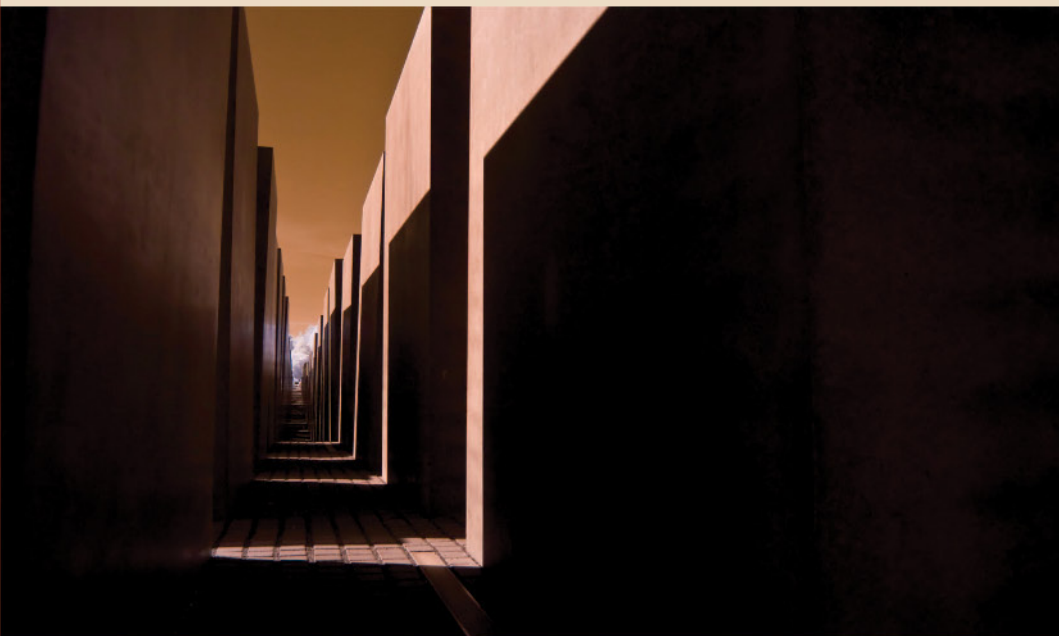# Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era

Edited by
Diana I. Popescu and Tanja Schult

Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the
Post-Witness Era

The Holocaust and its Contexts

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More than sixty years on, the Holocaust remains a subject of intense debate with ever-widening ramifications. This series aims to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Holocaust and related issues in contemporary society, politics and culture; studying the Holocaust and its history broadens our understanding not only of the events themselves but also of their present-day significance. The series acknowledges and responds to the continuing gaps in our knowledge about the events that constituted the Holocaust, the various forms in which the Holocaust has been remembered, interpreted and discussed, and the increasing importance of the Holocaust today to many individuals and communities.

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Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era

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Our special gratitude goes to the contributors, who have relentlessly and patiently refined their chapters. We are also very thankful to all artists who have allowed the use of their works within this publication. Lastly, for the editors this has been an immensely thought-provoking and inspiring collaboration leading to a new research project on Holocaust memory.

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subjektivering i kunst og teori (The subjective Remnant: Enunciation and (De) subjectification in Art and Theory, 2008), and *Erindringens æstetik – essays* (The Aesthetics of Memory, 2011).

Diana I. Popescu is a cultural historian in Holocaust and Jewish studies. She has published on defamiliarizing strategies of Holocaust representation in the visual arts, audience responses to representations of Nazism in art, and Jewish art museums' engagement with the topic of Holocaust memory. Articles have appeared in *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History, PaRdes Journal of the Association of Jewish Studies*, *Jewish Culture and History* and *Images: A Journal of Jewish Art and Visual Culture*. She was an AHRC-sponsored research student at the University of Southampton where she completed her PhD in 2013. Since 2015 she has worked as a Research Fellow on a collaborative research project with Tanja Schult, sponsored by the Swedish Research Council. This project will investigate performative practices of Holocaust commemoration and their impact upon audiences.

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James E. Young is Distinguished University Professor and Director of the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the author of *At Memory's Edge* (2000) and *The Texture of Memory* (1993), among other works, and was appointed by the Berlin Senate to the *Findungskommission* that chose a design for Germany's national Holocaust memorial, unveiled and dedicated in Berlin in May 2005. In 2003, he was appointed to the jury for the World Trade Center Memorial design competition, which in 2004 selected Michael Arad and Peter Walker's design, *Reflecting Absence*, dedicated on 11 September 2011.

