and the IGNIS Cultural Center.⁴⁶ In these temporary events and actions, Demnig joined a post-war generation of artists who were experimenting with new ways of art making that addressed ideas of coincidence and chance meetings between both artists and audiences - a synergy that could lead to new narratives and creative discoveries.

In 1990, Demnig decided to apply the lessons learned from his cumulative experiences in formal monument work and experimental temporary actions in a single project. He turned his attention to generating a strategy by which he might help to draw attention to the forgotten history and stories of the Sinti and Roma residents of Cologne who had been the victims of forced deportation in 1940 under the authority of the National Socialists.

45. IKG. "SELFPORTRAIT: International Artists Forum (IKG)." IKG Website (blog). Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://ikg-art.org/en/selfportrait/>.

46. Demnig, Gunter. "Biography: Gunter Demnig - Artist." Stolperstein. Accessed December 19, 2019. <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/biography/>.

This was a history which was not only under-examined in the post-war years but one which was quickly disappearing in the minds of his fellow citizens as he would find out during his production of the project. In this work, Demnig was to discover what his peers such as Horst Hoheisel, Jochen Gerz and Esther Schalev had previously addressed in their own Countermonumental projects - the fact that memory is the responsibility not only of the monument but of the public as well.



Trace Writing Device, 1990. Gunter Demnig.

5.2 A Trace Against Forgetting

As with other artists responsible for creating the early German Countermonuments, Gunter Demnig was moved to develop his first clearly Countermonumental actions in response to the history of Fascism in Germany. In his first actions he focused on its effects on the Sinti and Roma people of Balkan origin living in Germany and more specifically in Cologne at the time of the war.⁴⁷

Hoheisel determined to create an artwork and memorial that would raise awareness among the citizens of Cologne regarding the mass deportation of Romani which took place in 1942. Demnig created what he called a "Trace Writing Device" which was simply an old bicycle wheel mounted on the front fork of a bicycle.

47. Huttenbach, Henry R. "The Romani Pořajmos: The Nazi Genocide of Europe's Gypsies." *Nationalities Papers* 19, no. 3 (1991): 373–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905999108408209>.

Instead of a rubber tire on a rim, he welded a wide metal ring which was custom-made to feature raised text. The idea was for this “Trace Writing Device” to be run through a bath of white paint and then walked down the street in order to imprint text on the road surface in much the same way a municipal worker might apply a white line down the middle of a roadway. The text which Demnig engraved on the wheel declared that this was a way to create “Ein Spur durchs Vergessen” which means “A Trace Against Forgetting”.

Through his research into the subsequent deportation of the Romani citizens of Cologne at the hands of the Nazis in 1947, Demnig discovered the victims had been marched through the inner city to Cologne Hauptbahnhof for loading onto trains bound for Auschwitz.

So in 1991, Gunter Demnig began the work of tracing the “road to deportation” by applying the white paint of his text wheel along the streets that led through the center of Cologne and eventually ended at the Hauptbahnhof. It was during this first Countermonumental action that Demnig discovered and developed the effective strategies of memorializing personal histories that would lead him to eventually create the Countermonument he is most recognized for - the Stolperstein.⁴⁸

5.3 They Lived Here

During the process of painting his “trace against forgetting”, Gunter Demnig had many opportunities to engage with the people of Cologne. It was obviously a complete sculptural and performance work. First in the fact that it created such an uncommon and strange-looking sculptural device (in some ways referencing Duchamp’s Bike Wheel sculpture).

Secondly, that it turned this sculpture into a functional text writing tool to be used in the public space. The optics of this cannot be understated and called for public attention when undertaken. The transgressive nature of unauthorized painting on public streets, as well as the do-it-yourself nature of the entire project, was appropriately demonstrating a rebellion against the forgetfulness of the communities and the official silence by the government authorities of Cologne at the time. As the 1990’s marked roughly the 50 year point beyond these tragic events, many people wished to be done with this history and to move on from the uncomfortable feelings associated with its memory.

48. Apel, Linde. “Stumbling Blocks in Germany.” *Rethinking History* 18, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 181–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2013.858448>.

A new generation was being born at this time who would have no direct relation to the events of the war even through their parents. This amplified the chances of mass forgetting concerning the impacts of Fascism - thus making it more possible for a re-emergence of its effects in the future. This was the threat which was ever present in the minds of German artists such as Gunter Demnig who created the first Countermonuments.

For this reason, as the paint traces of his wheel eventually began to wear and fade from the streets of Cologne, Demnig realized he must find a more permanent way to keep the fate of the Romani people of Cologne in people's memory. To solve this challenge, he returned to his sculptural roots and returned to key points along the path of the Romani deportation and installed engraved brass plates into the ground.

Taking matters into one's own hands and making a bold gesture in the public space was considered to be an essential component to making sure these narratives were not forgotten. Even so, Gunter Demnig found during his performative work tracing the *road to deportation* that forgetting was endemic in the city of Cologne concerning the plight of the Romani people. Even when confronted with this history of abuse by witnessing his work, people were doubtful of whether it applied to them and their immediate surroundings.

The culminating event in this regard for Demnig during this first effort was his encounter with a local elderly woman who approached him while installing one of his commemorative plates on the streets of Cologne. Despite what one might expect, she was supportive of his efforts and even praised his determination in pursuing the narrative of the Romani deportation. However, she argued, she was not sure if he was in the right neighborhood and not even certain if there had ever been Romani peoples living in her area.

The force of this admission of ignorance, albeit perhaps unintentional, imprinted itself so deeply on Demnig that he made it the crux of his future work to find a strategy of memorialization that would ensure people knew exactly the locations of the individuals who had suffered at the hands of Nazi Fascism whose memory he sought to honor.⁴⁹

49. Demnig, Gunter. Stumble Blocks, Tracks, and Paths. Public Lecture at TEDx Koeln, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLuGXu3GIzI>.



Gunter Demnig. *First Stolperstein*, featuring text of Heinrich Himmler's "Auschwitz Decree".
Installed 16 December 1992 in front of Cologne City Hall.

5.4 The First Stone

In 1992 Gunter Demnig became even more deeply committed to raising awareness of the deportation and extermination of the Romani peoples at the hands of the Nazi's. He thus made it the central element of his first sculpture which would lead to the establishment of one of the most prolific and effective Countermonuments in history. Demnig sought a way in which he could draw attention to the fact that the Romani community of people had been a target of sustained racial profiling during and even before the advent of full-fledged Fascist rule.

During the Weimar Republic there had been an office of police set up to deal specifically with "gypsies" as members of the Romani communities were called. They were even required by law to register with the authorities in order to regulate and monitor their activities. This office was later expanded under the Nazi Reich Criminal Police and renamed "The Central Office of the Reich to Combat the Gypsy Plague."

By December of 1942, this attitude of discrimination against Romani peoples had become de facto policy within the Nazi government. And in order to formalize it in legal terms and make clear how the community would be dealt with in the future, Heinrich Himmler issued his so-called "Auschwitz Decree" which stated unequivocally that the Romani peoples were to be exterminated in that same fashion as the Jewish peoples.

The original copy of the decree has been lost but exists as a copy in the records of the Reich Criminal Police (RKPA) and reads as follows:

*By decree of the Reichsführer SS as of 16.12.42 – Tgb. Nr. I 2652/42 Ad./RF/V. – Gypsie bastards, Rom-Gypsies and people belonging to clans of Balkan origin with non-German blood are to be selected according to certain guidelines and to be admitted to a concentration camp by an action of a few weeks' duration. This group of persons will henceforth be called 'gypsie persons'. The admission will occur by family, regardless of their degree of bastardism, to the concentration camp (gypsie camp) of Auschwitz.*⁵⁰

Anticipating the coming Fiftieth anniversary of the decree in December of 1992, Demnig devised a plan to create an ingeniously subversive and yet powerful sculptural element that could be installed in the public space in such a way as to make the viewer stop and look closer or to “stumble” in their path over an otherwise forgotten and problematic history. Thus the first *Stolperstein* was laid.

This was accomplished by the unassuming (and unauthorized) removal of a simple street stone from the public sidewalk in front of the Cologne City Hall and replacing it with a new stone capped by a copper plate with engraved text.

For this first action, Demnig chose to engrave the copper plate with the first lines of Himmler's so-called Auschwitz Decree decree that the Romani people be deported to Auschwitz for extermination. This text was chosen by Demnig as he was also concerned at the time with implicating the German government in its collective responsibility for making the Romani people whole again.

With this installation of the first *Stolperstein*, Demnig specifically wished to raise awareness of the ongoing debate at that time over whether to grant the right of residence in Germany to Romani who were forced to flee Yugoslavia during the war. There had been a great deal of resistance and debate concerning the legalities of how exactly to categorize the Romani people and their treatment under the Nazis.

50. Complete text of the quick letter of 29 January 1943 as documented in: Die Verfolgung Der Sinti Und Roma in Hessen Zwischen 1870 Und 1950. Engbring-Romang, Udo. 1st ed. Brandes & Apsel, 2001. pp. 342-347. The original source z. B. Institute of Contemporary History, Munich, under the signature Dc 17.02, Bl. 322-327.

After the war, it had been argued by West Germany that the Romani were not similar to Jewish victims of the Nazis and were therefore not entitled to similar rights of compensation. There was an attempt to attribute the categorization of Romani to a specific subset of the Nazi's classifications known as "asocial" groups.

In fact, this effort was seen by Demnig as being a cynical misuse of the Nazi's own prejudiced classification systems simply for reasons of West Germany seeking to avoid costs of further compensation schemes involving groups not included in the officially acknowledged victims.⁵¹

By highlighting the specific text of Himmler's decree on the first Stolperstein and placing it at the doorstep of city hall, Demnig was essentially challenging this position at the very seat of the Cologne government. In doing so, he was calling for reparations and acknowledgement of the racially motivated deportation and murder of the thousands of Romani victims of Fascist policies in Cologne during the war.

5.5 The Stolperstein Project

Following these first experimental actions, Gunter Demnig began to consider how he could further refine and expand his work to memorialize the range of victims of Fascism beyond the Romani community of Cologne. In 1993, he published a statement of his expanded concept during the project *Größenwahn – Kunstprojekte für Europa*. In this stunningly bold action he proposed extending the project to include all victims of Nazi oppression regardless of race, color, creed, nationality or sexual orientation.⁵²

In 1994, he created 250 sculptures similar in appearance to the stone placed in front of City Hall Cologne. These each were inscribed with the individual names of 250 Romani and Sinti victims of Nazi oppression at the suggestion of the priest of St. Anthony's Church in Cologne, Kurt Pick to Gunter Demnig.

51. Janjevic, Darko. "Remembering Himmler's 'Auschwitz Decree' to Exterminate Roma and Sinti." Deutsche Welle News, June 12, 2017. <https://www.dw.com/en/remembering-himmlers-auschwitz-decree-to-exterminate-roma-and-sinti/a-41824830>.

52. Demnig, Gunter. "Biography: Gunter Demnig - Artist." Stolperstein. Accessed December 19, 2019. <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/biography/>.

The church was active in supporting causes of “sharing a common commitment to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation” as a member of the Cross of Nails church community which was formed after the destruction of the Coventry Cathedral in England by German carpet bombing during the Second World War.⁵³

These original 250 personalized stones were exhibited at St. Anthony’s Church to a largely positive reaction by the surviving family members of the victims. This led Gunter Demnig to consider further actions as he had only assumed that this would be a single exhibition of these stones. Further actions followed such as an unauthorized installation of stones in Kreuzberg in Berlin in 1996 which was later authorized by the city government after the project gained notoriety.

In a deeply meaningful gesture, Demnig proposed that future Stolperstein should only be installed in front of the last places of residence for the victims and that each stone would memorialize with an engraved text their names, their date of birth, the date they were taken by the Nazi’s, and the date and location of their death.

In this way, Demnig built further on the concept of his first Stolperstein in front of the Cologne City hall, but in this case he was proposing to lay evidence of the fates of all victims of Nazi oppression at the very doorsteps of the German people’s homes.⁵⁴ From the beginning, such a proposal seemed doomed to failure. But as with other examples of Countermonuments, the notion of an improbable undertaking, which at first glance would seem to potentially undermine the monument’s purpose or threaten its very existence, was used as a tool to introduce variable and unpredictable responses from the public. This was essential to implicating them in the functionality of the monument.

At that time in the mid 90’s, only a few short years after the fall of the Berlin wall and the dissolution of the former East German government, Berlin was a hotbed of artistic experiment and the city was quite a unique place since many public areas were freely appropriated by artists without much interference by the city authorities. Many parts of the city were still in a state of disrepair regarding the condition of certain districts and their streets.⁵⁵

53. Schuegraf, Oliver. *The Cross of Nails: Joining in God’s Mission of Reconciliation*. Canterbury Press, 2008. pp. 17-18

54. Scheffer, Ingrid. “Do Tread on Me!” Goethe Institute, August 2008. <http://www.goethe.de/kue/arc/dos/dos/zdk/en78940.htm>.

55. Vasudevan, Alex. “Dramaturgies of Dissent: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin, 1968–.” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 3 (May 2011): 283–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2011.564734>.

Despite these early challenges, the project began to take shape and gain attention and support and in 1996, Demnig installed 55 stones in the Kreuzberg district of the city of Berlin during his participation in the project “Artists Research Auschwitz”. The stones were so understated and subversive in their installation that the project was able to successfully install the 55 stones and received widespread attention despite and perhaps because of the controversial nature of its subject and methods of installation.

Finally, in 2000, after much effort to secure official city approval for his project, Demnig was approved to install 600 stones in the sidewalks of the city where the project first began - Cologne. This was accomplished despite a great deal of difficulty in receiving the official approval, but once it was granted the project began to gain approval in other cities.

5.6 What's In A Name

In naming the project, Demnig was drawn to the word *Stolperstein*, meaning literally “Stumbling Stone”. He felt that the term could work on both a literal and metaphorical level which suggested a deeper meaning beyond that of its original practical application when applied to the uneven cut cobblestones commonly used to pave the sidewalks of European towns.

These pavements are easily assembled and disassembled in order to allow fast repairs and diggings for servicing utilities under the city street. When exposed to the elements of terrestrial forces and impacts of city use, these stones often shift and rise from their position to become uneven and thus catch the foot of an un-expectant passerby, causing them to trip and have to correct their footing.

In a metaphorical sense, Demnig thought of these stones fulfilling a similar function in the mental and psychological consciousness of the public. While people on the street might be caught up in their own thoughts and concerns of getting from point A to point B, it is commonly not in their mind to consider the historical nature of the houses they are passing and the history of the people who lived there in years past.⁵⁶

56. Apel, Linde. “Stumbling Blocks in Germany.” *Rethinking History* 18, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 181–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2013.858448>.

Yet, in the normal day to day consciousness of the passing pedestrian, the Stolperstein disrupts the flow of the hundreds of passing generic street stones and with its reflective copper plate and engraved names and dates of birth and death and final resting places of murder, death, escape, deportation and redemption, calls out to the viewer of things with much more import than their trip to the store perhaps.

In this way, the Stolperstein trips the person in their mind and interjects into the deepest recesses of their consciousness the memory of exactly what has preceded their own existence and the threat of its return if not watchfully remembered. It is a cold heart that does not feel impacted by the thought of the persons behind these stones and the imagined scenes of their forced removal by Nazi troops across the very threshold that the person is now passing by in their rush through the day.

This is the way that Gunter Demnig wished to stop people in their tracks and have them “trip” over the memory of the individuals who suffered and died under the abuses of the fascist Nazi regime.

Yet, even though this was the extent to which Gunter Demnig himself conceptualized the reasons for calling the project Stolperstein, there were other related ideas that people began to attach to the name. The following example illustrates just one way in which Countermonuments can trigger and dovetail with expanded impressions and alternate interpretations of their meaning.

The first alternate interpretation of the Stolperstein name that people brought to the discussion was that it could possibly reference an anti-semitic expression common in Nazi Germany. The saying was uttered when one tripped over a street stone and was roughly translated “A Jew must be buried here.”⁵⁷ Gunter Demnig has himself refuted very strongly that he was considering this saying in any way.

Yet, this is something that is also interesting about Countermonuments is that they have a way of “getting away” from the author or creator and allowing a broader and more flexible association with their audience - almost like a rebellious child taking on their own identity under the guiding impetus of their original parental programming. There is nothing that can be done to contain the potential scope or interpretation of such a Countermonument is set in motion - it becomes a canvas that the public projects and reflects upon.

57. Bernstein, Dr. Reiner. “Initiative Stolpersteine Für München.” Stolpersteine-Muenchen, June 16, 2004. <http://alt.stolpersteine-muenchen.de/Archiv/Docu/docu-040616-sitzg.htm>.



Re-laying the Original Stolperstein. Köln, Germany. 2013.

5.7 Ground As Countermonument

Knowingly or otherwise, Demnig was engaging in activities very similar to his contemporaries working in what would later be understood to be a Countermonumental style. Much in the same way that Shalev-Gerz's *Monument Against Fascism* and Hoheisel's *Ashrott Fountain* directly address the actual earthly ground they were situated upon, so Demnig sank his own monument directly into the ground and made it the canvas that viewers would be engaged with when viewing his work.

Demnig originally had considered placing plaques on the exterior walls of homes where former victims of Nazi oppression had lived. However, many such homes were no longer owned by the same owner as they had been before the war. And many property owners balked at the prospect - some even considering that it would lower property values.

Demnig therefore ingeniously shifted his idea from placing plaques on private residences to placing stones in public sidewalks. Not only would this strategy avoid the need for permission from private property owners, it would also implicate once again the entire civic power structure in the form of receiving approval from City Hall for the placement of the stones.

One of the main requirements of the *Stolperstein* project that any interested party could contribute the necessary cost of €120 to produce the *Stolperstein*, conduct the appropriate research into the German State archives to confirm the details of the victim, and to seek approval for placement of stones directly in the public sidewalk from the local authorities.

In this way, the monuments became a part of the local neighborhood and the landscape of the street itself. This is also a major characteristic of early Countermonuments - that they sought to become a part of people's daily lives as opposed to standing apart from them and thus being more easily dismissed and forgotten or having no relevance to the present day.

By placing the Stolperstein in the sidewalk, Demnig had discovered a way of engaging people even in their most intimate and seemingly singular moments. What better time to remind someone of the personal and intimate history of a long-lost civilian to the Nazi terror than when they had lowered their eyes to the ground to avoid eye contact with a passerby or to navigate the uneven surface of such sidewalks in Germany that are often composed of thousands of cut square stones which often are uneven and need careful viewing to navigate.⁵⁸

An additional effective characteristic of the Stolperstein as a Countermonument is that it requires viewer participation at all levels - even in the simple act of viewing. Because the stones are installed in the ground and due to the reflective and sometimes burnished or even tarnished nature of the surface of the copper plate, one must bend over to read them and discern the details of the individual victim's history. This requires the act of stopping, bowing the head, and bending forward. Demnig specifically speak of this as a way of requiring the viewer to "bow" before the monument and before the memory of the victim themselves.⁵⁹

In addition, using copper plate to cover the surface of the top of the stone for engraving also allowed a unique way for people to interact with the stones - even if they never stopped to look at them. By Demnig's own admission, he felt that the use of copper would allow the stones to be "polished" by the feet of people walking on them. In this way, even if the viewer was not engaged, they would still contribute unknowingly to the success of the project in that they would shine the stone for the next person who perhaps would stop to consider the individual history which it represented.⁶⁰

58. Bendix, Regina F. "Memorial Interventions: Negotiating Paths through Complicated Pasts." *Folklore* 130, no. 3 (July 3, 2019): 221–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.2019.1585718>.

59. Scheffer, Ingrid. "Do Tread on Me!" Goethe Institute, August 2008. <http://www.goethe.de/kue/arc/dos/dos/zdk/en78940.htm>.

60. Stevens, Quentin, and Mirjana Ristic. "Memories Come to the Surface: Pavement Memorials in Urban Public Spaces." *Journal of Urban Design* 20, no. 2 (March 15, 2015): 273–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2015.1009010>.

At the start of the Stolperstein project, Demnig himself would cut, hammer, engrave and place every stone personally. As the project expanded he realized he would need help to keep up with the thousands of requests that came pouring into his studio. Yet, instead of subcontracting the work to a factory or automated process, in 2005 he sought out the help of a fellow German sculptor and craftsmen in the person of Michael Friedrichs-Friedländer.