1
Introduction: Memory and Imagination in the Post-Witness Era

Diana I. Popescu

Memory and imagination are the unusual companions of creative thought, the domain of creativity being located in the in-between spaces of the two faculties. Structurally very similar, memory and imagination can easily slip into one another, since displacements of the self occur both when one remembers and imagines (Sokolowski, 2000: 71). While imagination relies on memory to reconfigure the present in ways that ensures a certain commitment to remembering the past, memory has the potential to invest 'imagination with social responsibility observable in calls to "never forget" or indictments of "never again"' (Keightley and Pickering, 2012b: 123).[1]

Despite these phenomenological insights, in the context of Holocaust Studies the relationship between memory and imagination continues to elicit considerable unease. The notion that imagination is an assault on both the history and the memory of the Holocaust is prominent in the scholarly discourse of the late 1990s and the early 2000s.[2] Memory has been viewed as imagination's opposite, since remembering involves reconstructing the past as it was, unspoilt by the distortive capacities of imagination. Those opposing the imaginative discourse invoke the dangers of giving warrant to Holocaust denial, while others conjure Theodor W. Adorno's statement as a prohibition forbidding poetic licence. Imagination was perceived as incapable of dealing with the rupture that was caused by the Holocaust since, argued Hannah Arendt, 'the horror of the concentration and extermination camps can never be fully embraced by the imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death' (Arendt, 1966: 444). In a similar vein, Saul Friedländer invoked 'the total dissonance between the apocalypse that was and the normality that is makes adequate representation elusive, because the human imagination stumbles when faced with the fundamental contradiction of apocalypse within normality' (Friedländer, 1993: 51).

In the arising discursive arena of the post-witness era, this volume endeavours to shift focus from discussions on the ethics of representation and the limits ensuing from it, to the *relevance* of imagination in representing the Holocaust. Imagination, it will be argued, can play a significant role for the post-memory

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generations as it offers the possibility to work against closure and silence. Within an imaginative discourse, silence can become an articulate silence (Tanja Schult) that lends a sense of urgency to remembering. The transfer of memory and the domain of post-ness itself are increasingly dependent on a capacity to imagine.

History needs to be translated through imagination, so that its meaningfulness can be passed on to future generations and become part of a vivid memory. Yann Martel, author of *Beatrice and Virgil*, praises art's potential to convey the urgency of active memory, arguing that: 'If history does not become story it dies to everyone except the historian. Art is the suitcase of history, carrying the essentials. Art is the life buoy of history. Art is seed, art is memory, art is vaccine' (Martel, 2010: 16). The imaginative investigations of the Holocaust discussed in this volume confirm a moral commitment – not only valid for survivor artists and direct descendants, but also for distant inheritors of memory – to repair what was broken despite the possibility of failing that this effort entails. They remind of the fact that imagination can serve as a humble tool that opposes oblivion. Hence, acts of imagining the Holocaust in popular or highbrow culture need not be rejected, but subjected to critical interrogation not for the sake of distinguishing between good and bad, correct and incorrect Holocaust representation, but for reaching a better understanding of *how* mediation works in lending the historical past a sense of urgency that speaks to and about the present. While not all representations are effective in conveying an anti-redemptive stance, each one of them deserves attention, if only for the new questions that they may unwittingly raise. In the absence of full evidence, one can only assume that an educated public is able to distinguish between history and its cultural representation, and recognize the latter as a form of translation that does not entirely include or exclude history.

In addition to historical narrative, imagination becomes a vital way to connect with the past that is likely to provide new possibilities to carry out the work of memory. Georges Didi-Huberman's plea for the role of imagination gives further meaning and depth to this volume's essays. To 'imagine for ourselves … the hell of Auschwitz', is, he argues, 'a response that we must offer, as a debt to the words and images that certain prisoners snatched, for us, from the harrowing Real of their experience' (Didi-Huberman, 2008: 3).

Through imagination one establishes an emotional relationship with what one encounters. Didi-Huberman reminds that even the archival image, a metonym for any historical evidence of the Holocaust or any other historic event, 'is merely an object … an indecipherable and insignificant photographic printing so long as I have not established the relation – the imaginative and speculative relation – between what I see here and what I know from elsewhere' (Didi-Huberman, 2008: 112). These imaginative and speculative relations are also the domain of post-memory and of mediated memory. It is through imaginative practices that the 'deep memory'

articulated by the survivors' generation can be glimpsed once again by post-war generations (Delbo, 1995).

Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era acknowledges imagination as a tool by means of which younger generations can translate the past in a way that serves their memory work. The contributors of this anthology ask *why* are artistic imaginative representations of the Holocaust important *now* – when we are drawing near a crucial transfer of the Holocaust legacy from the realm of 'living memory' contained by the survivors and their families to a culturally and politically mediated memory work realized by post-witness generations. Consequently, this transfer begs the question of what are the effects of the looming disconnect with the past and what it may bring to bear? *How* do artistic representations tackle this rupture and work around this sense of 'afterwardness'?

The guardianship of Holocaust memory does not rest only in the hands of the descendants of the survivors of World War II. Within the creative domain many artists with no biographical ties to the Holocaust engage this topic using a variety of media. In the growing distance and soon *de facto* the absence of 'a sense of living connection' (Hoffman, 2004: xv), a turn to the imaginative discourse is not only desirable but essential in lending a sense of urgency and relevance to *why* the genocide of the European Jews should be kept alive in contemporary public consciousness.

Many of this volume's essays explore what Andreas Huyssen defined as the 'constitutive gap between reality and its representation in language [and] image … which cannot be closed by any orthodoxy of correct representation' (Huyssen, 2003: 19). The contributors present examples of artworks, memorial art, film, comics and literature which point to a diversification of approaches and re-presentations of the Holocaust, where memory and imagination are more intimately intertwined. They offer snapshots of the latest artistic engagements with Holocaust memory, in particular from Central and Northern Europe. These examinations make apparent the genuine struggle among those born after the Holocaust, whether Polish, German, Austrian or Swedish, to make the past relevant in the present, well aware that one cannot fully own or comprehend the past.

The discussed cultural representations emerge after important developments of the 1990s, such as the boom of filmic and pop-cultural productions dealing with the Holocaust, the memorial and representational debates, the establishment of institutional and political Holocaust commemoration, and the turn to perpetrator studies. They engage critically with the impact these representational legacies have upon post-2000s artistic engagements. Questions of afterwardness are raised. How can one remember after the witnesses have gone? What forms do cinematic representations take after Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*? What does German memorial culture look like after Peter Eisenman's *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* has been integrated within the German politics of national self-representation? What

happened with European comic books after Art Spiegelman's *Maus*? What shape does Holocaust remembrance take after Austria's public recognition of historical guilt, or after the intense public debates caused by Jan T. Gross's *Neighbors* in Poland? What are the repercussions of the 2000 Stockholm declaration in Sweden on the European politics of memory?

The essays are organized in four parts whose thematic concerns overlap and merge rather than remain separate. Familiar thematic engagements with the return of the repressed and the presence of the uncanny in recent commemorative practices and devices, questions of transfer of memory from living to mediated memory, the relations of memory sites with identity politics, and the preoccupation with Auschwitz as a site and a symbol are revisited against new and hardly discussed artworks. Taken as a whole, the essays offer a diverse range of insights upon the relevance of a creative and reflective mediation of the Holocaust within the evolving temporal and ethical framework in the post-witness era.

Part I reconsiders the aesthetics and politics of practices of commemoration. The rise of the device of listing, frequently employed in Holocaust memorialization, needs critical attention especially because listing is already contaminated by Nazi history. Its unreflective adoption by commemorative culture cannot go unnoticed or unchallenged, argues Ernst van Alphen. The continued need for reflective art and its potential to make visible that which is concealed emerges in Jacob Lund's and James E. Young's engagements with Esther Shalev-Gerz's installations *Between Listening and Telling: Last Witnesses, Auschwitz 1945–2005* (2005) and *The Human Aspect of Objects* (2006). Both essays are concerned with how deep memory is communicated through gestures and silences from the prism of the 'countermonument' (Young), and the lens of philosophical reflections upon the meaning of silence (Lund). In the post-witness era, memory needs imagination's resourcefulness to decipher, interpret and translate the silences of survivors and endow them with meaning.

Observing the effect memorial art has upon the public can tell us more about the next directions public commemoration may take to meet the audiences' expectations, imaginations and memories. Tracy Jean Rosenberg's reading of Berlin's memorials through the notion of the sacred and the profane reveals visitors' expectations and behaviours at memory sites and makes visible how recent memorial design, through its blurring of separation between sacred and profane, challenges us to rethink our engagement with these sites. The current focus on Berlin as the centre of Germany's national remembrance may also shift. Hence, Imke Girßmann explores the notion of decentralized memory work by comparing Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock's well-known project *Places of Remembrance* in Berlin-Schöneberg (1993) with Michaela Melián's audio project *Memory Loops* (2010) in Munich.

Part II asks what happens when younger generations of Poles, Jews or Swedes encounter the sites of mass murder. What perspectives do physical

proximity to Auschwitz make possible? What is gained or lost through temporal lapse? Why is it (ir)relevant to gain distance? How can one reconcile the urgency for remembrance and the moral responsibilities of preserving the legacies of the Holocaust with the tendency to take a step backward from this past? Conceptual, emotional and intellectual struggles with places where horrific crimes were committed are made apparent in Tanja Schult's and Jan Borowicz's examination of Polish and Swedish contemporary art and literature, Ceri Eldin's analysis of Swedish video art, and Erica Lehrer's and Magdalena Waligórska's reading of *Spring in Warsaw*, an Israeli public participatory performance in the Polish capital. Questions of engagement with the site of Auschwitz re-emerge in Tim Cole's interrogation of the changes and continuities in tourist practices at Auschwitz from their wartime origins to the present. These Polish landscapes become witnesses themselves to new forms of memorial work and are perpetually renewed through the diverse perceptions and experiences of contemporary visitors.

Part III deals with aspects of style, genre and narrative structure underpinning filmic and literary restagings of the Holocaust. What happens when, as Huyssen feared, the 'imagined past is sucked into the timeless present of the all-pervasive virtual space of consumer culture?' Is popular media fostering 'uncreative forgetting [and] the bliss of amnesia?' (Huyssen, 2003: 10). How does the past continue to haunt contemporary literary imagination? These unresolved questions surface in Hampus Östh Gustafsson's comparison of Norwegian-American Siri Hustvedt's *What I Loved* (2003) and Swedish Bodil Malmsten's *The Last Book from Finistère* (2008). Elizabeth M. Ward's analysis of German filmmaker Uwe Boll's *Auschwitz* (2011) grapples with historical authenticity and cinematic manipulation. How can contemporary filmmakers expose the very mechanisms of image formation? Issues of filmic re-presentations and how they involve the viewers are also central in Ingrid Lewis's investigation of women perpetrators in recent European films. The interplay between fact and fiction is tackled by Christine Gundermann through a comprehensive survey of European comics dealing with the Holocaust.

The concluding section of the volume is concerned with how the Holocaust is invoked in public debates, state memorialization and EU politics. Christian Karner looks at Austrian Jewish memory of the Holocaust from a fresh interpretative angle inspired by Avishai Margalit's categories of morality and ethics of memory. While there is much division and disagreement about how the Holocaust is invoked, its centrality for Jewish contemporary identities in Europe and in shaping interpretations of present circumstances remains unshakable. In a similar vein, through revealing case studies of art exhibitions held by the Swedish public authority the Living History Forum, Kristin Wagrell investigates the extent to which staging the Holocaust within exhibition settings can teach the country's youth about contemporary intolerance and racism. How effective is this approach in conveying historical

responsibility? Concluding the volume, Larissa Allwork evaluates the role of the Stockholm International Forum in institutionalizing Holocaust memory as a civil religion in liberal Western nation-states, and seeks to nuance our understanding of Holocaust memory within a European political discourse prone to encourage narratives that sacralize the past.

It is worth noting that the majority of the essays enclosed in this collection are authored by a younger generation of emerging researchers and academics for whom the past is largely mediated and imagined. Their contributions, read alongside essays by well-established scholars in the field document recent developments in the representation of the Holocaust as an imaginative discourse concerned with memory influenced by what the loss of the 'living connection' will signify in the future. Their contributions draw attention to a certain vicariousness of representation which invokes the workings of imagination as well as the obligation to remember. It is our wish that this volume will inspire new thoughts on the relation between memory and imagination in the context of the post-witness era, and serve as a useful resource to both specialists in the field as well as to non-specialized audiences.