To this day, each of the stones are handcrafted and engraved by Friedländer in his studio in the northeast suburban district of Berlin. His tools consist of hammer and stamps for engraving and he works six days a week for a total of at least 50 hours per week in order to keep up with the steady stream of requests for Stolperstein. As of the date of this writing, Friedländer had completed the engraving and preparation of over 63,000 Stolperstein.

This humble partnership has allowed Gunter Demnig to continue to conduct the installation of Stolperstein in cities and towns across Europe. Again, in a clear testament to the individualized nature of this decentralized Countermonument.



Workbench for the Engraving of Stolperstein. Berlin, Germany. 2017.

5.8 Controversy as Countermonument

While the fact that Stolperstein were installed in the ground solved a number of logistical and creative problems, it also gave rise to a number of controversial elements which would help to define the project even further conceptually. By 2004 thousands of Stolperstein had been installed in cities all over Germany and the project was being proposed in even more cities. It was in this year however, that some of the more controversial elements of the project were challenged in two major German cities.

The first city where the project faced opposition was in Munich. Unlike many other cities, where the Jewish community had welcomed the project and supported its installation, Munich displayed a very different response. In response to the work being placed in the ground and the fact that people might step on the stones themselves, there was a resistance to allowing installations of Stolperstein.

Gunter Demnig himself addressed the concerns of people who felt that walking on the Stolperstein was disrespectful. He has said very clearly that he does not consider the Stolperstein to be gravestones and gives the very logical explanation of this position by noting the fact that there are no people buried beneath them.

Demnig has further explained that “even if they were gravestones, it would not be a sign of disrespect to walk on them.”⁶¹ This is further supported by his own research into the traditions of Jewish funerary traditions. In his work with the Museum of Sepulchral Culture in Kassel, Germany, Demnig discovered historical traditions which suggested that the act of walking on a grave indicated respect for the dead. The idea being that as more and more people come into contact with a grave site, the more the memory of the individual is kept alive and honored.

The most influential figures in this response were the mayor of Munich, Christian Ude and the president of the Jewish Community of Munich, Charlotte Knobloch. While they appreciated the underlying sentiment of memorializing victims of the Holocaust and other groups of peoples oppressed by the Nazis, they at the same time felt that the method of installation was not respectful.

61. Demnig, Gunter. “Why Are Stolperstein Installed In the Ground?” Stolperstein. Accessed December 19, 2019. <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/faq/>.

In response, many members of the Jewish community disagreed and supported the project including the vice-president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Dr. Salomon Korn. Even so the mayor of Munich took the middle position that there were already plenty of Jewish memorials in town and that the need for another was not so great as to risk the offense of anyone in the Jewish community.

For this reason, no Stolperstein have yet been installed in the streets of Munich. However, in 2019, the city began to promote and approve the installation of brass plaques on the outer walls of private residences to commemorate, in the same way as Stolperstein, the victims who had once lived there.⁶²

5.9 Embracing Resistance

Controversies surrounding the Stolperstein are a perfect example of a Countermonument functioning in multiple ways for multiple people. The profound nature of the controversies and their relation to the Countermonumental tendency to embrace the influences of controversy and enfold them into the work itself.

The conclusion of this controversy in Munich was to see his original concept of placing plaques on private houses adopted voluntarily. Now in Munich, private property owners themselves have agreed, in response to their distaste for the Stolperstein, to place brass plaques on their own houses commemorating the victims of Nazi oppression.

One must here consider and appreciate the stunning fact that Gunter Demnig's first idea was to place brass plaques on the walls of private homes in Cologne. This original controversy and resistance by private home-owners to his first idea of placing markers on private residences led Gunter Demnig to revise the form of his monuments to allow them to be placed in public sidewalks. In this way, he worked around and incorporated the resistance of a hostile audience into his work to create a new and better solution.

In this example we can see in a dramatic way, how Countermonumental strategies can transform the sometimes chaotic public responses that they engender and create a space for evolution and change from their original conception.

62. Ziv, Stav. "Munich to Continue Ban of Stumbling Stone Holocaust Memorials." *Newsweek*, July 29, 2015. <https://www.newsweek.com/munich-continue-ban-stumbling-stone-holocaust-memorials-358176>.

While this strategy may seem like a risk at the beginning of the creative process, the more one studies this way of working, the more one realizes that it is the very nature of trusting the openness of an unpredictable process which allows the Countermonumental work to settle into a form that reflects all of the forces which have shaped the work.⁶³

5.10 Returning Responsibility for Remembrance to the Viewer

As in other examples of early Countermonuments we have seen that returning responsibility for remembering to the viewer was a main consideration in the minds of their creators. This is no less the case with Gunter Demnig and the Stolperstein project. In a literal way, the participants who engage with the process from the beginning are willing participants who contact Demnig in order to sponsor a Stolperstein. This can be one individual or a group of people with direct connection to a victim or simply interested parties who wish to support the project.

Regardless of their background or association with the victim they are required to conduct the necessary research to determine the facts of the persons treatment at the hands of the Nazi's. This is usually accomplished by requiring these participants to return to the German Archives to locate evidence of the victims. These records form what is referred to as the "Judenkartei" (Jews register) and began during the 1939 German census which was initiated by the Nazi government.⁶⁴

In this way participants must review by hand the meticulous records which were kept by the Nazis to document their deportation and extermination of minority groups. The experience of researching a victim to be memorialized by a Stolperstein leaves its own imprint on the sponsors and many recount that the experience of visiting these archives was itself a devastating experience due to the sheer number of records and all the individual victims that they represent.⁶⁵

63. Stevens, Quentin, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley. "Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic." *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 6 (December 2012): 951–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2012.746035>.

64. Reich Genealogy Office. "1939 German Minority Census." *Tracing the Past*. Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://www.tracingthepast.org/mappingthelives#gmc>.

65. Grimstad, Kirsten. "Still Struggling with German History: W.G. Sebald, Gunter Demnig and Activist Memory Workers in Berlin Today." *Holocaust Studies* 25, no. 1–2 (April 3, 2019): 101–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1472877>.

In a first-hand account by Norbert Wollschläger, one organizing member of a group of neighbors in Berlin who researched the placement of Stolperstein in the sidewalk in front of the main door of their house, he expresses the impact of the research experience as being an integral part of the monument itself. “We would go in pairs to the archives,” says Wollschläger. “It really knocks it out of you.” The Nazis kept meticulous records, he says. “Right down to the last silver spoon a victim left behind.”⁶⁶



Stolperstein Cleaning Initiative. Berlin, Germany. 2015

5.13 Vandalism and Restoration as Countermonument

In the same way as the Shalev-Gerz Monument Against Fascism invited the public to write any response they wished on its surface, so the Stolperstein present themselves without defense to the public. These works are completely vulnerable - not only to the effects of common weathering but also to intentional vandalism.

Even these telling acts of still-buried aggression are given the opportunity to come through in the participant. These acts are a part of the performative and transformative reflecting nature of the Countermonument for its audience. At the same time these actions provide an opening for acts of honesty, resolution, healing, and care.

66. Apperly, Eliza. “‘Stumbling Stones’: A Different Vision of Holocaust Remembrance.” *The Guardian*, February 18, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance>.

Just days after any vandalism is reported, groups of concerned citizens gather to clean and polish the vandalized stones. In this way also, Gunter Demnig's Countermonument invites the viewer to take responsibility for their actions or reactions - whether it be positive or negative - and to accept the consequences that arise.

In many regions there have arisen an organized following of people that gather on Remembrance Days to polish and clean the Stolperstein of their neighborhood. These events usually occur on January 27 which is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day as well as on November 9 which is the German Kristallnacht Remembrance Day.

In addressing this fundamental ability of his Countermonumental work to function on more than just the physical level, Gunter Demnig often quotes a schoolchild who once answered a journalist's enquiry as to whether people could actually stumble on a Stolperstein and physically trip. To this question she answered: "You don't trip on a Stolperstein, you stumble with your head and your heart."⁶⁷

67. Demnig, Gunter. "Why the name Stolperstein?" Stolperstein. Accessed December 19, 2019. <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/faq/>.

Section 6.0 / Countermonumental Strategies

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the intention throughout the preceding sections has been to explore the context, history and specific case studies of the early German Countermonuments of the 1980's and 90's. This preliminary research was undertaken in order to more clearly understand the practical artistic strategies that their creators employed in order to expand upon the functions of the traditional Monument.

The following modules of this section (6.0) will present each of the working strategies discovered to be prevalent in the case studies reviewed. The emergence and effectiveness of such strategies in the early German Countermonuments portends the possibility of a reciprocal response in other fields of artistic practice.

The application of these definitive strategies into an expanded creative field beyond public monuments will ultimately be explored in the final sections of this thesis which will feature artworks applying these Countermonumental artistic strategies within the author's artistic practice via documentation and written critique.

In the process of enumerating these characteristics, the following questions have been considered in order to define an area of inquiry and to allow a clearer understanding of the artistic strategies of Countermonuments:

Is the Countermonument interested in self-preservation?

Do Countermonuments represent an inherently anti-Fascistic art form?

What are the methods by which the Countermonument could dis-embody or purposely displace itself?

How do Countermonuments engage with multiple perspectives within a given historical narrative?

In what way are strategies of traditional Monuments redeployed or subverted by Countermonuments?

How did the early Countermonuments challenge notions of public space and territorial claims?

By what means did artists activate an interactive dynamic between the viewer and Countermonument?

Which strategies were used to acknowledge and co-opt the temporal nature of existence?

How were the practices of performance and ritual incorporated into the early Countermonuments?

What attitudes exist in Countermonumental methodology regarding notions of authorship?

6.1 Peripherality

6.1.1 Introduction / Definition

When considering historical methods of establishing the presence of a traditional monument in the public sphere, the issue of *centrality* is paramount. A centralized location permits the most accessible viewing experience of the traditional monument for the greatest number of people. This normally meant establishing an area which was solely set aside in order to erect the monument's structure and delineate the edges of its boundaries.⁶⁸

The early German Countermonuments understood the power of this fundamental technique of *centrality*. And while they also employed it in their work, they did so in order to call it into question. They did this by forming an extended narrative around the *peripherality* - the border areas where the monument experienced the limits of its relevance and its claim on public space and discourse. By drawing the viewer's attention to the *peripheral* spaces which defined the context of the Countermonument, artists were able to reclaim the influence of daily life on the monument.

In a sense, this examination and elevation of boundaries and how they function was one of the most brilliant strategies employed by Countermonuments in order to bring the function of monuments back down to earth. The intention was to ground monuments again in a blended experience not only of their own presence but to increase their relevance and speak more directly to the general population.⁶⁹

The strategy of *peripherality* allowed the early Countermonuments to react dynamically to the world which existed beyond their own monumental territory. In effect, this allowed them to free themselves of singularity and centrality and to carry their presence beyond a prescribed and sanctioned territory and more effectively into the experience and memory of the viewing public.

68. Cudny, Waldemar, and Håkan Appelblad. "Monuments and Their Functions in Urban Public Space." *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, January 3, 2020, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2019.1694976>.

69. Krzyżanowska, Natalia. "The Discourse of Counter-Monuments: Semiotics of Material Commemoration in Contemporary Urban Spaces." *Social Semiotics* 26, no. 5 (October 19, 2016): 465–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2015.1096132>.

6.1.2 Case Study Examples

Regarding the way in which this notion of *peripherality* describes a definitive strategy of Countermonuments, we need only consider the case study mentioned earlier in this thesis concerning the work of Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz known as *The Monument Against Fascism* (1986-93).

The very first element of traditional monuments which the Monument Against Fascism upended was the unquestioned notion of selecting a centralized, officially-sanctioned territory on which to construct the monument.⁷⁰ This was an official public monument, commissioned and sanctioned by the city of Hamburg.

The city initially offered Shalev-Gerz a traditional, green park space in central Hamburg for their monument to be installed, the artists rejected this standard location and instead opted for what they described as “a normal, ugly-ish place.”⁷¹ Indeed, the chosen location was not a platz in front of the local Rathaus or a prominent field in the central city parkland but that of a common outdoor shopping mall in a decidedly working-class suburb of Hamburg across the harbor known as Harburg on the periphery of the city itself.

This is an interesting choice not only because of the practical statement it allowed against sanctioned centrality but also because Walter Benjamin’s *Das Passagen-Werk* essentially put forward the idea that steel and glass architecture of the early twentieth century had created the possibility of the indoor shopping mall.⁷² It is an interesting notion that Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz were also led back around in their decision to place the monument in an outdoor working class shopping mall in Harburg.

By choosing to install their *Monument Against Fascism* in a peripheral way to the accepted central territories (both geographic and political) they signaled a new strategy of artistic display that rejected the historical Fascist aesthetic which represented the very historical power structure which their Countermonument sought to undermine and warn against.⁷³

70. Cudny, Waldemar, and Håkan Appelblad. “Monuments and Their Functions in Urban Public Space.”

71. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000. Pg. 28

72. Benjamin, Walter, and Rolf Tiedemann. *Das Passagen-Werk*.

73. Carter, Nick, and Simon Martin. “The Management and Memory of Fascist Monumental Art in Postwar and Contemporary Italy: The Case of Luigi Montanarini’s Apotheosis of Fascism.” *Journal*

Instead, by embedding their work in a shopping mall in a working class neighborhood, they were creating a space of political experiment where everyday German citizens might explore their own conflicted perspectives on a complicated and painful chapter in their national history.

This bold act of working in a *peripheral* position to the established *centrality* signaled that the speech or voice of these new Countermonuments was to be expressed not only through their physical presence, but equally through the composition of their neighborhoods - specifically the peripheral edges that define the shape and contours of their boundaries.

6.1.3 Theoretical Discourse

The philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin spent a great deal of time musing on this fundamental power of monuments to *centralize* their effects on the viewer - specifically the monumental spaces created by the *passages couverts* of early-twentieth century Paris.

Benjamin saw these new architectural forms of steel and glass remaking such cities as Paris into enclaves which could essentially function as capitalist paradises where the public could conduct commerce immersed and unabated despite conflicting exterior influences such as the weather. Benjamin sums up this power of monumental architecture by observing:

*“Out of the field of experience proper to the threshold evolves the gateway that transforms whoever passes under its arch. The Roman victory arch makes the returning general a conquering hero.”*⁷⁴

Indeed, as Benjamin states, once a viewer crosses into this centralized and highly-controlled area of monumental influence, they essentially enter into a space which exists solely in service to the narrative of the monument. Any other opposing or distracting influences existing outside of these prescribed boundaries are to be left behind and the viewer encouraged to reflect solely on the singular historical perspective put forward in the form of the monument.

of Modern Italian Studies 22, no. 3 (May 27, 2017): 338–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2017.1321933>.

74. Benjamin, Walter, and Rolf Tiedemann. *Das Passagen-Werk*. 1. Aufl. Edition Suhrkamp, 1200 = n.F., 200. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983. S. 1025

In this act of rejecting one of the most unquestioned tenants of public monuments (that they should dominate a central, sanctioned, official space), the early Countermonuments took advantage of exactly what the French art historian Jean-François Chevrier describes in his writings on public and private space in relation to documentary photography. In this work he describes the feeling of intimacy or *closeness* which might be present even within a given public territory.

Much like the public territory with which the early Countermonuments concerned themselves, Chevrier suggests that the territorial nature of documentary photography could also be nuanced in its perception. He differentiated between a sense of personal or close space as defined by the French expression *de proche en proche* (from person to person) and the space which was defined by the greater public view.⁷⁵

Chevrier posited that although the notion of a territory or public space suggests notions of control and limitation, it could also be considered to provide a sense of personal *closeness*. He calls this distinction *territorial intimacy* and gives further suggestions for where these openings may be found when considering public spaces.

In the same way as the artists of the early Countermonuments, Chevrier directs our attention away from the centralized and sanctioned spaces and describes the area along the margins of the territory, where delineated boundaries attempt to separate the monumental territory from its surroundings.

The idea that public space could be reclaimed by a narrative other than that of the dominant political, economic or social powers is nothing new. However, this idea that even within the seemingly restrictive and defined territories once could imbued them with a sense of intimacy, is in some ways a radically expansive notion.

The strategy of working with the *periphery* suggests that even in the most regimented of territories, and without a complete departure from the traditional forms, there may still exist openings for connection, intimacy and expansion.

75. Jean-François Chevrier. "Territorial Intimacy and Public Space." Le Magazine, May 2013. <http://lemagazine.jeudepaume.org/2013/09/jean-francois-chevrier-territorial-intimacy-and-public-space-en/>.

In these places of unsanctioned, yet adjacent territory, the possibility of a transition exists and the question of where the territory ceases to be arises as the prescribed boundaries of the monument dissipate into the rest of the world. Chevrier eloquently summarizes this fundamental Countermonumental notion in his treatise on the characteristics and workings of public space:

*“Territorial intimacy thus comprises this dimension of experience de proche en proche but it is not the intimacy of the private, domestic sphere. It is constituted on the frontiers of public space, in the grey or forsaken zones of the sanctioned territory. This dimension appears to be linked to situations of marginality or exclusion. It characterizes an environment that is other and diverse, and that may be both a reservoir of the picturesque and exotic, and an occasion for social and political experiment.”*⁷⁶

76. Jean-Francois, Chevrier. “Territorial Intimacy and Public Space.”

6.2 Reflectance & Mimesis

6.2.1 Introduction / Definition

The early German Countermonuments were fundamentally concerned with engaging the public not simply through static means. They sought to involve themselves in the personal experience of the viewer in real time. By doing so, an imprint of the Countermonument could potentially reverberate indefinitely in the viewer beyond their present experience and be carried forward into their lives.⁷⁷

The strategy of *reflectance* allowed Countermonuments to expand their functionality on the physical and psychological level when interacting with the viewer. Within the function of this strategy, the form of the Countermonument became a mirror in which the viewer could plainly see themselves as being an integral part in the historical narrative by activating the Countermonument's functions. In addition, the viewer could mirror the Countermonument back to itself by influencing its appearance in the public space.

This concern with instigating a dialogic, personal and lasting dialogue between the viewer and the monument inspired the artists of the early Countermonuments to develop more interactive and even confrontational strategies than those of traditional monuments. This was accomplished by arranging for situations that would create opportunities for a close physical interaction with the Countermonument.⁷⁸

In this way the monument and the viewer would share traces of their meeting that would affect and fundamentally change them both. These strategies also recognized the agency of the viewer in the process and made it possible for them to leave their own mark on the monument. In some cases this had the effect of fundamentally altering the Countermonument as well as the viewer through physical as well as mental mark-making.

77. Varea, Roberto Gutiérrez. "Sites of Transfer." *Peace Review* 22, no. 3 (August 20, 2010): 227–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2010.502056>.

78. Niven, Bill. "From Countermonument to Combimemorial: Developments in German Memorialization." *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 6, no. 1 (February 2013): 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1752627212Z.0000000006>.

6.2.2 Case Study Examples

An example of employing this strategy of *reflectance* is expressed perfectly in the Monument Against Fascism. This was accomplished by installing soft lead plates on the surface of the monument and encouraging viewers to inscribe their names with steel styluses. The citizens of Harburg were thus invited to not only take part not only in the passive viewing of a monument but to also involve themselves its evolution and dissemination through their own actions.

Although this strategy eventually led to a wide range of mark-making beyond simple names on the monument, even to the negative level of neo-fascist graffiti, the artists Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz decided to allow this development to continue and thus without intentionally planning to do so, created a mirroring effect in the work. This resulted in a *reflectance* of the current state of attitudes toward Fascism in this interaction between their Countermonument and the German public.⁷⁹

In the case of the Stolperstein Countermonuments this use of the strategy of *reflectance* was even more subtle, yet decidedly intentional, as evidenced in the decision of Gunter Demnig to use copper plate as the material with which the stones were to be surfaced and inscribed. This allowed for the stones to go through cycles of being tarnished and dulled by the weather and the dust and dirt of the sidewalks in which they were embedded.⁸⁰

This choice of material which responded to its surroundings and the effects of deterioration inherent in its placement at ground level created a potential for a unique interaction between the public and the Countermonument. This weathering of the surface could be counteracted by groups of concerned citizens who organized days for the cleaning and polishing of the stones and in this way the Countermonuments could physically be influenced by the viewers and the viewers influenced in turn through their remembrance of the victim of the Holocaust which each stone represented.

79. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000. Pg. 35

80. Grimstad, Kirsten. "Still Struggling with German History: W.G. Sebald, Gunter Demnig and Activist Memory Workers in Berlin Today." *Holocaust Studies* 25, no. 1–2 (April 3, 2019): 101–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1472877>.

Yet, even those people passing over the Stolperstein who did not notice them, those who chose to ignore them and even those who attempted to disrespect them intentionally by walking on them would still be participating in a strategy of *reflectance*. This was accomplished by the copper surface being polished from the abrasive effect of the soles of their shoes and thus keeping the surface of the Stolperstein shiny and literally reflective of light and its surroundings.

Gunter Demnig intentionally chose copper plate as his material for just such a reason and thus successfully turned what could have been considered a failure for a traditional monument (non-acknowledgement by viewers) into an integral part of the reflective qualities of the Stolperstein.⁸¹

6.2.3 Theoretical Discourse

In both of these examples we see a strategy at play which bears similarities to the fundamental and continually evolving philosophical question of how a narrative is represented to the public. This involves the process of *mimesis* or translating the narrative through a given medium and thus reflecting it to the public. In this case we may consider the Countermonument to function as such a medium.

This is an ancient conceptual exercise dating back to the great Greek philosophers and first discussed by Plato in his seminal work *Republic*. However, in Plato's case, he identified the term *mimesis* to describe the role of an actor or actress imitating a character in order to tell a story. The word is rooted in the Greek word *mimos* meaning *imitator*.⁸²

In Plato's time, the main method of confronting the public with the memory of cultural history was through the theatrical retelling of the epic poems and myths. As a matter of course these depictions were colored with the embellishments and exaggerations of the actors and the events they sought to memorialize.

In the estimation of Plato, this theatrical embellishment represented an *imitation* of life. He saw this as confusing the real experience of the historical narrative with its retelling through the actor's imitative play. As a result, he felt this represented a disservice to the public in terms of reflecting an accurate narrative.

81. Demnig, Gunter. "Why Are Stolperstein Installed In the Ground?" Stolperstein. Accessed December 19, 2019. <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/faq/>.

82. Cambridge essential English dictionary. (2011). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This led Plato to develop a counterpoint to the idea of *mimesis* which was the concept of *diegesis*. This alternate perspective represented the possibility of a narrative being factually and dispassionately communicated by a narrator and not by the actors themselves.⁸³ In this sense, the idea was that of the narrator reflecting the story to an audience not as an imitation of a character but as themselves. *Diegesis* therefore provided a foil to the imitative function of the actor in a play who seeks to emulate a character other than themselves in order to dramatize and activate the narrative for the viewer.

Countermonuments once again display a position in contrast to the traditional interpretation of such established systems. In the case of these traditional ancient narrative strategies of *mimesis* and *diegesis*, Countermonuments expand the dialogue around them. They do something which goes beyond the dichotomy of Plato's scenario of presenting a historical narrative. Countermonuments consider the viewing public to have an equal amount of agency and responsibility for determining the success or failure of the historical narrative and its accuracy.

One way in which Countermonuments do this is to frequently leave gaps in the narrative which can only be filled in with the participation of viewing public.⁸⁴ The audience in this case is no longer relegated to a non-participatory mass of people but become an integral part of the function of the Countermonument itself. We can see this at work in the case of the Monument Against Fascism's mark-making and the Stolperstein's polishing.

If it is true as Plato says that *mimesis* is the performative secondary imitation of reality and must therefore be clarified by the act of first person narration then Countermonuments have re-claimed a space in which *mimesis* fulfills the purpose of engaging the viewer on a visceral and physical level in order to activate their participation. This is in contrast to relying on the somewhat *diegetic* function of the traditional monument to narrate the details of historical events without allowing the viewer a voice in the process.⁸⁵

83. Plato, G. R. F. Ferrari, and Tom Griffith. *The Republic*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Book III.

84. Kendrick, Lynne. "Mimesis and Remembrance." *Performance Research* 17, no. 3 (June 2012): 109–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2012.696871>.

85. Rasmussen, Bjørn. "Beyond Imitation and Representation: Extended Comprehension of Mimesis in Drama Education." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 13, no. 3 (November 2008): 307–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569780802410673>.

Yet at the same time that Countermonuments take advantage of the *mimetic*, they do so not to the exclusion of the *diegetic*. On the contrary, they also present the possibility of the *diegetic* perspective to their audience by offering the viewer a pathway to accepting the responsibility of filling the role of the narrator.

This is accomplished by the viewer becoming an integral part of the Countermonument as themselves - not as an actor retelling a story or imitating a character - but as participants in the success or failure, the expansion or contraction of the narrative which a Countermonument addresses. In this sense the viewer has become the very real presence of the narrative as it exists in the present time.

Through this acknowledgement of the audience and the role they play, the Countermonument highlights their own power to shape history in the present by simply accepting the position of the real-time narrator of the next stage of development in the ongoing narrative of history.⁸⁶

86. Auerbach, Erich, and Willard R. Trask. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. 1st Princeton Classics ed., 50th anniversary ed. Princeton Classics. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013. Pg. 554

6.3 Subterranean

6.3.1 Introduction / Definition

The desire to establish a connection with the earth and the landscape in the case of most traditional monuments is often pursued primarily to the extent necessary to sufficiently anchor the physical structure of the monument in the ground.

The actual physical ground on which a monument is constructed is directly related to the metaphorical ground on which the historical premise of the monument also rests. Both of these “grounds” can be seen as essential to the functionality of traditional monuments.

Typically, the monument needs sufficient grounding in the earth to remain solid and preserve its presence over time. While many traditional monuments interact with the earth in this way, the main attention and relevance is given to the upper portions of the physical monument structure that exists above the ground in the landscape.⁸⁷

Countermonuments, however, consider the ground as an integral part of the memorial and utilize it in ways uncommon to traditional monuments. They engage the earth as a main subject in the narrative of the Countermonument - not simply a foundation to be built upon or claimed in a territorial sense. This strategy brings the viewer back into an experience of their own body in relation to the ground on which a specific Countermonument exists.⁸⁸

Not only to Countermonuments draw attention to the terrain of the territories they traverse, they even seek to delve beneath its surface and create an experience of the subsurface. This unique *subterranean* strategy of Countermonuments makes use of deeply meaningful traditions associated with the earth itself. Endeavors below the surface of the earth speak to some of the most fundamental processes of human civilization.

When one considers practices such as mining, agriculture, and burial traditions where the earth is the main context, it becomes obvious why the artists of the early Countermonuments chose to leverage the meaningful heritage of working with and beneath the earth itself.

87. Finlayson, Bill, and Samantha Dennis. “Landscape, Archaeology and Heritage.” *Levant* 34, no. 1 (January 2002): 219–27. <https://doi.org/10.1179/lev.2002.34.1.219>.

88. Children, George. “Interpreting Landscapes: Geologies, Topographies, Identities.” *Time and Mind* 6, no. 2 (January 2013): 249–53. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175169713X13589680082055>.

Through this elevation of importance of the ground on which they exist, Countermonuments once again take a traditional element of traditional monuments and expand the dialogue surrounding it by raising its importance in the memorial function.⁸⁹

The *subterranean* strategy of early Countermonuments references most closely the ability of the earth to facilitate decomposition and at the same time to recompose raw materials in order to renew and return them to the cycle of life - a cycle often referred to in spiritual traditions as a process of remembering and forgetting.

The earth holds the remains of all things and bears the remnants of all that has passed over its surface. The earth also serves as a rich source to speak about memory and the notion of traces in time. “Old as dirt” is a common colloquial expression in the English language which encapsulates this fact well - there is nothing as timeless as dust. It is what we come from and what we return to in the end.⁹⁰

Therefore, we see that the raw material of earth itself is an extremely powerful medium to work with when considering the ways in which a Countermonument might use it to speak about the passing of time and the endless march of history.

6.3.2 Case Study Examples

The importance of leveraging the creative and metaphorical possibilities of the earth was a central tool in forming the impact and defining the intention of each early German Countermonument. We can see this *subterranean* strategy emerging in a number of ways in order to facilitate a memorable imprint on the viewing public.

In the case of the Monument Against Fascism, the role of the earth serving as a support for the traditional form of the obelisk was completely reversed when the ultimate fate of the 12 meter tall column was to actually be lowered into the earth itself progressively over the course of five years. Now, instead of functioning as a foundation for supporting the column’s solidity over indefinite time, the earth became a tomb to ensconce the column within - a device of subterfuge used to create an effective absence of its form.

89. Krzyżanowska, Natalia. “The Discourse of Counter-Monuments: Semiotics of Material Commemoration in Contemporary Urban Spaces.” *Social Semiotics* 26, no. 5 (October 19, 2016): 465–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2015.1096132>.

90. Toland, Alexandra R. “Dirt Dialogues – An Exercise in Transdisciplinary Integration †.” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 44–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2016.1171582>.

While this method obviously had the effect of nullifying the dominant function of a traditional column monument, it also implicated the ground of Germany itself as a character in the narrative of the Monument Against Fascism - a history which was specifically referenced to implicate a specific metaphorical trope in the history of Fascism in Germany.⁹¹

In addition to the literal interpretations of the term *subterranean* - the ways in which the use of the physical earth can be applied to Countermonuments - there is also the consideration of how this strategy comes into play from a metaphorical and conceptual perspective.

Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz not only employed *subterranean* strategies in a physical way, but saw this as a possible strategy to be applied in a more *subversive* manner related to their critique of German history. They accomplished this by considering their Countermonument's descent into the ground not only as a physical performance of the monument, but also as a metaphorical act of condemnation.

This intention was outlined personally by Jochen Gerz himself when, during a public talk discussing *Gegen-denkmal*, he employed the metaphor of a *knife in the back* to describe his feelings concerning the ritual function of lowering the Monument Against Fascism into the earth of the City of Hamburg - and thus the metaphorical earth of the Nazi Fatherland⁹².

In his estimation, the lowering of the column of the Monument Against Fascism into the earth could be seen as a determined and even violent condemnation of Fascism and the country in which its most deadly forms of repression were realized.

Specifically, this idea referred to a theory of blame within the German cultural narrative immediately following the defeat of Germany in 1918 at the conclusion of the First World War. This theory purported that the German army (and those fighting at the front such as a young Hitler himself) had been *stabbed in the back* and betrayed by the imagined traitors of politicians and a war-weary population at home. The implication followed that the German army would have been victorious if politicians and civilians had not ended the war and negotiated peace.⁹³

91. Buta, Cristina, and Charles Esche. "Anti-Fascism: The Missing Monuments." *Third Text* 33, no. 3 (May 4, 2019): 431–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1663680>.

92. Gerz, Jochen. "Gegen-Denkmal: Conference on Art and the Holocaust." Evangelischen Akademie Loccum, Germany., May 20, 1989.

93. "New 'Stab in the Back' Propaganda." *Patterns of Prejudice* 17, no. 2 (April 1983): 38–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.1985.9969703>.

In referencing this metaphorical area of the *subterranean* and commonly unexplored history of German Fascism, Jochen Gerz references one of the especially powerful mythologies whose origins arose from the era of World War I and was later appropriated and perpetuated by Hitler and the Nazis to justify their own disregard for the settlement and non-aggression agreements made after the First World War such as the Treaty of Versailles.

This slippery slope of insincere logic eventually led to their rise to power and subsequent hi-jacking of the German government. In the end, this theory made it possible for the Nazis to justify their first incursions into neighboring countries to establish a *Lebensraum* or *living room* for the German nation.⁹⁴ In this metaphor, Jochen Gerz found fertile ground for his own *subterranean* strategy for calling this dangerous and deadly argument of German Fascism to account.

6.3.3 Theoretical Discourse

In the case of Gunter Demnig's Stolperstein Countermonuments, we see that the ground itself is the sole workspace which concerns the artist. Demnig's stone markers are installed in the earth and placed with their tops level to the surface of the sidewalk. This has the effect of making them a topographical part of the earth itself and fusing them with the experience of the street in order to effect the impression of memory on any unsuspecting passersby.

The Stolperstein also bring to this discussion a further example of *subversiveness* as an element in considering the *subterranean* strategy. While the early German Countermonuments certainly made use of the subterranean in terms of working beneath the surface of the earth, they also employed *subversiveness* in terms of how they presented themselves to the viewing public. Instead of claiming the obvious and most-easily noticed ground - they took the extreme opposite position and preferred lower-profile locations such as shopping malls and sidewalks that allowed more for the element of surprise.

94. Giaccaria, Paolo, and Claudio Minca. "Life in Space, Space in Life: Nazi Topographies, Geographical Imaginations, and Lebensraum." *Holocaust Studies* 22, no. 2-3 (July 2, 2016): 151-71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2016.1148876>.

In all of the early Countermonuments, and specifically in the case of the Stolperstein, we see that the effect of this strategy created a moment of levity and recognition in the viewer. Gunter Demnig acknowledged this directly by choosing to name these Countermonuments as *Stolperstein* - or stumbling blocks.⁹⁵ The intention therefore, is to interrupt the normal flow of the viewers experience.

These Countermonuments were designed to displace the viewer from their daily lives and infuse their thinking with a momentary impression of the depths of history. This moment had the effect of forcing viewers to plumb the deep fathoms of *subterranean* history beneath their feet. In referencing this strategic ground, Countermonuments thus created a direct connection between the viewer's present experience and their consideration of memory and the past.

95. Demnig, Gunter. "Why the name Stolperstein?" Stolperstein. Accessed December 19, 2019. <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/faq/>.

6.4 Impermanence

6.4.1 Introduction / Definition

One paradoxical trait of traditional monuments which characterizes their nature best is the conceit of unending *perpetuity*. Most traditional monuments, especially in the case of funerary and war memorials, desire to extend the memory of a person or event indefinitely led the creators of those monuments to attempt an obvious antithetical position to decay and decomposition. Yet, even the greatest of these *perpetual* monuments was still the susceptibility to ravages of war, weather and neglect.

In attempting to create an impression of timelessness, therefore, traditional monuments took great pains to do all they could to not only give the impression of eternal presence but to physically attempt to create works that would withstand the effects of time. Working in stone was the most common medium chosen by traditional monuments for this very reason.

The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics as stated by the theoretical physicist Max Planck states that “every process occurring in nature proceeds in the sense in which the sum of the entropies of all bodies taking part in the process is increased.”⁹⁶ A simplified way of imagining the implications of this statement is that all things, given enough time, erode, degrade and eventually come apart.

In approaching the problem of commemorating the effects of Fascism in the history of Germany, the artists of the early German Countermonuments were strongly aware of this paradox within the strategies of traditional monuments. This attitude of strength and longevity could be seen most clearly expressed in the Fascist monuments erected during the years following the First World War in Italy and by the Nazi regime in Germany during the Second World War.

Hitler’s plan for a *1,000 year Reich* included plans to remake Berlin as a world capital with neo-Roman style buildings meant to last indefinitely through future history in a Fascist fever-dream of *perpetuity*.⁹⁷

96. Planck, M. (1897/1903). *Treatise on Thermodynamics*, translated by A. Ogg, Longmans Green, London, p. 100.

97. Kaplan, Brett Ashley>. “‘Aesthetic Pollution’: The Paradox of Remembering and Forgetting in Three Holocaust Commemorative Sites.” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 2, no. 1 (April 2003): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725880305900>.

Countermonuments therefore, sought to undermine this basic assumption of *perpetuity* which implied that the more a monument shows itself to be impervious in resisting the deteriorating effects of time the more successful it could be considered in preserving the memory of its commemorative narrative. In direct opposition to this, they felt that the long-standing physical presence of a monument could actually work against its indefinite relevance to the public.

The artists of the early German Countermonuments felt that monuments could fail by standing in unchanging and static presence for too long. They felt that a traditional monumental form could eventually become familiar enough to people in a way that allowed them to ignore it, or worse, offload onto it their own responsibility for remembrance and vigilance.

The early German Countermonuments therefore employed *impermanent* strategies that purposefully and intentionally caused their structures to yield to and employ the effects of fluid time - to move, shift and in some cases decay and disappear. In these ways they made it plain to the viewer that the repository of memory did not exist in stone but in the continued vigilance against the aesthetics and ideology of Fascism in the attention of the viewing public.⁹⁸

Countermonuments pursued this strategy of *impermanence* even at the risk of their own long-term viability in being prominently displayed, easily recognized or even existing at all. In sometimes extreme ways, they sought above all else to make this point - that nothing lasts forever.

6.4.2 Case Study Examples

The most obvious application of this strategy of *impermanence* was best expressed by the Monument Against Fascism in its radical challenge of established traditions surrounding the form of the column or obelisk in traditional monuments. By gradually over time lowering their column monument and eventually allowing it to disappear completely into the ground of Harburg, Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz made a dramatic statement against the notion of *perpetuity* concerning monuments.

98. Mitchell, Katharyne. "Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Memory." *Urban Geography* 24, no. 5 (August 2003): Pg.444. <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.24.5.442>.

What is also deeply profound about the Monument Against Fascism is that, since ancient times, one of the main challenges presented to those artists working with the monumental form of the Obelisk was the problem of how to raise it up and assure its permanence. The idea of purposefully lowering an Obelisk was antithesis to its existence and often indicated a reversal of fortunes.⁹⁹

In addition, this strategy removes the column as an easily identified presence in daily life - again referencing the theory espoused by Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz that the overexposure of the public to a monument over time resulted in their no longer caring or paying attention to its original memorial purpose. In this spirit, the artists allowed a trace of the column to remain in an almost subversive visual subtext at the former site of the erected column - a square plate of grey lead plating - the top of the submerged monument column brought level with the pavement.

That is all there is to see of the actual physical form of the column today. The absence of the column and the activation of the viewers imagination is all that continues to animate the artwork and maintain its relevance for future generations. Those who visit this space are presented with an opportunity to consider their own buried history regarding the threat of Fascism and how to face the challenges of continuing its slumber or the threat of its reawakening in years to come.

A further example of how the early Countermonuments approached the idea of *impermanence* is evident in the extended history of the original Aschrott Fountain. Having been constructed by Sigmund Aschrott to serve as a testament to his civic position, it became the target for a destructive protest by Nazi sympathizers in 1939.

Thus the ruins of the Aschrott fountain were hauled away by the city and all that remained was the empty basin of the fountain. This was initially proposed to be removed as well and thus create a space for military marches and parades, however it was decided to leave the basin, fill it in with dirt and create a flowerbed. For this reason, the remaining basin came to be morbidly referred to as "Aschrott's Grave".¹⁰⁰

99. Lewis, M. J. T. "Roman Methods of Transporting and Erecting Obelisks." *Transactions of the Newcomen Society* 56, no. 1 (January 1984): 87–110. <https://doi.org/10.1179/tns.1984.005>.

100. Hoheisel, Horst. "Hoheisel & Knitz - Aschrott Fountain [Kassel 1985]." Website of the Artist, Horst Hoheisel (blog), April 20, 2014. http://www.knitz.net/index.php?Itemid=3&id=30&option=com_content&task=view&lang=en.

For many years the site remained in this condition. Even following the fall of the Nazi party and the end of World War II, the site continued to undergo changes. In 1963 the decision was made to remove the flowers and dirt. Thereafter, the stone basin was re-filled with water to exist as a simple pool. No sculptural *folly* was ever re-erected within the basin and the darker history of the fountain was not acknowledged by any plaque or marker.

Even many citizens that had a memory of there having been a *folly* sculpture in the middle of the fountain assumed that it had been destroyed during the heavy damages sustained by Kassel during the bombing campaigns of the Allied forces during the war years. This would eventually result in the Aschrott Fountain's memory and the narrative of the actual events being forgotten or misconstrued.¹⁰¹

The true history of the Aschrott Fountain remained obscured until the city of Kassel decided to face the dark story of this monument's history and invite artistic interventions that would help to restore and expand the historical record.

By Horst Hoheisel proposing his submerged mirror image of the original fountain which was destroyed, he made the point that nothing can last forever and once destroyed can never be rebuilt in exactly the same way. This acknowledgement and even embrace of *impermanence* is a critical and definitive characteristic of Countermonuments.¹⁰²

6.4.3 Theoretical Discourse

The danger of not working with such strategies of *impermanence* was clear to the early Countermonumentalists - that the public would mistakenly begin to trust in the unchanging and constant presence of a traditional monument and slowly give up their personal narratives concerning the history which the monument intended to activate - in this case that of the devastating impacts and continuous threat of Fascism.

101. Young, James Edward. "Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany." Harvard Design Magazine, no. 9 (Fall 1999). <http://partizaning.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Memory-and-Counter-Memory.pdf>.

102. Hernandez, Juan Felipe. "La Química De La Memoria: A Benjaminean Approach." Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies 22, no. 3 (September 2013): 259–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569325.2013.808175>.

This strategy also shows a willingness on the part of the artists to potentially lower their own position and the noticeability of their personal authorship. By putting the narrative of these artworks and its effective transference to the viewer above such concerns, the artists effectively supplanted their own position in order to better serve the intentions of the artworks themselves.

In the history of art, from Pre-history through to the Gothic era, there were very few individuals whose names were preserved as artists.¹⁰³ Most were considered mere craftspeople and, while worthy perhaps of reward for their skills, were certainly not meant to be adulated in the attention of the viewing public. This position of honor was reserved for the work itself and that which it represented - most often depicting narratives of a religious nature.

So widespread was this attitude toward authorship that artists would have not even considered that they should sign their name to an artwork. This attitude began to change in the early Fifteenth century when artists began to be sought after not only for their exceptional skills, but also for the legitimizing influence which their name would have when attached to a project or artwork. This trend has only increased and continued through to the Twentieth century with the development of the cult of celebrity regarding artists and authorship.¹⁰⁴

In accepting a position below the work and positioning themselves and their own memory at a lower level than the narrative of the Countermonument, these artists effectively used strategies of *impermanence* to undermine and question notions of authorship. This should be recognized as a major departure from the tradition of monuments as well as the fashion of artists as famous personalities.

It therefore takes an artist with a strong intention for the impact of their work to humble themselves in service to a cause which they believe has a greater purpose beyond their own individual glorification. The strategy of *impermanence* in the early Countermonuments shows this willingness and effectiveness in upending hundreds of years of allotted artistic privilege in order to assure the success of their intentions.

103. Gombrich, Ernst H. *The Story of Art*. 1. Aufl., pocket ed. London: Phaidon, 2006. pg. 150

104. McCartney, Nicola. "Complicating Authorship: Contemporary Artists' Names." *Performance Research* 22, no. 5 (July 4, 2017): 62–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2017.1383775>.

6.5 Displacement

6.5.1 Introduction / Definition

What the artists behind the early German Countermonuments understood instinctively was that their work must physically and metaphorically seek to *displace* established monumental structures as well as to *displace* ignorance and forgetfulness concerning the historical narrative of Fascism's effects.

Displacement is defined as *the act of forcing something out of its usual or original position*.¹⁰⁵ This term relates most directly to the fields of physical science, and can be best understood through Archimedes' principle of fluid dynamics which states that an object submerged in liquid *displaces* the equivalent amount of the object's volume.¹⁰⁶

In a sense, the early German Countermonuments accomplished a similar reaction in the field of public sculpture by *displacing* the traditional forms of monuments themselves. This effect was accomplished on a physical level by animating the presence of the sculptural work, and, in a subtractive fashion, by creating a void in the absence of their presence.

In the case of the Aschrott Fountain this could be seen in its attempt to open a hole in the earth itself into which the viewer's attention could be drawn. The artist Horst Hoheisel discussed this subtractive effect of *displacement* in describing his way of seeing the function of his Aschrott Fountain Countermonument:

*"The only way I know to make this loss visible is through a perceptibly empty space, representing the space once occupied. Instead of continuously searching for yet another explanation or interpretation of that which has been lost, I prefer facing the loss as a vanished form. A reflective listening into the void, into the negative of an irretrievable form, where the memory of that which has been lost resounds, is preferable to a mere numb endurance of the facts."*¹⁰⁷

105. Cambridge essential English dictionary. (2011). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

106. Walton, Alan J. "Archimedes' Principle in Gases." *Contemporary Physics* 10, no. 2 (March 1969): 181–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107516908220108>.

107. Hoheisel, Horst. "Hoheisel & Knitz - Aschrott Fountain [Kassel 1985]." Website of the Artist, Horst Hoheisel (blog), April 20, 2014. http://www.knitz.net/index.php?Itemid=3&id=30&option=com_content&task=view&lang=en.

Hoheisel therefore raises the question that if the physical form of the monument could be displaced, then perhaps it was also possible to do the same to the memory state and consciousness of the viewer themselves. In doing so one could thus create a space for memory to be *displaced* with new experience and thus implicate responsibility to one's own place in the historical narrative.

In this sense, the strategy of *displacement* was extended beyond just the physical realm by early Countermonuments in order to address their potential effect on the psychological space within the viewer's mind. This was accomplished by focusing the work on memories surrounding the history of Fascism and the Holocaust in Germany.

6.5.2 Case Study Examples

The Stolperstein monument took great advantage of this strategy on a number different levels - both physically and metaphorically. While traditional memorials have a single location and fixed dimensions, the Stolperstein Countermonuments opened the possibility of a memorial that could exist simultaneously in many places at the same time. This had the effect of *displacing* the monument itself and spreading it across multiple territories in a decentralized fashion.

On a physical level, the Stolperstein deliberately were conceived to not constitute a single work in any one location. The very nature of trying to activate the personal story of each of the possibly millions of victims of National Socialism demanded a radical departure from a singular monument. For this reason Gunter Demnig chose to disperse the presence of his monument across all the areas of the world in any country which had suffered under the occupation of Nazi Germany.

Such a formal strategy also effectively gave direct visual recognition of the extent to which the victims themselves were *displaced* from their homes and sent to other towns and even other countries to be murdered in the Nazi death camps. It is eminently appropriate that such violent acts of uprooting of people, families and culture be signified in the *displaced* physical presence of the Countermonument which commemorates their memories.¹⁰⁸

108. Olivier, Abraham. "Place and Displacement: Towards a Distopological Approach." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 27, no. 1 (January 2019): 31–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2019.1570537>.

Demnig continued after many initial controversies regarding the legality of his methods of *displacing* his monuments in Germany to expand, define and defend his Countermonumental work of placing Stolperstein in the sidewalks of cities all over Europe. As a result the project has grown to become the largest decentralized monument in the world. At the time of this writing in 2018, there were over 70,000 Stolperstein installed in more than 1,200 European cities and towns in 24 countries.¹⁰⁹

While the Monument Against Fascism occupied a central space and did not extend its physical presence beyond the boundaries of the shopping mall in Harburg where it was originally installed, it still made use of a form of *displacement* in the use of photography as a method of preserving and copying its physical form. It accomplished this by incorporating a permanent photographic placard at the monument site with a record of its descent into the earth from 1986 to 1991.

The work and function of photographic documents themselves as Countermonuments which stand in place for a moment in time will be explored further in the final sections of this thesis. However, it can simply be said at this point that in the case of the Monument Against Fascism there was an initial subtractive *displacement* employed when it removed itself over time from the original position in which it was erected thus creating a void where once there was a column sculpture.

And then, secondarily, it accomplished an additive *displacement* by subsequently installing photographic documents to replace its presence in that same location. This was a beautiful method of taking the entire *displacement* cycle back to its beginning stages - transforming it from a physical, sculptural Countermonument into *displaced* representation of itself - a photograph as a trace of the original thing itself.¹¹⁰

6.5.3 Theoretical Discourse

In this sense, we see that this particular strategy of *displacement* in Countermonuments is deeply concerned with how to work with established memorial forms and narratives in order to effect an organic transformation - not a destruction - of their development.

109. 70,000th 'Stolperstein' for Holocaust Victims Laid in Frankfurt." Deutsche Welle News, October 23, 2018. <https://www.dw.com/en/70000th-stolperstein-for-holocaust-victims-laid-in-frankfurt/a-46009363>.

110. Seppänen, Janne. "Unruly Representation: Materiality, Indexicality and Agency of the Photographic Trace." *Photographies* 10, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 113–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2016.1258658>.

Through *displacement* the early German Countermonuments sought not simply to seek the replacement of one form of dogma with another but to set in motion a sequence of events that had the possibility to upend and yet further evolve the dialogue surrounding the work.

It was perhaps, Gunter Demnig's Stolperstein Countermonuments that best achieved this balance on both a physical and metaphorical level. We have already seen how these Countermonuments were dispersed over a broad geographical area in a physical sense, but the deeper effect which they have on viewers also leverages this strategy by actually *displacing* the thoughts of the viewer in the moment they traverse the public space.¹¹¹

In order to understand how this psychological displacement occurs, one can imagine the normal experience of walking down a street. The cobblestone sidewalks of Germany into which Demnig implanted his unassuming Stolperstein are often the surface which pedestrians constantly scan in order to avoid tripping over the uneven surfaces of small paving stones.

The common person walking the streets of most German cities scans hundreds if not thousands of these grey, similarly-shaped stones over the course of their daily commute. Just one Stolperstein unexpectedly appearing in this monotonous daily ritual of the viewer has the advantage of a certain effect of mental *displacement* or surprise on its side. Contemplating the many cares and daydreams which occupy any person's mind while passing through the city streets on any given day, we can imagine that considering the memory of a specific victim of Nazi oppression would not necessarily be foremost in the mind of most people.

Yet herein lies the simple and effective genius of the application of *displacement* in the strategy of the Stolperstein. At the moment that the eyes of the viewer walking by passes over the reflective copper surface in their path with a simple name, date, and indicated place of murder such as Auschwitz inscribed, the space of their daily mental thoughts is immediately *displaced* with memories of the Holocaust.¹¹²

111. Vickery, Jonathan. "Art, Public Authorship and the Possibility of Re-Democratization." *Visual Culture in Britain* 12, no. 2 (July 2011): 219–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14714787.2011.575296>.

112. Stevens, Quentin, and Mirjana Ristic. "Memories Come to the Surface: Pavement Memorials in Urban Public Spaces." *Journal of Urban Design* 20, no. 2 (March 15, 2015): 273–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2015.1009010>.

Suddenly the viewer, must imagine the scene of the memorialized victim being perhaps forcibly removed from the very house the viewer of the Stolperstein is even now in the present moment passing by. Along this very sidewalk the victim whose name they now have filling their mind, was dragged or coerced to pass for the last time on a path to their final ultimate destination where they would be ruthlessly exterminated while their fellow citizens continued to go about their daily business.

The memory of the victim is literally uploaded into the viewer's mind and displaces their daily thoughts. The depth and weight of this *displacement* of mental space in the Stolperstein is almost too much to bear in the unexpectedly powerful way in which it confronts the viewer.¹¹³

Displacement of mental space and the real estate of the mind is at work here as much as the physical spaces displaced by the other Countermonument case studies. And in such a subversively quiet way, it allows the viewer themselves to continue the narrative and carry the actual form of Countermonument forward into their life - a monument disembodied in memory.

113. Grimstad, Kirsten. "Still Struggling with German History: W.G. Sebald, Gunter Demnig and Activist Memory Workers in Berlin Today." *Holocaust Studies* 25, no. 1–2 (April 3, 2019): 101–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1472877>.

6.5 Ritual Performance

6.5.1 Introduction / Definition

Another way in which Countermonuments utilize the functions of traditional monuments while expanding their function is in the use of *ritual performance*. This is defined by a repetitive act or set of actions which establish a dialogic relationship between the monument and the viewers. Such acts have long been essential to the sustained recognition of traditional monuments.

Ritual performances associated with traditional monuments capitalized on the theatricality and centrality of the locations which traditional monuments typically inhabited. Often these ritual performances took on the form of ceremonies occurring once per year on the date of the occurrence which many such monuments commemorate. In this way, the public could be reminded of the presence of the monument's standing in public space and its relevance in the cultural memory.¹¹⁴

Other ways in which rituals enter into the functionality of traditional monuments are less obvious but no less important to supporting their overall intentions. For instance, the regular act of upkeep and cleaning of monuments is an ongoing and never-ending work which is constantly occurring at memorial sites.¹¹⁵

6.5.2 Case Study Examples

Traditional strategies such as employing rituals to activate the monument were not simply dismissed out of hand by Countermonuments. These rituals were given careful consideration as to whether or not they could be leveraged to fulfill the requirements for memory work with which Countermonuments found themselves engaged. For instance, the installing ceremonies originated by Gunter Demnig for the Stolperstein Countermonuments show in stark detail

114. Bell, Catherine M. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

115. Brunetaud, Xavier, Livio De Luca, Sarah Janvier-Badosa, Kévin Beck, and Muzahim Al-Mukhtar. "Application of Digital Techniques in Monument Preservation." *European Journal of Environmental and Civil Engineering* 16, no. 5 (May 2012): 543–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19648189.2012.676365>.

how the expanded use of Ritual and Performance operates in the early Countermonuments.¹¹⁶

As a performative aspect Demnig insists to install every Stolperstein personally. This is an incredibly meaningful stipulation of the project and cannot be understated in its importance. Demnig essentially implicates himself in the history by doing so. He also fundamentally shifts the course of his own life when one considers the sheer scale of the amount of victims of the Holocaust he could possibly commemorate and the fact that there are currently over 70,000 Stolperstein in existence - all installed by Demnig himself.

Such an undertaking in some ways calls to memory the renunciatory acts of religious acolytes who, feeling the call to a higher purpose, seek to engage in a repetitive action in order to effect a fundamental transformation.¹¹⁷

Yet this performative action does not end with the artist alone. Demnig requires the participation of multiple individuals in partnership and agreement. This includes sponsors, victim's families, and city officials in the performative ritual of placing the stones.

Before installation of a stone can be scheduled, the sponsors are required by Demnig to seek out and invite all known remaining relatives of the victim to the installation ceremony. For the placement ceremony, the sponsors are asked to provide Demnig with a formal invitation and to pay for his travel and a bed for the night if the location is within more than one day's travel from his home in Cologne.

At the appointed time, Demnig arrives and, using the hand-tools of a common bricklayer, usually dressed in work pants and kneepads, installs the stone and sponsors or family members of the victims can say a few words, recite a prayer or if the victim was Jewish recite Kaddish.

In this way, the sponsors, the victim, the victim's family and neighbors are all drawn together with Demnig in a ceremony that authenticates through a communal effort the importance and integrity of the monument.¹¹⁸

116. Widrich, Mechtild. *Performative Monuments: The Rematerialisation of Public Art. Rethinking Art's Histories*. Manchester, United Kingdom; New York: Manchester University Press, 2014.

117. Peeters, Evert, Leen van Molle, and Kaat Wils, eds. *Beyond Pleasure: Cultures of Modern Asceticism*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011.

118. *Stolpersteine in Einbeck – Sie waren unsere Nachbarn* (Stolpersteine in Einbeck – They were our neighbors" ([https:// einbeckerstolpersteine.wordpress.com](https://einbeckerstolpersteine.wordpress.com)) (in German). [worldpress.com](https://einbeckerstolpersteine.wordpress.com). Retrieved 11 May 2016.

6.5.3 Theoretical Discourse

It is important to understand how Countermonuments effectively employed this strategy of performative ritual. We must first distinguish between two distinct forms of performance which occur - these are performances either *of* the monument or either *for* the monument.

A performance *of* the Countermonument would for instance be that of the Aschrott Fountain when the flow of water is activated at certain times of day. This action is specifically designed to occur as a part of the design and physical structure of the Countermonument. The water flow emanates from below the ground and fills a circular water channel around the boundaries of the sculpture to eventually flow toward the deep center basin. This extends many meters into the ground and creates the visual effect and sounds of an endless waterfall disappearing into a black hole in the ground of Kassel.¹¹⁹

There is no exterior action necessary by any person in order to facilitate such a performance, unless you consider the occasional servicing of the mechanical aspects of the sculpture by city technicians - which is by no means a small thing. However, in most cases, these performance are not dependent on the audience to participate or even to be present. In the case of the Aschrott Fountain, this activation of water flow is designed to occur automatically and is regulated by clockwork - not by sensing any number of people in the vicinity.

Another performance *of* the Countermonument is that of the disappearance of the Monument Against Fascism in gradual stages from 1986 to 1993. In the daily experience of the people working at the shopping mall in which the monument column was originally installed, they experienced the gradual descent of this once towering structure slowly and steadily until it also disappeared below the ground.

A performance *for* the Countermonument constitutes a slightly different application of the ritual performance strategy. This is simultaneously evident in the Monument Against Fascism. Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz prescribed that when each lowest section of the column had

119. Bloch, Ofra. "Dialogues in No Man's Land." *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 51, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 320–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2015.1036343>.

been covered with graffiti, it should be lowered in a performance *of* the Countermonument.¹²⁰

Yet at the same time the column was lowered, it was required that the event be announced and that the neighborhood residents, business owners and local government officials be invited to attend a public ceremony to commemorate the lowering and to further expand the discussion around Fascism in Germany. This gathering of people and organization of the ceremony can be considered a performance *for* the Countermonument. In this sense, the performance is dependent on the viewers participation and cannot be effectively carried out without the involvement of the entire community.

In the performance *for* a Countermonument we see a strategy emerge which effectively serves the desire of Countermonuments to create a personal reflection in the viewer.¹²¹ By involving not only the single viewer but the entire community in the success or failure of attending a ceremony which seeks to give attention to a hidden and sometimes undiscussed difficult history of Fascism - the ritual performance becomes a gauge which measures the temperature of the dialogue in the general populace regarding Fascism.

120. Popescu, Diana I., and Tanja Schult. "Performative Holocaust Commemoration in the 21st Century." *Holocaust Studies*, March 4, 2019, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2019.1578452>.

121. Wilson, James Andrew. "When Is a Performance?: Temporality in the Social Turn." *Performance Research* 17, no. 5 (October 2012): 110–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2012.728450>.

6.7 Multiperspectivity

6.7.1 Introduction / Definition

In recent decades, the notion of *multiperspectivity* has emerged in relation to the practice of historical research and education. This involves not only referencing the most dominant sources concerning a historical event, but taking into account opposing accounts, minority voices, and communities or players without representation in the sanctioned historical narrative.

The advantage of this strategy is that it reintroduces the notion of multiple perspectives into the historical narrative while still preserving its factual intentionality which originally distinguished the voice of the dispassionate narrator from the theatrical embellishments of the actor.¹²²

The early German Countermonuments employed this notion in sculptural ways such as the Aschrott Fountain maintaining an open circular perspective on the monument. The ground surrounding the waterfall and hole in the ground can be approached from multiple directions and there is no prescribed main entrance to its space on the main platz of the city hall of Kassel.

Once the viewer enters the circle of water channels in the ground surrounding the Aschrott Fountain they are presented with a line of text that extends around the entire perimeter of the monument. This unending band of history allows the viewer to enter the narrative at any point they choose - thus giving a *multi-perspective* on its years of existence. The circular text extends from its first incarnation as a city fountain in 1908 to its destruction in 1938 to its subsequent years of neglect and finally its recreation as the Countermonument it is today.¹²³

Yet, these efforts to employ *multiperspectivity* were not only relegated to reimagining sculptural formalities of monuments. Early German Countermonuments also explored the possibility of offering the viewing public more than one historical narrative, indeed in some cases offering them personal control of the narrative itself.

122. Roegholt, Sietske. "Towards a Concept of Multiperspective Education." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 25, no. 2 (March 1993): 153–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0022027930250205>.

123. Bloch, Ofra. "Dialogues in No Man's Land." *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 51, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 320–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2015.1036343>.

6.7.2 Case Study Examples

As a meaningful display of *multiperspectivity* in Demnig's Stolperstein Countermonument we can consider the relevance of November 9 as it has emerged, almost organically through the responses of the viewing public.

The many viewer connections which have emerged, both positive and negative, in relation to this date in the work shows the incredible flexibility inherent in Countermonumental strategy and its ability to straddle a historic ground fraught with conflict.¹²⁴

In the case of the Stolperstein Countermonument, November 9 is the day that many Stolperstein groups choose to clean and polish the Stolperstein in their area. Self-formed community groups meet to light candles and lay flowers at the stones to honor the victims of National Socialism which each stone represents.

This is a solemn day of remembrance that has been organized solely through the efforts of the viewing public and not by any prescribed requirement of Gunter Demnig although he supports these efforts. This is a perfect example of the ability of Countermonuments to continue to evolve and grow their functionalities precisely because they are not overly concerned with controlling the contextual dialogue as a singular narrative.