Notes

1. Keightley and Pickering employ the concept 'mnemonic imagination' to explain the relationship between memory and imagination as 'an active synthesis of remembering and imagining' (2012a: 7). This refers to 'the ways in which we continuously qualify, adapt, refine and resynthesize past experience, our own and that of others, into qualitatively new understandings of ourselves and other people, including those to whom we stand in immediate or proximate relation, and those from whom we are more distant' (Keightley and Pickering, 2012b: 121). The concept is used in relation to second generation descendants of survivors, and not necessarily *vis-à-vis* those with no biographical ties to the event. While acknowledging the theoretical possibilities this may open up, we have chosen not to adopt their terminology for lack of sufficient evidence on how this concept may relate to the artistic discourse of generations far removed from this historical event.
2. See critical viewpoints by Elie Wiesel, Claude Lanzmann, Ernst van Alphen and Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi (2001).

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Part I
Revisiting Artistic Practices of Holocaust Commemoration

2
List Mania in Holocaust Commemoration

Ernst van Alphen

The rise of the archival mode in Holocaust commemoration is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although archival lists have been used widely since the end of the Second World War, they were at first not always considered to be effective as memorials. Lists were rather seen as instrumental, because they gave access to referential information. In the first few decades after the end of the war it was the narrative mode of diaries and testimonies that was viewed as the most effective means of Holocaust commemoration. The referential information provided by narrative was more extensive, comprehensive and elaborate than the basic information offered by lists.

This essay argues that since the beginning of the 21st century the archival mode is increasing in importance, especially in the form of lists. The continuing establishment of Holocaust museums and memorials seems to be an important phenomenon of the last ten years. Often these memorials are not made according to the conventional format of the monument, or of the counter-monument (another important trend in the 1990s, in addition to perpetrator art, that has become a convention in itself; see Young, 1994). Many of the recent memorials consist of lists, are presented in digital form and can be visited on the web. The most well-known example is probably the redesigned Hall of Names at Yad Vashem in Israel, reopened in 2005. The Hall of Names commemorates every Jew who perished in the Holocaust. It houses the extensive collection *Pages of Testimony* – a listing of short biographies of each Holocaust victim.[1] Over two million pages are stored in this collection. In close connection to the Hall of Names exists the digital *Shoah Names Database*, initiated in 1999, in which the names and biographical details of two-thirds of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis have been collected and recorded.[2]

Another example of a memorial consisting of a list and being digital is *Digitaal Monument Joodse Gemeenschap* in the Netherlands (Digital Monument Jewish Community). The historian Isaac Lipschits initiated this digital monument in the year 2000 and since 2005 it can be visited and consulted on the web. The main goal of this website is to be a memorial. It

wants to keep alive the memory of all Dutch Jews who died in the Holocaust. This means that around 101,800 victims are being commemorated by listing them with their names, date, place and country of birth, and the date and camp where they were killed. In case more information about a specific person is available, for example partner, children and other relatives, it is also added on a subsequent page. The second goal of this work is educational: to offer later generations the chance to find out about the Dutch Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

In the Netherlands another impressive memorial has been established, although this one is not digital. It is devoted to all Jewish and Roma children in the Netherlands who were killed during the Holocaust. It is titled *In Memoriam: De gedeporteerde en vermoorde Joodse, Roma en Sinti kinderen 1942–1945*. (In Memoriam: The Deported and Killed Jewish, Roma and Sinti Children 1942–1945) This memorial was first presented in 2012 in the form of an exhibition, then in book format. Its initiator, Guus Luijters, was inspired by the project of Serge Klarsfeld in France, who already in 1995 published *Mémorial des enfants juifs déportés de France*. What these two memorials of children have in common is that adding photographs of the children to the listed names and dates compensates the factuality and impersonality of lists. The issue I would like to address in this essay is what exactly do these recent memorials, digital or not, perform when they are based on the genre or format of the list and the activity of listing. Within Holocaust Studies and Holocaust commemoration the format of the list is highly respected as well as highly problematic. It is respected because *all* victims can be acknowledged and represented. Not by means of one symbol or allegory that is supposed to represent all victims, but through their own individual names and through information that confirms the individuality of those persons, like date of birth and date on which their life ended. That same activity of listing is, however, also problematic because the genre of listing is potentially contaminated by its history, as the Nazis had particularly excelled in listing.