To many peace-loving Jewish and German people, November 9 also represents a solemn day for remembering the victims of the brutal public show of property damage and individual violence which occurred on the night of November 9, 1938 - commonly referred to as "Kristalnacht" in reference to the millions of shards of broken glass which citizens of dozens of German cities found on their sidewalks and streets the morning after this night.

The coordinated attack on the German-Jewish community involved vandalism and attack by Nazi supporters and thugs breaking shop, home and Synagogue windows across the whole of the country while the Germany authorities watched and did not intervene. Over 7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed and 30,000 Jewish people were arrested and sent to concentration camps.¹²⁵

124. Grimstad, Kirsten. "Still Struggling with German History: W.G. Sebald, Gunter Demnig and Activist Memory Workers in Berlin Today." *Holocaust Studies* 25, no. 1-2 (April 3, 2019): 101-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1472877>.

125. Zeller, Lore Haber. "Kristallnacht: Experiencing Nazi Germany." *Psychological Perspectives* 43, no. 1 (January 2002): 20-29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332920208403525>.

November 9 has many relevant historical references for Germany and combines aspects, both positive and negative, from the country's past. For example, November 9 was the day when the execution of the liberal leader Robert Blum took place which marked the end of the German popular revolutions in 1848. Yet, it was also the date when Wilhelm II abdicated his rule, thus signaling the final end of the German Empire in 1918.

Most ominously, this date arises repeatedly in the history of the Third Reich. It served as both the day when Hitler first attempted to overthrow the government in the failed Nazi Beer Hall Putsch in 1923 and the violent explosion of Kristallnacht in 1938. And even in the present day, Nov 9 continues to be a day of importance for adherents to the fascist tenants of National Socialism and Nazism.¹²⁶

November 9 is therefore a day when many towns see increased vandalism by Neo-nazi groups. This often takes the form of spray painting and damage to Stolperstein. In some cases the vandalization of a Stolperstein on Nov 9 may be followed up within hours by a community group visiting to repair the damage on the same day. These many perspectives on the single date of November 9 find their confluence and meeting grounds in the body of the Stolperstein.

Through the use of this strategy of *multiperspectivity* the early Countermonuments displayed a unique flexibility to address a specific historical narrative while also remaining vulnerable and open enough to accommodate multiple histories and perspectives - even if they portray the dark side of the narrative they seek to present. By remaining exposed and open to the multiple perspectives of public reaction, the work can absorb and reflect all audiences and their responses thus amplifying to others the effects of those historical positions and intentions.¹²⁷

6.7.3 Theoretical Discourse

This position of *multiperspectivity* challenges the legitimacy of an attitude prevalent in art making since the Fourteenth Century which traditionally puts first the authorship and control of the artist over that of the collaboration of the viewer.¹²⁸

126. Spencer, Ben. "Neo-Nazis Target Holyrood Election." Daily Record, February 7, 2007. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/neo-nazis-target-holyrood-election-948115>.

127. Gerz, Jochen. "Toward Public Authorship." Third Text 18, no. 6 (November 2004): 649–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0952882042000285050>.

128. Gombrich, Ernst H. The Story of Art. 1. Aufl., pocket ed. London: Phaidon, 2006. Pg. 155-164

One can imagine that by giving up this authoritative ground which had been held for so long by traditional monuments it might seem that counter monuments were in effect ceding a position which would undermine their effectiveness.

However, what the early Countermonuments came to prove was that by releasing the tyrannical grip on historical narrative one might expand the effectiveness and relevance of the memorial to extend further into the popular consciousness and experience - revealing both the truth of the historical narrative and the complicated conflicts inherent in memorializing events of such import.

The Monument Against Fascism presents perhaps the most stunning example of how this strategy was discovered in a sense by accident and applied by Esther Shalev and Jochen Gerz. In the beginning, the artists invited participants to “add their name to ours” in opposing Fascism by etching their name onto the lead-skinned column of the Monument Against Fascism. A plaque at the foot of the monument itself expressed this intention and invitation to the viewing public and read:

*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.*¹²⁹

The idea was that by writing their own names, the community would be implicating themselves in the events and extrapolating circumstances of Germany’s Fascist past. However, what quickly became very obvious in the wide spectrum of reactions to the monument was that they were by no means predictable or even controllable. This was not a monolithic public - they were a politically diverse community with many different reactions to the monument.

While some people marked their names on the surface to acknowledge their relation to the events of Fascist history or painted colored-marker hearts during the day, others waited until the dead of night to visit and attack the monument by scratching out all the names and even trying to remove the lead panels.

129. Statement retrieved from Esther Shalev-Gerz’s website <http://www.shalev-gerz.net/?portfolio=monument-against-fascism>. Accessed August 20, 2018.

When swastikas began to be added to monument and vandalism became regular, the city officials warned Shalev-Gerz of the implications. The artists responded by saying that "...a swastika is also a signature...why not give that phenomenon free rein and allow the monument to document the social temperament in that way?"¹³⁰

At one point during the years between the ceremonies of lowering, in order to gauge the local public sentiment regarding the monument, Shalev-Gerz went from store to store in the Harburg shopping plaza to ask local business owners what they thought of the monument. The responses were as wide ranging as the graffiti on the monument itself. While many expressed satisfaction with the monument, there were also those who ranged from indifferent to aggressively against the monument. Said one store owner, "They ought to blow it up."¹³¹

In light of the countermonumental intentions of Shalev-Gerz, this was an acceptable result of the monument - to allow for all attitudes and expressions to be seen and heard - thus framing a broader and more complex public dialogue than any traditional monument would generally be able to accommodate or even acknowledge.

Through the Monument Against Fascism, the statements of local community members have been elevated across time and documented - even those supporting its destruction. It is a phenomenal accomplishment and deeply revolutionary to accept all attitudes and give them an equal platform.

130. Michael Gibson, Hamburg: Sinking Feelings, (ARTnews 86, Summer 1987). Pg 106-07.

131. Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Nachdr. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000. Pg. 34

Section 7.0 / Applied Countermonumental Strategies

Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.

- Sol Lewitt, from Sentences on Conceptual Art, 1969

The final section of this thesis presents the results of the author's experiments in applying Countermonumental strategies discovered in the historical and theoretical research to a wide-ranging artistic practice.

While the resulting artworks represent the culmination of research into early German Countermonuments, it is also the case that their respective mediums, subjects of inquiry and historical contexts extend well beyond the sculptural practice of memorials in public spaces as seen in the 1980's and 90's.

These artistic experiments are many and varied in terms of material and process and encompass projects in the realm of studio art, sound performance, print work in public space and lens-based practices such as photography and video. The intention of working in many different mediums is undertaken in order to enquire into the viability of Countermonumental strategies forming a practical creative position across artistic disciplines.

In creating these works and considering their relevance to the dialogue around Countermonuments, the author has sought to identify a method of practice that reflects the flexibility, changeability, and adaptability of the early Countermonuments. Even though these strategies have been presented as systemic positions taken by the artists, it is important to understand that in many cases they were adopted in the context of a fluid creative process.

These strategies, therefore, should not be considered as rules or even strict guidelines - such an attitude would be antithetical to the very notion of the Countermonument - but rather as points of departure for the creative process within each medium.

7.1 Photography / *Countermonuments* (2015-2020)

7.1.1 Countermonumental Strategies and Photography

Photography represents a creative process that for much of its short history has been practiced in a singularly regimented, monumental and standardized way for the advantage and benefit of commercial ends.¹³² This was originally necessary because of the fact that the optical and chemical process of photography was dependably reproducible. It adhered to strict rules of natural science to document a realistic depiction of useful documentary data. If one did not mix the proper chemicals at the proper ratios and apply them for the proper amount of time then no image would exist.

Therefore photography shares a similar trajectory with many of the other plastic arts who were historically for most of the course of history beholden to depict the Monumental concerns and memories of those who could commission their practitioners. This fact binds photography to art forms such as painting and sculpture, wherein they have been bound by the chemistry of their medium and the demands of the market and thus the constraint of working within a realistic aesthetic.

One of the greatest philosophers to discuss photography as a metaphorical and even spiritual framework in matters of existential import was Walter Benjamin. In his writings he speaks to this issue of not being satisfied with a simple realism or materialism in relation to processes that can deal with representing the past such as photography. Benjamin eloquently describes the danger of relying solely on the traditions of a successful medium and why this should be continually challenged. In his sixth thesis on the Philosophy of History, Benjamin writes,

“To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.”¹³³

132. Nelson, Patricia A. “Competition and the Politics of War: The Global Photography Industry, c. 1910–60.” *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 9, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 115–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2016.1190207>.

133. Benjamin, Walter, Hannah Arendt, and Harry Zohn. *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. Pg 255.

In this sense the struggle to not allow a memory to fade is the problematic underpinning of why monumental creations consistently fail. In trying to last forever they make their temporality even more apparent and their ability to preserve themselves even more futile. In trying to hold a single viewpoint through visual and physical dominance they engender a numb absorption or even worse a deliberate rejection by the ever shifting attention of a fluid population of the individual through time.

This struggle against the fading of memory is shared by both the practice of traditional monument-making and the practice of traditional photography. Photography has suffered under the weight of its duties since it was first developed in order to serve the commercial purpose of producing multiple images cheaply and quickly to serve the needs of a modern culture which was transitioning from the written word to the visual signifier.

This ability of photography to memorialize a moment in time with crystal clarity was the reason for its enjoying such success in becoming the main artistic medium of the 20th Century. Indeed, photography's ability to seemingly freeze time was one of the reasons that it was able to usurp painting as the main representational medium.¹³⁴ Yet, in a Countermonumental sense, this singular focus on capturing moments in time is precisely what has constricted the practice and possibilities of photography.

Roland Barthes went so far as to claim in *Camera Lucida*, his thesis on memory and photography, that the practice of camera work represents “a kind of abrupt dive into literal Death.”¹³⁵ This is a functionality of the process which defined its early development and was further enshrined in the characteristic practice of the medium by such early masters as Cartier-Bresson.

In Bresson’s “decisive moment” we find a highly aestheticized expression of this strength of photography. Bresson highlighted a very specific and somewhat fetishistic point in time of the moment just before, during, or immediately after a meaningful visual alignment has occurred.¹³⁶

134. Natale, Simone. ‘Photography and Communication Media in the Nineteenth Century’. *History of Photography* 36, no. 4 (November 2012): 451–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2012.680306>.

135. Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. 1st American ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

136. Cookman, Claude. ‘Henri Cartier-Bresson Reinterprets His Career’. *History of Photography* 32, no. 1 (March 2008): 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087290701723279>.

However, this way of considering the effects of perceiving time which is so characteristic of photography's functionality has become something of a cliché' and a conceit.¹³⁷ This is mainly due to the fact that it inherently presents a view of the world which elevates selected moments above others, when the fluidity of experience is something much more elusive and timeless.

As the need for more images grew in the modern era, so photography expanded and provided the raw materials for reworking popular consciousness and creating a common visual language. For much of its history this accomplishment of photography has been revered as its greatest achievement. Yet much in the same way that monument-making in Germany in the 1980s was in need of reinvention by the advent of Countermonuments, so to is photography in our present time.

7.1.2 Project Description

The early German Countermonumentalists found that monuments had become so ubiquitous in their repetitive forms that the public had grown tired and could quickly relegate the traditional forms to the dustbin of history thus allowing them to freely move on without considering the very grave and meaningful histories which these very same monuments sought to preserve.

The *Countermonuments* series of photographs represent the uprooting and reinterpretation of monumental structures erected to be seen in a clearly prescribed manner. This is accomplished via the simple repositioning of the camera's perspective in relation to monument. No hammers, chisels, building materials or cranes and power equipment are necessary to reinterpret and re-contextualize the monuments depicted. Even so, these physical tools are referenced in the work *Behind the Back of Buddha* (2015) in order to compare the differences and similarities between the camera as a tool of monument-making and the physical act of constructing a monument.

The formal consideration to eschew scenes with movement was made in order to consciously remove the now somewhat artificial allure of the *decisive moment* and to allow the photographs a distance and freedom from the necessity to always refer to a cinematic moment. There are therefore no unique photographic tricks or embellishments in these images.

137. Plummer, Ellen A. 'The Decisive Moment'. *History of Photography* 29, no. 1 (March 2005): 90–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2005.10441357>.

Aesthetically they could be considered quite traditional in their approach to framing, exposure, composition and technical execution. The only way in which they distinguish themselves and activate the Countermonumental intention is that they make exclusive use of the control of perspective to reverse and counteract the homogenous reading of monuments via the prescribed perspective of their creators. This is an active disruption on the part of the artist and expresses and reclaims the potentially debilitating power of photography in its restriction to singular perspectives.

This question of re-positioning the viewer, or the positioning of the perspective of the camera on the defining principle of Countermonumentalism was discussed in the early part of this thesis regarding *periphery*. These works therefore further contextualize themselves within the concept put forth regarding monuments and memory by Jean-Francois Chevrier – a notion of territorial intimacy “constituted on the frontiers of public space, in the grey or forsaken zones of the sanctioned territory...an occasion for social and political experiment.”¹³⁸

These images of monument sites were created in locations around the world and reference the early application of the photograph to quell the demand from a new viewing public for images of faraway places. There is a conscious critique of the exoticism inherent in the photographic traditions of documenting monuments which are not easily accessible to the viewer. In addition however, these images strive to be easily reproducible if the viewer were to visit the site with a similarly weathered time of day and with a fundamental understanding of quality camera control. In this sense, they inhabit a space that is at once foreign and accessible at the same time.¹³⁹

138. Jean-Francois, Chevrier. “Territorial Intimacy and Public Space.” *Le Magazine*, May 2013. <http://lemagazine.jeudepaume.org/2013/09/jean-francois-chevrier-territorial-intimacy-and-public-space-en/>.

139. Baird, J. A. “Framing the Past: Situating the Archaeological in Photographs.” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 165–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569325.2017.1309315>.



Craig Havens. *Behind The Back Of The Buddha*, 2016.
Pigment Print on Paper. Edition of 2 / AP 1, 110 x 148 centimeters.

7.1.3 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: Peripherality

This image depicts one of the largest stone monuments in Southeast Asia - the great Amitaba Buddha of Phat Tich Mountain in Vietnam. In many ways this sculpture serves as a textbook example of a traditional Monument. It was built on the highest hill of the Bac Ninh Province in 2014 thus fulfilling one of the definitive characteristics of traditional monuments which is to claim and hold the most visible territories of display. The monument was composed of more than 2,500 cubic meters of stone from the mountains in Thanh Hoa Province which was hand cut from the mountains with no power tools.¹⁴⁰

140. "Vietnam Home to Southeast Asia's Largest Stone Buddha." Buddha & Asian Antiques Blog (blog), October 13, 2016. <http://blog.azibaza.com/?p=630>.

The Phat Tich monument also added a number of aspects to its construction and viewing that contribute further to the singularity of purpose and perspective that is required of viewers who visit the remote site. Firstly, as a religious site, the journey to the location of the monument is organized into a series of levels beginning with the entrance to the Phat Tich pagoda and then to a series of paths weaving their way through gardens, forests and eventually the lower hills of Phat Tich Mountain.

At this point, the viewer comes to a viewing place which is composed of a large open paved area in the middle of the hillside forest with a clear view of the monument. This area of stone pavers however is placed many meters below the sculpture itself which is still far up the mountain from this officially sanctioned viewing area. In this way, the perspective of the visitor is controlled to only allow a monumental perspective - that of positioning the viewer below the depiction of the Buddha.

There is no obvious path up to the Buddha. Indeed visitors are not expected to approach the sculpture any closer, but to place fruit, flowers and gifts on the stone altar at the far end of the paved space while lighting a stick of incense and saying prayers. A selfie photograph or family portrait is frequently taken by visitors from this perspective of the paved area with the sculpture itself in the background as a small presence further up the mountainside.

For most visitors this is where the experience of the monument is expected to end. Indeed there is no indication by the design of the monument space that one should do anything other than experience the sculpture from this perspective and return back down the mountain to the temple. Yet for the inquisitive visitor, one can continue hiking up the side of the mountain and access the actual Phat Tich Buddha on a service trail which was used during construction.

There is very little security or official patrols of the monument since it is run by volunteers or members of the temple. It is relatively easy to slip outside the borders of the large paved area and search out the service entrance trail up to sculpture. This is a path for workers to clean and repair the sculpture. After about a 5 minute walk once emerges at the foot of the Buddha - looking directly up at his seated form. Again, this is not the prescribed way to experience this monument and is only available to viewer curious enough to explore the *periphery* of the monument.

Moving around to the area behind the back of the sculpture one discovers a veritable bone yard of discarded stone fragments from the construction and repair of the monument. A crane was also permanently installed by pouring a foundation of concrete into the earth behind the statue. This is still used to service the sculpture and repair it when necessary.

Viewing the monument from the perspective that is normally prescribed by the monument designers, none of this supporting apparatus is visible to visitors viewing the statue from afar from hundreds of yard below.

At this point of the *periphery* it becomes apparent that the original impression of a clean, perfect physical form of the Buddha - almost seeming to levitate from within the forest is now undermined and in effect undone. Yet, at the same time, it can be said that this perspective is the more *real* in that it not only acknowledges the form of the monument but at the same time all of the associated forms that went into creating it and that continue to keep it from disintegrating.

This attitude is well summarized in a passage of the Tao Te Ching, one of the sacred texts of Buddhism written by the 6th-century BC sage Laozi. It describes the same rationale which underpins the Countermonumental strategy applied in these photographs. This is a method of viewing a monument not only from its single, prescribed perspective but also from the opposing perspective of the *periphery* in order to better understand and give comparison to its multidimensionality.

*All in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and in doing
this they have (the idea of) what ugliness is; they all know the skill
of the skillful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what the
want of skill is.¹⁴¹*

What this image represents is a fuller portrait of the monument and all of its *periphery*. The application of this Countermonumental strategy seeks to acknowledge a more complete impression and is in keeping with the basic tenants of Buddhist thinking by acknowledging not only the idealized perspective of the monumental but also revealing a multidimensional perspective of the monument.

141. Legge, James, Zhuangzi, and Laozi. The Tao Te Ching. Taipei: Cheng-wen, 1969. Chapter 2.



Craig Havens. *Waterloo Battlefield (Freshly-turned Soul)*, Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium. 2016.
Pigment Print on Paper. Edition of 2 / AP 1, 110 x 148 centimeters.

7.1.4 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: The Subterranean

The Countermonumental strategy of working from the *periphery* is used throughout the *Countermonuments* series of images as an effective way of taking traditional monuments and re-interpreting them in ways which are not prescribed by the original monumental design. However, a second effective strategy of the early German Countermonuments is also employed in this work - the strategy of considering the *subterranean*. This is most apparent in the images created at the site of the battle of Waterloo near the village of Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium.

The Battle of Waterloo was fought on Sunday, 18 June 1815 and represents a point in European history when the ambitions of Napoleon to establish his French Empire across the continent were pushed back and defeated by a combination of armies from the nations of the Seventh Coalition such as the German Legion, Hanover, Nassau, Brunswick, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Napoleon's armies were narrowly yet successfully defeated and he was forced to abdicate not only his throne but his plans for unending wars for years to come. This ushered in a number of decades where the continent would enjoy a respite from unending wars referred to as the *Pax Britannica*¹⁴².

142. Bury, John Patrick Tuer. *The New Cambridge Modern History. 1830-70*. Cambridge: University Press, 1964.

The original topography of the fields where the battle was fought just beside the town of Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium have not been completely preserved. They were excavated in order to create a large earthwork hill known as the *Lion's Mound* which was erected to commemorate the spot on the battlefield where the King William I of the Netherlands' son was wounded. Not only this, but the fields around the mound are still in service as farmland and are turned and seeded every season to produce grain and sundry for the markets and people of Belgium and other nations of the European Union.

In the current arrangement of the Waterloo monument, the battlefields themselves only serve as a framing element for the "main attraction" which is the *Lion's Mound* and the accompanying visitors center which was built beside it to welcome visitors. Both of these constructions are in a sense an intrusion on the natural landscape which seek a *centrality* of perspective to impress the viewer and forcefully impose a dramatic perspective. The mound does this via a staircase that leads to the top of the mound where a 31 ton iron sculpture of a lion by the Belgian sculptor Jean-Louis Van Geel (1787–1852) is installed and from which visitors can observe the surrounding farmlands.¹⁴³

Yet the experience of being in the fields themselves is a visceral experience which is not readily made available to the typical visitor by the official monument. Once they approach the monument on the main entrance road they are instead efficiently directed into the visitor's center where, ironically, they are then invited into a dark theatre to view a multimedia presentation which depicts images of the very fields that exist in reality outside. After viewing the film they can then ascend the 226 stairs of the *Lion's Mound* to view the fields from a literally monumental bird's eye perspective which has very little to do with the perspective of the actual soldiers who fought the battle at ground level.

The image *Waterloo Battlefield (Freshly-turned Soul)*, (2016) from the *Countermonuments* series depicts this *peripheral* perspective in relation to the official monument - from the lower vantage point in the middle of the battlefields themselves just days after the earth has been turned and furrowed by local farmers to prepare it for seeding. In this way, a Countermonumental perspective functions to suggest to the viewer an alternate experience apart from the traditional memorial of the *Lion's Mound* which have been erected at this site.

143. Les textes officiels d'époque l'appellent le Monument de Waterloo pour éterniser la gloire nationale : États généraux des Pays-Bas : budgets et dépenses, volume 4, chapitre V, section VI, art. 4, année 1822.

These fields hold the physical remains and metaphorical representation of a European history which could have easily been written differently had Napoleon been victorious in the Battle of Waterloo. They also hold the remnants of the actual conflict and often artifacts are found to this day in the fields such as weapons, human remains and coins.¹⁴⁴ This again suggests the power of working at the *periphery* of the monument where perhaps one may still encounter evidence of occurrence in the recently turned earth of the farm fields - if not literally in finding a rare artifact then in the play of the light and shadow on the many suggestive forms in the shapes of broken ground starting to sprout with new life from early spring growth.



Craig Havens. *Butte de Lion & Dirtpile, Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium*. 2016.
Pigment Print on Paper. Edition of 2 / AP 1, 110 x 148 centimeters.

Butte de Lion & Dirtpile, Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium (2016) is another image from the Waterloo battlefield from the Countermonuments series. This work not only displays the benefits of applying the working strategy of examining the *periphery* but also makes use of the strategy of working with the *subterranean* at the same time.

In preparation for the 200 year anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo in 2015, the Belgian government initiated a large scale public works project to extend the train line from Brussels directly to a newly excavated subterranean station beside the monument.

144. Simms, Brendan. *The Longest Afternoon: The 400 Men Who Decided the Battle of Waterloo*. New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2015.

In order to accomplish this a huge amount of earth would need to be excavated and removed from the area in a short time. A great deal of earth was displaced to create the original *Lion's Mound* - as much as 290,000 m³ of earth from areas of the original battlefields.¹⁴⁵ This had the effect of changing the actual topography of the landscape and eliminating certain features of the field that had played an important part in the course of the battle.

Much of the earth which was removed in order to excavate the subterranean train station was taken around to the back of the monument site and dumped in a pile which was assumed to be less visible to visitors of the monument as it was on the opposite side of the monument site to the main entrance road. It was also placed outside of the border fence which surrounds the foot of the *Lion's Mound*.¹⁴⁶

This *subterranean* narrative extends through the violence of the original battle and the shedding of blood into the earth to the excavation and removal of the earth itself being disturbed for the creation of a monument mound and finally the eventual excavation of a train station for tourist access to the monument space resulting in a dirt pile dumped on the periphery of the battlefield which exists as an overgrown mirror-image of a miniature version of the original monument mound itself.

In some instances, perhaps even through no direct intention of the authorizing powers, the cycle of memorialization starts to turn back upon itself and mimic its evolutionary cycle. Such a case of cyclical meaning and evolution are depicted in *Butte de Lion et Dirlpile, Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium. 2016*. Yet, in keeping with another previously mentioned Countermonumental strategy of also allowing multiple narratives to exist, this actuality has the useful effect of referencing a fluidity of meaning beyond the authorized or even the intended historical fundament of the Waterloo monument.

145. Jacquemin, George. The Liège Boteresses at the Butte du Lion de Waterloo (1826). Exegetical study of contradictory historical theses. Braine-l'Alleud, 2000.

146. DH Les Sports+, « 40 millions pour le champ de bataille de Waterloo », sur www.dhnet.be, 9 mai 2012 (consulté le 31 janvier 2020)



Craig Havens. *Everybody Knows Our Cities Were Built To Be Destroyed (The Lustgarten)*, 2017.

Reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss

First Constructed 1442 / Destroyed 1950 / Reconstruction 2017

Pigment Print on Paper. Edition of 3 / AP 1, 110 x 148 centimeters.

7.1.5 Summary

The *Countermonuments* series of images is ongoing and continues to document additional monumental sites in a similar way in order to expand on the multiple narratives underpinning these sites and establish a broader perspective on the prescribed interpretation of the monuments. As discussed in the introduction to this section, the art form of photography has in many ways become a victim of its own success - falling into many of the same pitfalls and atrophies that public sculptural monuments had settled into when the Countermonumentalists began their early works.

The photograph is now so ubiquitous in daily life and so generic in its experience that viewers are simply unwitting participants in its semiotic throes. Through digital media, not only the singular nature of the moment has been called into question, but so once again has the very authenticity of the photograph as a document of reality through easy manipulation in post production.¹⁴⁷

147. Bate, David. "The Memory of Photography." *Photographies* 3, no. 2 (August 23, 2010): 243–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2010.499609>.

Therefore the *Countermonuments* series follows in the footsteps of many early German Countermonuments by reclaiming from the traditional past of their practice a ground that has come to represent a restrictive form. By applying the Countermonumental strategies of *peripherality* and the *subterranean* to this form, it is brought into a new dynamic and a new purpose.

From these perspectives which are not prescribed as a part of the original design of these monuments, a new and alternate reading of the monument is accomplished exclusively via the function of the erstwhile restrictively narrow vision of singular camera perspective. Thus, through the application of Countermonumental strategies, this erstwhile restrictive and reductive form is placed in service to reimagine conventional monuments as Countermonuments simply through the use of the camera as an instrument of change.

The preceding examples from the *Countermonuments* photographs are offered specifically to give an example of how the Countermonumental strategies of *peripherality* and the *subterranean* can be translated from the early German Countermonuments and applied in other fields of artistic endeavor.

Additional works from this series form the selection of works accompanying this written thesis text and can be viewed in the Image Appendix in addition to being featured in the exhibition of the artist's work for purposes of the thesis defense.

7.2 Moving Image / *American Endings* (2015-2020)



Craig Havens. *The End Is Only The Beginning of Another Story* (*American Endings* #1-25). 2016.
Courtesy of Open Arts Foundation and the United States Embassy, Bulgaria.

7.2.1 Countermonumental Strategies and the Moving Image

The history of the moving image began in Lyon, France in 1895 with the Brothers Lumiere and their invention of a camera which could not only shoot, but process and even project moving images¹⁴⁸. The brothers, however, ultimately considered the moving image a less interesting pursuit than that of the still image. By 1905 they had divested themselves of producing their *cinématographe* camera and had moved into developing a successful color still-photography process.

Yet, the visual Pandora's box of moving images continued to be developed by other pioneers such as Thomas Edison and eventually those who chafed against the American inventor's litigious and jealous protectionism of his invention on the east coast of the United States.

148. Chardère Bernard, Borgé Guy, and Borgé Marjorie. *Les Lumière*. Lausanne: Payot, 1985. Pg77.

Edison had cornered most of the market by patenting nearly all the basic processes of the early cinematic practice.¹⁴⁹ This led his growing list of competitors to seek areas of the United States that at this time were less accessible to his lawsuits for using the technology of moving images of the time. His competitors found their promised land and freedom to develop their own studios and cameras in the American West - namely California and the city of Los Angeles where a small suburb of the city known as Hollywood would develop into the monumental storytelling capital of the world.

What had been begun by the Lumiere Brothers, and what had been patented into industrialized straightjackets by Edison, found its perfect marriage of commercialism and romanticism in the films that were to be made by the first film-makers of Hollywood in the early years of the Twentieth Century. Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, and Buster Keaton, to name a just a few filmmakers of the era, all understood how to couple the visual curiosity of the new medium with the compelling human narratives of popular thought.¹⁵⁰

This created a new visual medium which succeeded in accessing the imagination of not only American popular culture but that of a large part of the entire world's population at the time. In the case of an artist such as Charles Chaplin one can see how this unprecedented effect had an impact on the world. At no other time in history had one person been so universally known to millions of people all over the world in such an intimate and personal way. This was thanks in a great part to the fact that in the early years of cinema the technology for syncing sound with images had not yet been developed. Therefore, the babel of different languages was removed from the equation and through mimesis and body language which all humans could understand, the person of Chaplin's "Tramp" character could effectively connect across cultural, religious, language, and even political boundaries.¹⁵¹

American Cinema sought to portray to the public over the course of time a vision of an America that was at once reflective and prescriptive - generated by the studios creating the films and by the audience who paid to consume the the films themselves. This symbiotic relationship caused a sort of fantasy of desire to be encoded in the narrative of American Cinema where a dream was presented to people and, through their reactions and the resulting success or failure of the films, a certain evolution of future offerings would develop.¹⁵²

149. Pederson, Charles E. Thomas Edison. Edina, Minn: ABDO Pub, 2008. Pg. 67.

150. Parkinson, David. History of film. New York, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996.

151. Louvish, Simon. Chaplin : the Tramp's odyssey. London: Faber, 2010. Pg. 204

152. Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. Film history : an introduction. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2010.

Ever since André Bazin posited that a cinematic image is a certain kind of trace,¹⁵³ the medium of motion pictures has been described as standing in to memorialize moments in time.¹⁵⁴ Therefore the development of the medium of moving images is also a history of the modern era and all the political influences and social developments which occurred over the course of the Twentieth Century.

If the still image of photography, as the Bauhaus photography instructor Laszlo Moholy Nagy proclaimed, was the “New Instrument of Vision”¹⁵⁵ or the new language to connect the global industrialized world of the Twentieth Century, then cinema and the moving image was the way of making that instrument sing.

7.2.2 Project Description

In the course of creating the artworks associated with this thesis and Countermonumental strategies, one of the main concerns was to find ways to transition the definition and functionality of the traditional monument into new forms.

The still image was the first medium to be explored in this regard through the *Countermonuments* series of photographs. The next logical step was to seek ways in which to work with the closely associated practice of moving images to enquire as to what results might evolve through the application of Countermonumental artistic strategies.

For the creation of an artwork that introduced Countermonumental Strategies to the practice of moving images, the decision was made to focus on the notion that American Cinema at this point in history stands as a sort of “monument” to the overarching narrative of the Twentieth Century as seen from the perspective of American popular culture. The work is composed of a site-specific dual channel video installation featuring the final scene from each of the most popular American films as determined by the American Film Institute.

153. Maynard, Patrick. *The Engine of Visualization: Thinking through Photography*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.

154. Bazin, André. *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, Hugh Gray, *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4. (Summer, 1960), pp. 4-9.

155. Kostelanetz, Richard, and László Nagy. *Moholy-Nagy*. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1971. Pg. 50

The work indexes and contrasts archetypal endings from the collective mythology of American cinema. Final scenes are played in sequence side-by-side in order of ranking and otherwise allowed to interact together at random revealing the shared narrative from which all American film endings are commonly drawn. Footage was sourced from the internet to purposefully employ the jumps and starts of the delivery mediums through which many of these films are now perceived by viewers in the 21st century.

Indeed the same years that trace the development of American Cinema have also closely paralleled the notion of the *American Century*. In 1941, Walter Luce, one of the first multi-media moguls of the 20th century declared in his own *Life* magazine that the 20th Century was the *American Century*. According to Luce, the entrance of America into the struggle of WWI and its ascendance as one of the remaining world powers in WWII years would result in its position as a hegemonic power.¹⁵⁶

To be sure this is a singular perspective and is fraught with the risks of a narrow, even nationalist viewpoint and the dependent on the development of mythologies and outright fantasies regarding the realities of Twentieth Century history.¹⁵⁷ Yet, in many ways, this prediction came true up through fall of Communism and dissolution of Soviet Russian through the end of the Twentieth Century when China began its own ascendance and re-introduced a more complex dynamic to the balance of world politics at the start of the Twenty-first Century.¹⁵⁸

Therefore, in creating the artwork *The End Is Only The Beginning of Another Story (American Endings #1-25)*, the decision was made to utilize the American Film Institute's Top 100 list to compile a source list of films to use in developing a framework for the artwork.

The American Film Institute was formed in 1965 by the executive order of American president Lyndon Johnson who had been sworn into office after the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The purpose was to establish an organization which would project American mythology and power internationally in the form of the moving image.¹⁵⁹

156. Luce, Henry. "The American Century." *Life Magazine*, February 17, 1941. Pg. 61-65

157. Hogan, Michael J., ed. *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the "American Century."* Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

158. Evans, Harold, Gail Buckland, and Kevin Baker. *The American century.* New York: Knopf, 1998.

159. History of AFI. "With Beginnings in the White House Rose Garden." Accessed February 27, 2020. <https://www.aifi.com/history/>.

In the true fashion of an industry which considers the world from its own perspective, the headquarters of this institution were based in Hollywood, California and the board members were mainly composed of noted celebrities and elite members of the Hollywood business community as opposed to academic or scientific members.

In 1998, AFI conducted a poll of only industry insiders at the past 100 years of American Film History and create “a poll of more than 1,500 artists and leaders in the film industry who chose from a list of 400 nominated movies.”¹⁶⁰ In essence, while this list was compiled for purposes of legitimizing the American Film industry, it also reveals how its singularly homogenous viewpoint shapes the perception of American life.

The 100 Films / 100 Years AFI list therefore reflects a biased, yet authentically singular and therefore traditionally monumental standpoint from which the vast library of American films for the list were culled. That is to say that this list of the Top 100 American Films is a truly honest reflection of the self-referential bias with which the industry of Hollywood sees itself.

This is especially true as well in how international markets had been influenced by American ideals through the films that make up this cannon and the shifting attitudes toward American power which at the start of the Twenty-first century had begun to change dramatically.¹⁶¹ This list was utilized to create the video artwork *The End Is Only The Beginning of Another Story (American Endings #1-25)*. 2016. Work was begun by the artist in 2015 independently and in 2016 was supported with a grant from the United States Department of State.

7.2.3 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: Multiperspectivity

Much in the same way that the *Monument Against Fascism* allowed for multiple narratives to be introduced to its surface by the citizens of Harburg scratching their feelings about the idea of Fascism, the *American Endings* work allowed for multiple interpretations. It can speak both to those of the critical mind regarding American hegemony in general and those who see the work simply as a celebration of American cinema.

160. American Film Institute. “AFI’S 100 Years - The 100 Greatest American Films Of All Time.” 100-Movies-10th-Anniversary-Edition (blog). Accessed February 27, 2019. <https://www.afi.com/afis-100-years-100-movies-10th-anniversary-edition/>.

161. Wasser, Frederick. “Is Hollywood America? The Trans-nationalization of the American Film Industry.” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 4 (December 1995): 423–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039509366949>.

The ranking of the AFI list was employed to determine the order in which each of the final scenes of the top 100 American films were played. The length of the final ending scene was determined by identifying the final scene of each film and allowing it to play from start to finish and through to the last frame which contains the words "The End". Each of these "American Endings" were then sequenced to follow each other in order of their rank on the AFI list and displayed via a side-by-side projection of two endings at a time.

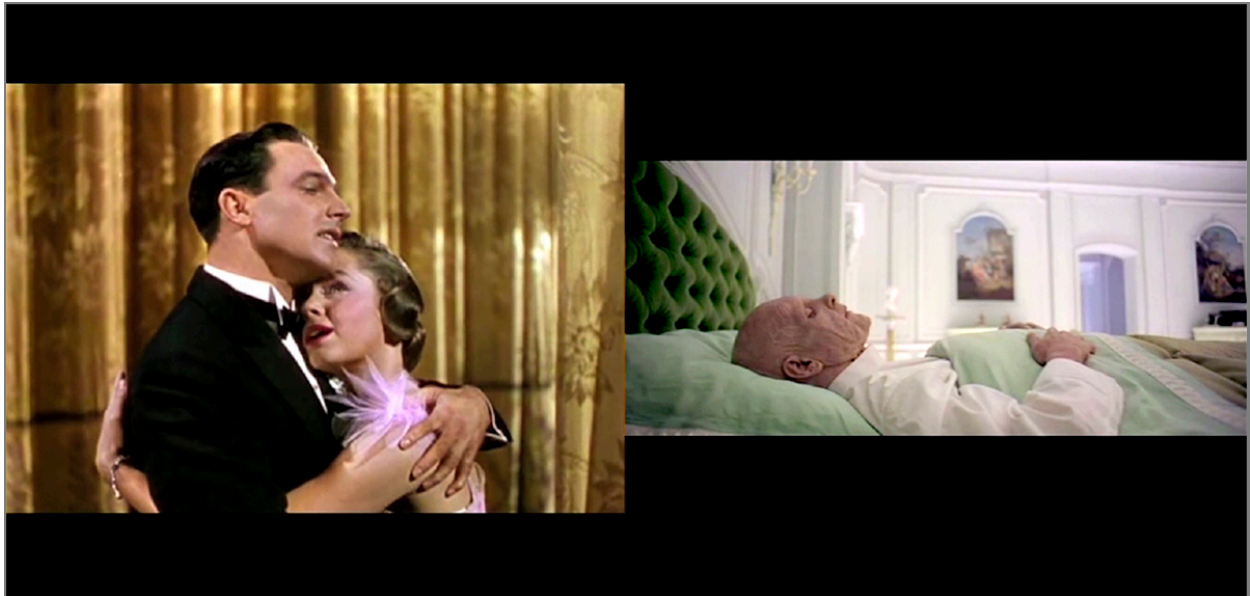
The combination of structural sequence as determined by the AFI list and the randomness of the different lengths of each final scene meant that the work, while structured and controlled, also would possess a certain element of *Multiperspectivity* regarding the eventual loss of control over the sequencing of images and the combination of projecting two visual images and two soundtracks simultaneously - many of which were created in different eras and styles over the course of the Twentieth Century.

The effect of this Countermonumental approach is such that the films begin to suggest to each individual viewer a vast yet restricted source code from which they personally pull meaning. This occurs not only in relation to single images of one film, but through the interplay and conversation which begins to emerge as both films play together simultaneously. In the fits and starts of one ending, the other ending implies contradictions and challenges, while at other times they harmonize in sublime ways which draw attention to the common source of the American ideals which most of these films reference whether to critique or honor.

In the end, the application of the strategy of allowing for *Multiperspectivity* in the work allows for a broader response and inquiry on the part of the viewer. It implicates their own most likely extensive immersion in the American entertainment industry which continues to inform worldwide film production and in many cases underpins some of the most meaningful emotive responses that people reference through the moving image.

Through the films produced by the American cinema, the artist felt that the choice of how to end a story was a critical and under-examined aspect of the mythology of American film. In fact, what came to be seen in the development of this work was that there are very few major variations on the endings offered in the cannon.

Therefore an additional advantage of working from multiple perspectives simultaneously was to allow the work the freedom to function in a way that was fluid and flexible, even if the artist held a critical position on the history of American hegemony and the narrow narrative choices offered from within that view of the world.



Craig Havens. *The End Is Only The Beginning of Another Story (American Endings #1-25)*. 2016.
 Still Image: Singin' In The Rain (1952) / 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), 2014.
 Dual Channel HD Video Projection, Stereo Soundtrack. Duration 00:25:15

7.2.4 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: Reflectance & Mimesis

By nature of the medium of Cinema, there is a linear component to the work that relies heavily on the notion of narrative. In the same way that Countermonuments brought the narrative function from the monument (narrator) to the audience (public), so does *American Endings* seek to transfer responsibility for memory and interpretation of that history back to the audience by giving them an opportunity to reflect themselves in the multiple threads of these familiar films.

The final viewers of this work are allowed to incorporate their own mythology and reflect the narratives portrayed in their own lives were allowed to freely associate and develop in the experience of the viewers themselves and not dictated by a monumental singularity of vision in the final art piece. This function was reflected in the first showing of the work.