Killing through Archiving

The Nazis pursued what they called *restlose Erfassung*, which means a total registering, without loose ends; an expression that connotes also 'all-embracing seizure'. This ambition led to a fanatic policy of counting, making lists and conducting censuses. Keeping the registry of the inhabitants of the German Reich up-to-date was the main task of the Bureau for Publications of the SS Security Office, the so-called *Sicherheitsdienst*. But the total registering did not stop with the registration of all inhabitants of the Reich; it was also performed in the concentration camps. In other words, the Nazis excelled as archivists. Let me explain in more detail which structural principles of the camps can be characterized as archival. In many

concentration camps the Nazis were fanatic in making lists of all the people who were put on transport, who entered the camps; whether they went to the labour camps, or went directly to the gas chambers. It is thanks to the existence of these lists that after the liberation it was possible in many cases to find out if the detainees had survived, and if not, in which camp and on which date they had been killed (for the role of the archive in Nazism see Ketelaar, 2002).

On arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau, detainees would get a number tattooed on their arm, being in this way transformed into archived objects. They were no longer individuals with a name, but objects with a number. Like objects in an archive or museum, the inscription classified them as traceable elements within a collection. Upon entering the camps they were also sorted into groups: men with men, women with women; children, old people and pregnant women to the gas chambers. Political prisoners, resistance fighters, were not mixed with Jews, and received no tattooed numbers on their arms. Artists, musicians, architects were usually sent to camps like Theresienstadt. Selecting and sorting on the basis of a fixed set of categories are basic archival activities and so is the making of lists.

When Holocaust memorials or artworks are based on the format of the list, they can be responsible for producing uncanny effects. In my earlier work I called this a Holocaust effect (Van Alphen, 1997). Listing creates an effect of the Holocaust because it adopts, usually unreflectively, processes or devices that were also used by the Nazis in implementing the Holocaust.[3] The making of lists was a crucial device. Guus Luijters, responsible for the *In Memoriam* (2012a) for the Jewish children, is not unaware of the fact that he deploys Nazi categories for his memorial. He explains that when we use the term 'Jewish children' we in fact use Nazi definitions and terminology. He quotes from Deborah Dwork's *Children with a Star* (1993) to explain why these Nazi categories are problematic: 'It is not new, but it should be said again that the deployment of racial – and racist – laws that were adopted or imposed all over Europe, identified many people as Jewish, many people who did not consider themselves as Jewish' (Dwork, 1993: 12). Yet Dwork uses the term 'Jewish children' on purpose, and so does Luijters. He is well aware of the fact that terms like 'transit camp', 'transport', 'Jewish counsel', 'mixed marriage', 'list', 'selection', 'transport list' are contaminated terms, which conceal the truth. Still we have to use these terms, according to Luijters. He does not explain why.

But using the terms 'list' and 'transport list' as a way of giving insight into Nazi historical reality, is not the same as using listing as a device for making a memorial. A memorial that is based on listing, as most of our contemporary memorials are, does not necessarily convey historical knowledge about the Nazi past or Nazi practices. At first sight its use seems to be unreflective and highly contaminated by the Nazi use of it. That is why I argue that memorials, which use listing as their main device do not only

commemorate the Holocaust, they also create Holocaust effects. Therefore, my question should be reformulated in the following way: can the production of Holocaust effects be an effective and responsible way of Holocaust commemoration? 'Listing' then is a performative verb. In order to answer this question, I will first discuss several art works that are highly self-reflexive in their deployment of the device of listing. They use the list in order to understand and expose what a list is and what a list does.

The Referentiality of Lists

The representational genre of the list is often legitimized by its referential efficiency: a list does not refer generally, metaphorically, but refers to all items, all individuals, in the case of a Holocaust memorial, to all victims, by explicitly mentioning them all. French artist Christian Boltanski who has turned listing into a privileged practice for making art works, explores this referential function of listing.

   Boltanski has produced many artist books, usually in the context of an exhibition. They are not catalogues documenting the exhibition; they demonstrate in the material form of the book the issues that are also at stake, but differently, in the framework of the museum exhibition. Those books usually consist of lists. They list photographs, items, names, descriptions of art works and the like. Let me list a few of these books in order to give some examples of Boltanski's obsession with listing:

- In *Liste des artistes ayant participé à la Biennale de Venise 1895–1995* (1995), Boltanski lists the names of artists who have been shown at the Biennale of Venice.
- In *Erwerbungen rheinischer Kunstmuseen in den Jahren 1935–1945* (1993c), Boltanski lists all the acquisitions of museums in the Rhineland area in Germany between 1935 and 1945.
- In *Diese Kinder suchen ihre Eltern* (1994a), he lists the posters printed by the Red Cross of children who were left displaced or homeless in devastated post-war Germany. Each poster has a portrait of the child and information on special characteristics in an attempt to find a family for them again.
- In *Archives* (1989), he lists photographs which he cut in 1972 from a weekly journal about crime. The listing shows the faces of perpetrators and victims without indicating the difference.
- In *Liste des Suisses morts dans le canton du Valais en 1991* (1993a), he lists all Swiss inhabitants of the canton Valais who died in the year 1991. The list is organized on the basis of the days of that year, of who died on which day in 1991.
- In *Archive of the Carnegie International 1896–1991* (1992a), he lists alphabetically the names of the artists who were included in the Carnegie

international shows between 1896 and 1991, indicating in each case in which year they were presented. Boltanski is himself included in the list. His work was shown in 1991.

- In *Les Suisses morts* (1991), he lists the portraits of people who died in the Swiss canton Valais. These portraits were taken from obituary notices of the deceased, cut from the regional Swiss paper *Le nouveliste du Valais* in the 1980s.

   In yet another artist book Boltanski demonstrates the fact that the referential function of lists is to a certain extent illusionary. This book consists of the real telephone directory of the Swedish town Malmö. The directory is from the year 1993. All he changed was the cover of the original directory. A white sheet of paper was glued on top of the original cover, printed with the name of the artist, the name of the museum responsible for this publication (Malmö Konsthall), and the title *Les habitants de Malmö* (The Inhabitants of Malmö, 1993b). The telephone directory as artist book foregrounds how the referential nature of pragmatic lists is ultimately illusionary. The referentiality begins to evaporate from the moment such a listing is being performed. More and more people of the list will move to other places or they will die. After some time the list only provides the names of people who once lived in Malmö but who are now gone or dead. Boltanski foregrounds the illusionary referentiality of the directory by adding a four-page errata to the directory. A three-page list of names of people is introduced by the following statement 'You can't reach these inhabitants of Malmö on the phone anymore. They died in 1993' (Boltanski, 1993b: n.p.). Boltanski's telephone directory creates a Holocaust effect comparable to what his well-known installations do, but this time it is the listing of names that is responsible for it. Over time the directory becomes a memorial of all the former inhabitants of Malmö. Similarly to what Boltanski did with the Malmö telephone directory, the referential function of these previously mentioned lists is challenged. But the way he undermines the referential function is now different. These lists stand for human beings or objects in the real world. Like arrows they refer to them. But in small remarks in the introductions to these artist books Boltanski redirects their representational function. In the case of the book project *Diese Kinder suchen ihre Eltern* (These children are looking for their parents) he introduces the Red Cross posters in the following way:

> Now fifty years have passed, and when I look at the faces of these lost children I find myself trying to imagine what has become of them. They have become part of the post-war history of Germany with all its changes. Has fate brought them happy or unhappy lives, made them rich or poor? I would like to find them again. They are about my own age, and their history is similar in some ways to mine, to ours. We too, are in search of our parents. (Boltanski, 1994a: 7)

The referential reading of the list transforms into a metaphorical reading of it. Whereas the portraits in combination with the added information first referred to specific children, now grown up, Boltanski reads the listed portraits in what they have in common with himself, or with anybody: in one way or another we are all looking for our parents. Whereas the enumeration of lists is usually seen as an alternative for articulation by means of analogy or symbolization, Boltanski creates analogies on the basis of enumeration. His reading of the list is metaphorical. The same semiotic transformation takes place in the presentation of his book *Les Suisses morts* (The Dead Swiss). Explaining why this book exclusively focuses on Swiss people, he states the following:

> Previously I made works concerned with dead Jews. But 'Jew' and 'dead' go too well together, the combination is too illuminating. By contrast, there is nothing more normal than the Swiss. There is really no reason at all why they should die; in a certain sense they are more frightening, because they are like us. (Boltanski, 1993a: 86)

Boltanski reads the list of dead Swiss as a *memento mori*, as a warning that we should all remember our mortality. The referentiality of the list is not completely cancelled but it is overruled by the analogy with the fact that the mortality of these Swiss people is not different from our mortality.

What exactly enables Boltanski's reading of lists as metaphorical instead of as referential? Although each item in the list has a referent, the fact that the list as such makes the impression of being endless makes the referentiality lose its specificity. The referentiality becomes general or abstract, which creates a paradox. The gradual evaporation of referentiality is an effect produced by listing: the more endless the list, the less specific its referentiality. When the referential function loses its strength, the symbolic reading of the list imposes itself.