The multi-faceted and deeply personal experiences which exist between the ending scenes compiled in *The End Is Only The Beginning of Another Story (American Endings #1-25)* brings another Countermonumental strategy to bear in how the work functions.

The inaugural sequence of Endings No. 1 through 25 premiered in Plovdiv, Bulgaria at Kino Kosmos, a condemned late Soviet-era movie palace. Many attendees of the opening exhibition expressed to the artist that they had seen these very films for the first time in that theatre during the Soviet era with their friends or future partners. In this way, the films and their re-presentation allowed for a function of *reflectance* in the audience and brought them into an invested position with the art.

A further Countermonumental aspect to the work arose from the artist's collaboration with Sariev Contemporary, Open Arts Foundation and with the support and assistance of the United States Department of State and the United States Embassy, Sofia. The financing and active promotion of the American embassy was the decisive factor in allowing this work to be made and exhibited.

This came as a shock to the artist as he saw the piece representing a critique of the narrow focus of American cinema while also reveling in its spectacle. Yet, this direct support from the American Department of State stands as a testament to the fluidity of the work and its Countermonumental intentions.

While the process of the production of this artwork may not be considered strictly mimetic, it does follow the spirit of the idea which is that one might be able to circumnavigate the emotionality and affect of a historical narrative to provide the public with the possibility of having a clearer understanding of the machinations and thus the bias of a given communication medium - in this case American cinema.

7.2.5 Summary

The application of the Countermonumental strategies of *Multiperspectivity* and *Reflectance* & *Mimesis* to the moving image artwork *The End Is Only The Beginning of Another Story* (American Endings #1-25) had the beneficial effect of taking an established monumental cinematic archive of nationalist, popular mythologies and turning it against itself. By establishing a Countermonumental mechanism these movie endings were made to question themselves by literally reflecting against one another.

The work allowed for a space of non-linear, multiplicity which opened the possibility of reconsidering the deeper and unconscious narratives beneath the glossy surface of these moving images. The result of the application of these Countermonumental strategies was to decontextualize these film endings - to bring them out of the context of glossy entertainment and into a reflectance of their own meaning and the relevance given by viewers themselves.



Craig Havens. *The End Is Only The Beginning of Another Story (American Endings #1-25)*. 2016.

Still Image: *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) / *From Here To Eternity* (1953)

Dual Channel HD Video Projection, Stereo Soundtrack. Duration 00:25:15

7.3 Performance Art / *Listening Sessions* (2015-2020)



Listening Session I & II: Fear of Death, Fear of Life, 2016.

Audio Monitors, Amplifiers, Blankets, Dual Channel Audio, Printed Artist Publications
Courtesy of Nova Kultura Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria.

7.3.1 The Countermonument and Performance

While the practice of performance has existed back to the theatre traditions of the classical Greeks, the notion of a performance which takes place as a singular work of art to be equally considered in the same context as painting or sculpture did not emerge as a formal expression of a performance that “implies productive disagreement with itself”¹⁶² until the emergence in the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century.

Art movements of this time contained the *anti-art* seeds of performance art such as Dadaism, which sought to upend static art forms such as Expressionist painting through free-associative artworks and performances.

162. Carlson, Marvin. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2004.

This desire to push back against established art forms was common to many of the art movements of the time including Futurism and Constructivism which shared the goals of shocking the viewer and provoking a visceral reaction to the artwork.¹⁶³

At this time, the traditional art forms of painting, sculpture and drawing seemed to the artists of the avant-garde to have outlived their usefulness and had resulted in the atrophy of what they saw as overly-comfortable bourgeois viewers. This led them to seek methods of re-activating the artistic landscape outside the classical forms. While photography and the moving image in the form of film were used to these ends, the Dadaists accomplished this expansion of the artistic landscape of their time through the introduction of “musical or literary” performances at venues such as the Cabaret Voltaire (Zurich).¹⁶⁴

Constructivism also clearly expressed this desire to upend the established norms in art by formally deconstructing classical forms such as painting to their fundamental elements as in the monochrome paintings of Alexander Rodchenko. This movement came to a full culmination in New York City with many of the artists having left the European continent to avoid the effects of war.

The exhibition of Marcel Duchamp’s urinal sculpture titled “Fountain” was rejected by the Society of Independent Artists when it was submitted for their inaugural exhibition in 1918. Yet in the decades to follow, this work came to be seen as the major statement of the *performativity* of modern art in the twentieth century. The work fulfilled this purpose simply as a performance of choice by the artist. This was expressed by the American author and art critic Louise Norton in the Dadaist journal *The Blind Man*:

*Whether Mr Mutt [aka Duchamp] with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – created a new thought for that object.*¹⁶⁵

163. Rodchenko, Aleksandr, and Varvara Stepanova. “Letters to and from Paris (1925).” *History of Photography* 24, no. 4 (December 2000): 317–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2000.10443427>.

164. Hage, Emily. “A ‘Living Magazine’: Hugo Ball’s Cabaret Voltaire.” *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 91, no. 4 (October 2016): 395–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00168890.2016.1224912>.

165. *The Blind Man*, Vol. 2, 1917, p. 5.

This desire for a clear break from what these artists saw as the static and monumental past was what would eventually lead to the full emergence of an art form in later decades which came to be known as Performance art among other titles such as *interventions*, *actions*, *body art* and *happenings*. In retrospect, it can be seen that these performances sought a thoroughly Countermonumental position in seeking to push back against the rigid and static structures of formal art making traditions.

In the 1950's and 1960's artists working in this way sought a form of art which could respond to the upheaval and shock of the modern era with all its implications borne out in and beyond the two world wars at the start of the century. In addition, the immediacy of the transfer process between image/artwork and viewer/public had been so accelerated in such a short period of time by new forms of media such as radio, television and newspaper, that it became necessary to look to more direct and even confrontational practices such as performance to reinvigorate the possibilities of art making.¹⁶⁶

It was in the 1970's and the ensuing decades with the work of artists such as Allan Kaprow, Joseph Beuys, and Carolee Schneemann that this form of art came into it's full realization as a distinctly recognizable and recognized medium which could stand alone in its own way from classical art forms by facilitating "the radicalization of individual images and 'sensations', celebrating the diversity of subjective engagements with works."¹⁶⁷

The distinctly *anti* position that performance work historically possesses relates indirectly but well to the attitude of Countermonuments in that they both sought to upend previously static and monumental attitude within their mediums and in the public at large. Performance art is therefore a uniquely well-suited ground to introduce Countermonumental strategies into with the intention of further leveraging the possibilities of its ability to activate and empower the viewer by involving them directly in the work itself.

166. Wilson, Martha. "Performance Art: (Some) Theory and (Selected) Practice at the End of This Century." *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (December 1997): 2–3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1997.10791841>.

167. Curtis, Harriet. "Fifty Years since Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* (1964): A Review of This Iconic, Historical Performance, Its Reiterations and Influence in Performance Art History." *Performance Research* 20, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 118–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2015.1026742>.

7.3.2 Project Description

In order to create a performance work that incorporated the Countermonumental strategies of *impermanence* and *ritual performance*, a conceptual framework was created to take advantage of the ability of a Song to operate as a monumental structure without a body.

A song has no visible physical shape or form. It does not exist apart from its performance and the vibrations of the air created during that time. Even so, a song is able to perpetuate itself via listening and transference from person to person over many generations.

The *Listening Sessions* are devised as site-specific sound performances that introduce participants to the ritual of *intentional listening*. Each session deals with specific themes through the presentation of rare musical recordings. Part audio time-travel and part ritual, they present archival recordings of unique live performances by deceased musicians. The artist guides the performance and provides a live commentary for each song within a historical context.

Before the performances the artist conducts extensive research into the historical and musicological Rhizomes around each song and its performance in order to weave a narrative structure between the introduction of each song to the group. The selection of recordings played during the ritual performance of the *Listening Sessions* are carefully chosen to relate to a specific topic of existential importance. The first inaugural session was divided into two presentations - the first presenting live recorded performances of songs about Life by dead musicians and the second featuring songs about Death. Subsequent sessions have focused on related topics such as Fear, Love and Home.

The parameters of the work are organized to present a ritual setting which allows the participants to focus their attention almost exclusively on the songs themselves. This was accomplished by asking all participants to commit themselves to at least one hour of uninterrupted time for the performance. They are required to turn off all cell phones and leave them outside the room where the performance takes place. Also, basic physical needs such as eating and bathroom are asked to be settled before the start of the performance. Water is provided to participants by the artist.

Participants are invited to relax and lay down on provided blankets and pillows. To close their eyes. Even to sleep if they feel the desire. The artist opens the performance with a short introduction and welcome and then begins to play the selected songs one by one in their totality. The artist provides commentary and playback of the recorded music through a closed-

circuit high-fidelity array of in-ear audio monitors provided to the participants which simulate the highest spectrum of sound with no interference of exterior noise - this allows the closest possible experience to the original performance of the recorded songs.

A printed artist's publication accompanies each performance and is provided to those participating in the sessions. The publication takes the form of a song booklet featuring transcribed lyrics, song authorship, discography and performance details. This is done so that participants can reference the lyrics of the songs which give an even deeper and more nuanced meaning to the experience of the songs. It also provides a distraction for those participants who find it difficult to not have something physical in hand during long periods of sitting still.

Participants are asked not to speak during the performance. Otherwise, all responses to the *Listening Session* are encouraged and accepted and many emotions come to the surface for participants throughout the performance. Many people taking part in the experience are moved to tears - a testament to the fact that a responsive Countermonument does not need to rely on a physical form to function.

7.3.3 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: Ritual Performance

The influential American artist Allen Kaprow bears a great deal of relevance to any discussion concerning the work of Performance Art and additionally the concept of Countermonumental strategies. He considered the act of performance to be an extension of life itself and even discussed life as being a form of art in his definitive treatise on *The Legacy of Jackson Pollock*.¹⁶⁸

Indeed by choosing to highlight the crossover between painting and performance evident in Pollock's work, Kaprow found a perfect vehicle to exemplify the notion that life and therefore art-making itself could be defended as being a certain form of play or performance. He viewed performance as an experimental space created between the artist and the audience in which all the participants could conduct what he referred to as *basic research*.¹⁶⁹

168. Allan Kaprow, 'The Legacy of Jackson Pollock', *Art News*, 57.6 (1958), 56–57.

169. Allen, Chay. "Allan Kaprow's Radical Pedagogy." *Performance Research* 21, no. 6 (November 2016): 7–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2016.1240931>.

Kaprow was responsible for introducing the idea of the *Happening* performances which were an early form of performance work that sought to deconstruct the hierarchical nature of a performance and the relationship between artist as performer and audience as static monolith. The main intentions of the *Happenings* aligned directly with the future intentions of Countermonumental strategies, which also sought to acknowledge the temporality of the artwork and involve the audience in its realization.¹⁷⁰

Allan Kaprow foretold through his work that the line between art and life would eventually be dissolved. To the extent that this has occurred in regards to recorded songs (the subject of the *Listening Sessions*) one can observe that this is true. As a result of the digital music revolution, music is extremely portable and can be played via devices in any place at any time. People everywhere have their headphones in constantly in order to keep exterior noises abated, yet the distinctiveness of the experience of listening to a Song is often lost in that it becomes simply another layer of distraction.

In this sense, perhaps it was not a completely positive foretelling of art becoming the same as life which Kaprow predicted. Perhaps there was a visceral connection lost in this dissolution of the line between art and life when it comes to the experience of listening to recorded music.

The *Listening Sessions* were therefore developed using the Countermonumental strategies of *ritual* and *performance* in order to create a space which would allow the monumental form of the Song to be expanded upon within the structure of a timed performance and participatory requirements - no phones, lay down, close your eyes. Ritual practices such as these help to focus participants attention in ways they are no longer accustomed to in the course of daily life where the act of listening to music has become so ubiquitous.

In essence, the *Listening Sessions* employed Countermonumental strategies to the act of listening to music in order to further increase a sense of *awareness* in the artwork and its participants. This is the critical ingredient in a successful Countermonumental artwork and is well-described in the words of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, another artist working in electronic sound performances, when he describes how the act of the ritual performance infuses the artwork with a conspicuous sense of *awareness*:

170. Stevens, Quentin, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley. "Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic." *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 6 (December 2012): 951–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2012.746035>.

*Actually all art--, has awareness. This has always been true, but we have now become aware of art's awareness. Pieces listen to us, they see us, they sense our presence and wait for us to inspire them, and not the other way around. It is no coincidence that post-modern art emphasizes the audience. Pieces of art are in a constant state of becoming. It's not what they "are" but that they are "changing into".*¹⁷¹

7.3.4 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: Impermanence

Recorded music has existed for less than 150 years and high-fidelity recordings for less than 75 years. In this short time audio technology has advanced exponentially and made recorded music possible. In this sense, songs have been given a *corpus* as it has become possible to *reanimate* performances of songs, which, having once been presented by a musician to a live audience, would remain only as a memory for the listeners to that performance. Whereas now, the recorded Song allows unlimited repeat experiences of the performance which once would have been lost forever.

Before the advent of recording technology, a performance of a Song was easier to perceive as a unique experience which was temporal and *impermanent*. While the same performer could perform the same Song many times, each performance would be slightly different depending on the conditions of the performance. Once the performer had died, and if the Song was closely associated with them, the Song would then be even further removed from its original performance.

In his definitive critical thesis *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin posits that this sense of an original work of art which has not been reproduced can be referred to as the *aura* of an artwork. The mystical import of such a term in referring to the work of art lends an almost supernatural implication which leads him to lament the loss of the ritual function of a work of art in its original *presence* before it has been reproduced simply with concern for industrializing it's display.¹⁷²

171. Barrios, Jose Luis. "Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Artist) in Montreal." Online Art Directory of Gallery Exhibitions & Contemporary Visual Fine Artists. Re-title.com. Web. 03 Apr. 2012.

172. Akker, Chiel van den. "Benjamin, the Image and the End of History." *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology* 3, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20539320.2016.1187851>.

Benjamin describes his thinking in this regard in a metaphorical description which states:

*“If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. This image makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the contemporary decay of the aura. It rests on two circumstances, both of which are related to the increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things “close” spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.”*¹⁷³

Benjamin suggests that once a work of art is removed from its original state and reproduced then its *aura* experiences a state of decay. Yet, in the context of Countermonumental strategies, there is an embrace to this notion of *impermanence* - that nothing can last forever and that all things experience flux and change. Countermonuments posit that any narrative worth keeping in the active memory must be continually activated in the viewer when they experience an artwork which seeks to prolong that memory.

In essence the *Listening Session* seeks to eliminate the effects of reproduction by embracing the reproduction itself. The way in which the *Listening Sessions* approach this challenge is to expand the question of how to experience a Song - either through the original performance or through a performance of the recorded and re-animated playback of that performance. The *Listening Sessions* are therefore *impermanent* performances of *permanent* reproductions of Songs. And this artwork is, in a deeply Countermonumental way, seeking to essentially counter the decay of the *aura* in recorded music by returning the audience to a ritualized experience of these Song performances in high-fidelity.

7.3.5 Summary

The *Listening Sessions* hold a unique position in the creative experiments conducted to explore the effects of Countermonumental strategies within multiple artistic mediums. This is mainly due to the fact that they remove the question of Form and focus exclusively on Function by working exclusively within the realm of performance. By setting up a one-time performance of pre-recorded music they call into question the need for the physical form in a Countermonument.

173. Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin Books, 2008.

Through the application of the Countermonumental strategies of *ritual performance* and *impermanence* they are able to focus the participant audience more effectively on the experience of memory and time. When the artist presents these *Listening Sessions* he not only presenting the thematic matter that the songs will address, but is at the same time working to collapse our experience of Time by re-animating the past performances of dead artists via recording technology and ritual Listening.

The artist effectively expresses this in the text from the printed artist publication from the very first performance of the *Listening Sessions* in 2016 in this way:

*So when we take part in these Listening Sessions we are really in a sense, involved in a bit of magic here - we know it to be technical magic, but someone joining from distant past might easily mistake what we are doing here for some kind of seance! Because if we think about it we're really re-animating these artists, many of whom have long since passed away. Through the medium of recorded music they are still be able to move us and communicate to us - and for me this is one of the miracles of being alive at this point in history is having access to these technologies for our inspiration and enlightenment.*¹⁷⁴

174. Craig, Havens. Listening Session I & II: Fear of Death, Fear of Life. 2016. Printed Artist Publication. Nova Kultura Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria.

7.4 Public Art / *No More Nations* (2015-16)



Craig Havens. *No More Nations*, 2016. Lithographic Print Multiples in Public Space, 200 x 140cm

7.4.1 Public Art and the Countermonument

Public art is a field of creative endeavor that distinguishes itself from presentation methods that are exclusive to controlled exhibit spaces such as the gallery or museum space. What characterizes Public Art is that it seeks a direct and open connection to the entire population in all of its diversity - not simply the section of the public that visits art institutions.

The chosen medium of the early German Countermonumentalists was that of Sculpture and this is true for a great deal of Public Art over the course of its development. While an active art-historical distinction of Public Art as a distinct contemporary artistic practice has only come about in the last century, the point should be considered that some of the oldest monuments and sculptures of antiquity could be justifiably considered *public* art.

To be sure, the original early German Countermonuments could all be considered Public Art. The Monument Against Fascism, the Aschrott Fountain, and the Stolperstein were prominently displayed in public space and sought to actively present themselves to the population at large - eschewing the protected environs of the white cube space of gallery or the hallowed halls of the museum space.

During the period of time from the early 1980's through the late 1990's when these artworks were created there was a shared feeling among the artists that the confines of private spaces were no longer conducive to their goals and aims in confronting the audiences they sought to influence and they therefore chose to work within the field of Public Art.

Yet when considering the current state of the artistic practice of Public Art, there are some specific distinctions that should be highlighted in relation to its relevance and potential for working with Countermonumental strategies. This primarily involves the debate centering around the question of Public Art as being *Sanctioned* or *Unsanctioned*.¹⁷⁵

Public Art of the *Sanctioned* variety has composed the bulk of the practice since ancient times through the auspices of public memorials and monuments. The public sculptures and memorials of Rome, built to propagandize and promote the empire, its leaders and their accomplishments are an example of this practice extending far back into history before the Modern or Postmodern eras of the last century. In the early Twentieth Century attitudes toward this way of working began to change toward having more consideration for the population as opposed to only the political agenda of sanctioning powers.¹⁷⁶

The idea of Public Art emerged as a concept in the early 20th century in the United States through programs such as the Federal Art Project (FAP) during the New Deal of the Great Depression era which sought to fund unemployed artists during the economic downturn. This program supported thousands of artists. The funding did not distinguish between representation and non-representational work (not widely accepted at the time) and therefore gave support to undiscovered artists such as Ad Reinhardt¹⁷⁷ and Jackson Pollack.¹⁷⁸

175. Falls, Susan, and Jessica Smith. "Sanctioned and Unsanctioned Public Art." *Anthropology Now* 5, no. 1 (April 2013): 67-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19492901.2013.11728388>.

176. Kennedy, Roger G.; David Larkin (2009). *When art worked*. New York: Rizzoli. ISBN 978-0-8478-3089-3.

177. "Oral history interview with Ad Reinhardt". Archives of American Art. Smithsonian Institution. 1964. Retrieved 2015-06-16.

178. "Jackson Pollock". Guggenheim Collection Online. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Archived from the original on 2015-05-30. Retrieved 2015-06-15.

For these reasons, the program resulted in a shift in thinking concerning how art could function in the public space and whether or not it could operate outside of purely governmental aims. The ensuing decades would also see an expanded notion of Urban Planning which considered open spaces and their arrangement as a critical element to the design of cities and communities.¹⁷⁹

These developments would also coincide with the emergence of more forms of *Unsanctioned* Public Art which came to be known as the Land Art movement of the 1960's and 70's. This genre of Public Art featured earth-based artworks in open spaces such as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) and Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977). Many of these works were created in spaces far from urban centers and without governmental support or influence. These works have come to be seen as a response to the failures of utopic urban planning initiatives which failed to provide livable green spaces and which called attention to the environmental impacts of modern urban life on the earth itself.¹⁸⁰

In many ways, the Land Art movement would set the tone for the next stage of Public artworks that would emerge in the 1980's and 90's which began to meld the functionalities of *Sanctioned* and *Unsanctioned* public art into the same practice.

An example of this was the artwork by Professor Joseph Beuys titled *7000 Oaks* (1982) which proposed the planting of 7000 oak trees in the city of Kassel, Germany with each tree accompanied by a basalt stone column. The project was both supported and opposed by elements of the government and the public at large.

This was in keeping with Professor Beuys' stated intention of leveraging the tension between the *Sanctioned* and the *Unsanctioned* when he said, "*I not only want to stimulate people, I want to provoke them*".¹⁸¹ For the duration of its implementation the project was hounded by opposition against what some in government saw as an imposition on public spaces whereas others saw it as contributing to the beautification and environmental restoration of the city.¹⁸²

179. Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", in: *October*, vol. 8, spring 1979, pp. 30-44

180. Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*. University of California Press 2002.

181. Bastian, Heines and Jeannot Simmen, "Interview with Joseph Beuys," in the catalog exhibition, Joseph Beuys, Drawings, Victoria and Albert Museum, Westminster Press, 1983, no folio

182. Beuys, Joseph; Blum, Bernhard; Rappmann, Rainer (2006). *Gespräche über Bäume*. Wangen FIU-Verlag. ISBN 978-3-928780-11-7

Other such Public Art that challenged notions of the *Sanctioned* and *Unsanctioned* would follow in the ensuing decades such as *Howe*, a work by Rachel Whiteread (1993–94). The work consisted of a condemned house in East London which the artist intended to cast in her signature style working in concrete to cast a negative form of the house interior once the wooden structure was removed.

In a perfect blend of the *Sanctioned/Unsanctioned* sensibility, the work was supported by *Artangel*, a private fund for site-specific public art, and also by commercial entities such as *Beck's Beer* and a local paving company. At the same time, the local council government gave a temporary lease on the property to the project. While the work resulted in Whiteread receiving the Turner Prize, the council chose to demolish the artwork at the end of the lease due to controversial and conflicting views of the project.¹⁸³

The potential therefore exists within contemporary Public Art practice to further develop a sense of place by leveraging Countermonumental Strategies to further expand the reach of artistic practice beyond the formerly accepted settings of exhibition.

Specifically this can be addressed through the strategies of *Peripherality* and *Displacement* to consider how the impact of a Public Artwork can be brought to an audience which may not be previously addressed and who, from overexposure to contemporary Public Art positions, may already bear a resistance to the messaging and delivery inherent in the now established forms of display. This is therefore the realm of inquiry explored in the ensuing thesis project *No More Nations* (2015-2016).

7.4.2 Project Description

The public artwork *No More Nations* (2016) was commissioned by the Weserburg Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen, Germany in collaboration with the Zentrum für Künstlerpublikationen.

In order to address working in the medium of Public Art in a Countermonumental fashion, the project leveraged the strong presence of the mass media in public space to apply Countermonumental strategies for communicating a historical and contemporary perspective on public space and the idea of identity politics.

183. Whiteread, Rachel; Lingwood, James; Bird, Jon; Artangel (London, England) (1995). *House*. London: Phaidon. ISBN 9780714834597

This temporary signification project within public space took full advantage of buried histories and acted as a Countermonument to static commemorations of the past. It recognized the commodified nature of public space and sought to restore the public's role and responsibility for actively participating outside of predetermined boundaries for identification by nation, state, color or creed.

The industries of mass media and specifically advertising employ highly effective strategies based on deep market research of the population and an effective understanding of the psychological profiles of the segments of the general population they wish to target.¹⁸⁴ The intention of this artwork was to utilize this already existing architecture of public advertising to create an effective disruption of the narrative of segmented populations caught in a cyclical pattern of need and consumption.

In order to counter this narrative, the motto *No More Nations* draws attention to the current shift of influence over public space from the former structures of nation-states to the immaterial networks of private capital and global information networks. Simultaneously, the motto can be construed to be a humanitarian call for worldwide unity when considering the current existential challenges of climate change and rising fascism and nationalism in response.

This mass media print action in public space co-opted large public print advertising displays throughout the central and outlying regions of Bremen, Germany during the winter months of 2015-2016. Advertising spaces and billboards which would normally be dedicated to the promotion of consumer products were reserved for display of the with the assistance of the Weserburg Museum.

Regarding the visual significance of the work and the images depicted in it, the images which combine to create the billboard print reference specific histories relevant to the old port city of Bremen as well as the globalized impact of the shipping and affiliated consumer supply chains affiliated with it in the present day. In order to facilitate a historical iconography for this narrative, the icon of the Cog ship was chosen from an 19th century technical etching of this style of ship. The etching clearly shows the captain sailing the ship from behind with his hand on the rudder with an African slave at the bow identifying the inherent injustice and inequality of global trading systems.

184. Gentile, Douglas A. "Selling Ideas, Attitudes, and Behaviors." *Journal of Agromedicine* 15, no. 2 (March 31, 2010): 96–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10599241003627151>.

The history of the Hanseatic Cog ship identifies a key element to the expansion of the idea of collateral states and trade territories in the 14th and 15th centuries serves as a defining historical axis for the city of Bremen.¹⁸⁵ It further references the impact of private capital when administered to public spaces while emphasizing the role of the individual in such a venture - either as a beneficiary or as a victim.

In addition to this etching, the representation of all visual spectral colors has been referenced in the background color field. This portion of the work is the result of a photograph composed by the artist depicting the full spectrum of white sunlight dispersed through a spectral prism.¹⁸⁶ This element of the work is incorporated both as an observable scientific paradigm relating to the composition of sunlight and also as an iconic signifier of the implicit unity and interconnectedness of all humanity regardless of nationality, age, gender, wealth, ethnicity, race, religion, or any other categorical separation.

These two seemingly divergent elements unite under the motto "*No More Nations*" which describes the currently shifting landscape of power over the global public space from the former bureaucracy of nation-states to the newly immaterial workings of private international capital. Ultimately, however, individuals are the determining factor that possess the right and flexibility to cross national boundaries for no reason other than the greater good. Through their responses they determine the collective use of the public space which itself is a representation of the greater collective space of the planet.

As a thoroughly globalized contemporary culture, we face a sea of unforeseen perils and potential discoveries within and between ourselves. Our personal response to public space and one another will determine the temper and tenor of our collective experience. Ultimately, it is the sovereign individual who is the determining factor – possessing the ability and flexibility to dissolve boundaries of both public and private space through personal action.

185. Crumlin-Pedersen, Ole. "To Be or Not to Be a Cog: The Bremen Cog in Perspective." *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 29, no. 2 (October 2000): 230–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1095-9270.2000.tb01454.x>.

186. Waldman, Gary. *Introduction to Light: The Physics of Light, Vision, and Color*. Dover ed. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2002.



Craig Havens. *No More Nations*, 2016. Lithographic Print Multiples in Public Space, 200 x 140cm
Location: Bismarckstr/Stader Str, Östliche Vorstadt, Bremen. Courtesy of Weserburg Museum.

7.4.3 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: Peripherality

The Advertising Industry and Public Art share more than a passing relationship to one another for a number of reasons. In traditional Public Art as in the case of traditional Monuments it is preferable to secure a prominent position in the public space and hold it in indefinitely or for at least as long as possible. The same is true in the practice of Advertising in public space. It is assumed that the longer any of these mediums is able to maintain a position of centrality and dominance in the public sphere, the greater the possibility that their message will be digested by the population.¹⁸⁷

187. Madsen, Kenneth D. "Graffiti, Art, and Advertising: Re-Scaling Claims to Space at the Edges of the Nation-State." *Geopolitics* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 95–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2014.896792>.

In the development of the *No More Nations* work, there was a conscious decision made to apply the Countermonumental strategy of *Peripherality* to the placement of the works in relation to the parameters of the city of Bremen. Instead of only focusing on the central portions of the city and installing the work in front of prominent landmarks such as the Bremen Hauptbahnhof, the decision was made to also purchase advertising space in the suburban areas of the city.

The central city is densely-populated and therefore certainly provides a statistical advantage to viewership numbers in general and therefore the work was also shown in these areas. However, the audience of the central city is primarily composed of upper class professionals and white collar workers. While it is important to reach these people, it is also in keeping with the spirit of the Countermonumental attitude of the *No More Nations* work to reach the middle and working classes as well and this was accomplished by employing the strategy of *peripherality* to the installation in public space of this artwork.

Many of these installations of the work were literally on the *periphery* of suburban neighborhoods where traffic was mainly transitory in nature. This had the effect of allowing an experience of the work during the daily commutes of workers coming from homes outside the city and passing through the peripheral areas by car or public transit. As a result, more of the public were able to experience this work than if it had simply been installed in the central city.

This at first seemingly counter-intuitive approach to placement of artwork in the Public Space is a fundamental characteristic of the early German Countermonuments and served to distinguish them from their traditional predecessors in terms of how to present an artwork in public space. While it may seem that the central and most obvious placement is the best way to facilitate a works success, it is not always the case.¹⁸⁸

The effectiveness of the strategy of *peripherality* was further proven in the fact that within the two months that the *No More Nations* campaign was presented in the central and peripheral areas of Bremen, the overwhelming response came not from people affiliated with the more culturally and artistically literate central areas of the city but from working class people living on the outskirts who had seen the work in their daily commutes. Many people took it upon themselves to contact the artist to express their responses or to enquire directly to the Bremen Museum for copies of the work.

188. Young, James Edward. "The Counter-Monument: Memory Against Itself In Germany Today." *The University of Chicago Press* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 267–96.



Craig Havens. *No More Nations*, 2016. Lithographic Print Multiples in Public Space, 200 x 140cm
Location: Verteilerkreis Utbremen BAB-Zubringer, Walle. Courtesy of Weserburg Museum.

7.4.4 Applied Countermonumental Strategy: Displacement

One of the most effective early Countermonuments in relation to the use of the strategy of *displacement* is Gunter Demnig's *Stolperstein* project. His ingenious application of this strategy within the dynamics of the daily walking commute for citizens of the city of Kölln, Germany resulted in a highly-impactful moment. By inserting his *Stolperstein* monuments in between the common everyday cobblestones of the sidewalks which all citizens navigated over the course of their day, Demnig was able to reclaim a small portion of the public space with a large impact on the viewer's psychology.¹⁸⁹

189. Grimstad, Kirsten. "Still Struggling with German History: W.G. Sebald, Gunter Demnig and Activist Memory Workers in Berlin Today." *Holocaust Studies* 25, no. 1–2 (April 3, 2019): 101–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1472877>.

While this was a somewhat unconventional way of working with fine art sculpture at the time, it was already a well-established method of advertising in the form of advertisements pasted on the face of stairs in public underground stations and transportation. Again, in this sense, the interrelatedness of public space, advertising, and public art has been a characterizing element in the development of both early Countermonuments and the application of Countermonumental Strategies to the practice of Art in the Public Space as well.

In the case of the *Stolperstein* this cross-over into the public space of the sidewalk and ground itself became an opportunity for Public Art to distinguish its own viability in this sphere through the effective use of the Countermonumental strategy of *displacement*.

The ability for an artwork to insert itself into the common narrative of the public realm in spaces formerly reserved for commercial advertising therefore presents the opportunity for *displacing* the advertisement and effectively co-opting the previously standardized and *sanctioned* realm of the commercialized public space. In effect, artworks such as *No More Nations* and the *Stolperstein* have the advantageous effect of disrupting an otherwise uninterrupted daily narrative of consumer advertisement and stimulation.

This strategy of *displacement* allows for the artwork not only to be noticed but also to be more thoroughly considered for a longer period of time by the viewer than simply processing another advertisement which obviously is meant to sell a product. The nature of the *No More Nations* work meant that it gave no consideration to such commercial outcomes or to the eventual sale of a product or service - only the personal and intimate moments of engaged thought which it might generate between itself and a potential viewer.

In the composition of the *No More Nations* graphic there was no implicit directive for the viewer to follow - only a call to consider on its merits the conceptual possibility of what it might mean to have "no more nations". This created an effective *displacement* of the normal train of thought which viewers might otherwise follow in the course of their daily routine and therefore allowed a moment of levity and introspection concerning the intentions of the artwork.

7.4.5 Summary

By combining the strategies of *displacement* and *peripherality*, an artwork such as the *No More Nations* project is able to achieve its intentions of inserting itself into a formerly vacant or commercialized public space in a thoroughly Countermonumental fashion.

An additional methodology concerning the effects of incorporating an element of limited duration also extended to this project. In similar fashion as advertisements and in keeping with other Countermonumental strategies such as that of allowing for *impermanence* in the artwork, *No More Nations* was only displayed for a total of two months in the city of Bremen, Germany. This also followed through on the Countermonumental notion that a monument left standing for too long begins to atrophy in its ability to impress a meaningful response in the public.

Artwork in the Public Space represents a definitive medium when it comes to the question of a Countermonumental artistic practice. The *No More Nations* project was able to take advantage of this medium in a way that not only implemented Countermonumental strategies, but also combined them to form new ways of implementing these working methods in public space while further extending their reach beyond a single artistic medium.

Section 8.0 / Summary & Future Research

*...the lieux de memoire [memorials] only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.*¹⁹⁰

- Pierre Nora, from *Between Memory and History*, 1989

8.1 Countermonuments

It has been established that traditional monuments, by pursuing rigid standards of dominance, permanence and stability, often result in creating such ways of working which can be easily undermined by unexpected shifts and upheavals of culture at any given time in history.

The initial history of Fascism in Germany that made Countermonuments so necessary was the formative influence on the artworks and artists that made them possible. In order to outline the methods which might also unlock potential creative positions in other fields of art-making, it was necessary to delve deeply into the background and contexts of this memory work.

What becomes readily apparent time and time again, is that the search for an assurance that memory will not slip away - and that our greatest achievements, or even our greatest mistakes, will not be forgotten - is a recurring theme in all endeavors of memory work. The early Countermonumentalists of the 1980's and 90's sought not to destroy this notion or even undermine its desires but rather sought to speak more plainly and honestly through their work about what is at stake and what is required if we sincerely wish to avoid fulfilling the prophetic words of writer and philosopher George Santayana that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."¹⁹¹

One of the most compelling aspects of Countermonuments is how they at once seemed to undermine and yet in actuality supported the memory work of classical art forms such as traditional Monuments - although to somewhat different ends by emphasizing the role of the populace in the work. Yet, at the same time they cleverly avoided a position of *anti-art* in order to reform and expand the medium in which they are working.

190. Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations* 26, no. Special Issue: Memory and Countermemory (Spring 1989): 7–24.

191. Santayana, George, Marianne Sophia. Wokeck, and Martin A. Coleman. *The Life of Reason, or, The Phases of Human Progress*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013. p. 284, volume 1.

After a thorough exploration of the many histories and artworks ancillary to the progression and development of Countermonuments, it is assuring to come to the conclusion that their attendant strategies do not therefore narrow into a singular perspective or settle easily into place. Indeed, when it involves looking more closely at these unique artworks they in fact remain variable and fluid in their strategies and in their field of inquiry.

8.2 Countermonumental Strategies

The benefit of establishing a clear understanding about the formation of Countermonuments is further supported by the subsequent enumeration of the strategies which were developed by the original creators of these artworks. The positions of these strategies de-emphasize centrality and encourage a thorough exploration of *peripheries* when approaching any artistic process involving memory work.

These working methods encourage a broad field of inquiry from the beginning of the creative process which allows for alternate perspectives on conceptual narratives. The strategy of *multiperspectivity* deepens the inquiry and opens a broad dialogue which otherwise could be undermined if narrowed to only one perspective.

Countermonumental Strategies additionally direct the creative practice toward a more fundamental acknowledgement of the viewer as an active participant in the *mimetic* process of an artwork - thus incorporating a more wholistic approach to the full cycle of a works inception, creation and realization.

By defining these strategies within the history of Countermonuments and contextualizing them within disciplines of creative practice outside of monument-making alone, this thesis work has identified fundamental solutions for creative practice that offer new methods for an artistic practice that acknowledges *impermanence* and seeks less to establish a legacy for the art as to communicate and facilitate an open dialogue around issues of importance to the artist.

Methods of involving the audience in this dialogue such as *displacement* and *ritual performance* have also been identified as being useful in this regard. By developing methods of inserting the artwork into established frameworks and narratives which at first may seem to be antithesis and yet with the proper handling can be used as a platform to leverage a new incursion into the viewers consciousness are additionally made possible by these strategic positions.

In total, these seven strategic positions have been identified in this thesis not as rules or requirements of Countermonumental work but as points of origination and departure as artists seek to develop them in their own work and toward a further transference of their attitudes and potentialities.

8.3 Applied Strategies

The fact that these strategies were first developed in response to the task of establishing a historical position against Fascism and its effects is a timely and relevant aspect of this research. During the course of preliminary thesis research and throughout the time of its completion, the notion of seeking out proven strategies for facing down the re-emergence of Neo-fascist and Nationalistic attitudes has become even more urgent for creative practices today.

The brilliance of these Countermonumental Strategies is that they are not exclusive to any one method of creative practice as evidenced in the artworks created for this research project. Across art forms and media, these strategies have been proven to function in ways that not only can address directly the threats of fascist systems but also leverage their structures to further disperse alternate perspectives on historical and contemporary issues.

The operative advantage to these strategies is that they seek less to enrich their own position as they do to activate the audience in such a way that grants ownership of the work to all participants. This allows a more dedicated response to the work than simply raising it on a pedestal for all to see. It returns responsibility to the audience for the remembrance and memory of history and the acknowledgement of the threats that continue to exist as long as Fascism and its related positions remain a threat.

What the early Countermonumentalists understood and what these distilled strategies prove is that vigilance for the recurrence of atrocities against humanity and betrayals of conscience are always waiting in the wings to return to the stage of the world and wreak havoc. It is therefore, within each of us, and, in the case of the dialectic relationship between artwork, artist and audience, must be acknowledged and addressed directly and without apology.

These strategies suggest that while the easier path of creative endeavor may seem to be, like Monuments themselves, that of the singular, centralized and seemingly perpetual, it is more often the duty of the artist to turn toward the multiplicities, peripheries and impermanence that define reality and the nature of existence in order to more effectively present the public with an opportunity to choose their own response regardless of the outcome for the artwork or the artist.

In the consideration of Countermonumental thought, it is essential to espouse the alternate position against those who would seem to offer the viewer an impressive perspective on any given narrative and yet do so at the cost of forcing them to abdicate their own position. In the end, Countermonumental Strategies espouse a radically different position from established, monumental systems of creative practice in the sense that they are less concerned with authorship and issues of legacy than they are with imprinting an indelible and undeniable trace in the mind of those who come into contact with the artwork.

8.4 Further Research & Postdoctoral Practice

In considering next steps for the trajectories which this research has established both for the author's academic pursuits and artistic practice, it is proposed that the work proceed in keeping with the Countermonumental Strategies discovered in its development.

This would include proceeding from a position of *multiperspectivity* in that the inquiry surrounding Countermonuments should extend not only into the future but simultaneously into the past. This would involve conducting more research into classical, traditional, and even pre-historic monumental practices which could extend beyond the realm of constructed monuments and possibly identify a framework for discussing power structures of organization in a monumental fashion.

This inquiry deeper into established systems of *monumentality* would further expand the foundation for continuing a discovery of how Countermonuments establish an alternative to this systemic model. By conducting further research into the years immediately following the emergence of Countermonuments, it could be possible to expand the further on the strategies which emerged and were incorporated into later artworks by subsequent contemporary artists.

As a result of research conducted in service to this thesis and through the process of creating the accompanying artworks, the author has begun to consider the possibility or improbability of considering a totality of theory in regards to Countermonumentalism.

Further research would continue to expand on ways of articulating a philosophy that utilizes the Countermonumental Strategies for establishing creative working methods. Developing a specific course for this inquiry would involve further artistic experimentation across mediums as well as considerable research regarding the viability of the proposed theories in the context of an artistic educational program that introduces young artists to the concept of Countermonumental practices.

Through the auspices of open discussion and discovery regarding these topics, students would be encouraged and initially guided to reference monuments within their own communities or within their originating cultural or theoretical moorings which might benefit from the application of a Countermonumental perspective.

The purpose of these educational activities would be to encourage further other artists and students of art in working with Countermonumental strategies to develop their own relevant work concerning memory and its relevance to the issues and concerns of their day.

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