Seen from this paradoxical effect of listing it is not really surprising that since the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC in 1982, designed by Maya Lin, so many other memorials have been modelled on this memorial consisting of a list of all US military who died in Vietnam. The listing of individual names seems to make these soldiers' referentially present.[4] Each name stands for a soldier who died. Their absence or death is momentarily transcended; referentially they are made present again. But the listing, seemingly endless, of all those names has an opposite effect. These memorials are so effective because the listing results in an overwhelming effect of absence. Ultimately, it is the incredible, that is, uncountable number of the people who died that overwhelms us. Whereas each individual soldier can be imagined, made 'present' by means of a referential name or portrait, the endlessness of the list cannot be imagined. The unimaginable number of people who died strikes us by their absence. This is the moment

that the referential function transforms into a metaphorical – or symbolic – one, and the pragmatic list that can be consulted to know who died, transforms into a memorial for all those who died. And perhaps also into a *memento mori* for those who still have to die. The success of such memorials in the form of a list depends entirely on the dissolution of referentiality.

The Imposition of Categories

Boltanski's obsessive listing shows another problem with the referentiality of pragmatic lists. At different moments in his career Boltanski published artist books that consist of inventories of his own works. Whereas Marcel Duchamp archived his oeuvre by means of the archival practice of storage in his *Green* and *White Box*, Boltanski archives his oeuvre by means of a listing of his works. In 1992 he published a so-called *Catalogue* (Boltanski, 1992b). This catalogue lists chronologically all his books, printed matter and 'Ephemera' of the period 1966 to 1991. His other art works, installations and exhibitions are not included in this list. All items are numbered; the list consists of 80 items. The *Catalogue* looks like a real catalogue: it has no image on the cover, only the name of the artist, the title and the names of the publishers (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln; Portikus, Frankfurt am Main). It could be the kind of catalogue that is used in archives or museums. In 2009 Boltanski published a book titled *Archives*. This book looks like a typical archival cahier that is used in archives or libraries for archival recording. It looks administrative, utterly functional and objective. This archival cahier is wrapped in the kind of plastic bag that is also used in archives to protect documents, to keep them acid free and dust free. The archival 'look' of Boltanski's books and catalogues is strongest and most convincing in the case of the publication titled *Lost* (1994b), made on the occasion of exhibitions in 1994 in Glasgow, Dublin and Halifax. This publication consists of a cardboard sleeve containing a folder that can be closed with an elastic band. The folder contains several folders with papers, and index cards organized in bundles. The form of this publication looks in all details like the folders used in archives for keeping documents. Also the index cards inescapably evoke archival organization. *Archives* (2009) lists all of his works that were not included in the earlier catalogue of his books and printed matters. It contains a *catalogue raisonné*, a list of publications about his work, a list of personal exhibitions, and a list of collective exhibitions. The *catalogue raisonné* is organized on the basis of the different 'genres' practised by Boltanski: his paintings, his reference vitrines, his inventories, his family albums, his biscuit tins, and more.

The fact that Boltanski published listings of his own works at different moments in his career demonstrates that those listings are already not complete the moment that they appear. The catalogue that lists all of his books and printed matter is itself not included in the inventory in which

this listing is performed. This indicates that listing is a time-bound process: it lists past items, but not present or future items. In the case of a living artist such listing can never be complete. If total control in the sense of complete overview is being intended, then this listing should take the form of an open-ended practice. But the two listings by Boltanski of his own works point also at another characteristic of listing. Listing is the result of distinctions imposed on the work. One listing concerns his artist books and printed matter, the other one his other artistic works, his installations and exhibitions. Of course, this is a very conventional distinction because the genre of the book is ambiguous, not only used by artists but also by writers. To make a separate list for this ambiguous genre seems at first sight not arbitrary and imposed on the work, but seems almost 'natural' and inherent to the kind of work. Another one of Boltanski's lists makes the arbitrariness of categories imposed on the work more visible. In his *Inventaire du Cabinet d'art graphique 1977–1998* he lists the acquisitions of the Prints and Drawings Department of the Centre Pompidou in Paris between 1977 and 1998. Curator Jonas Storsve explains in the introduction that Boltanski's listing did not pursue completeness but was the result of strict distinctions and categories imposed on all prints and drawings. They were the following:

- aesthetic criteria do not matter;
- the listing concerns the artist who had entered the collection not his or her works; each artist is going to be presented by one work, arbitrarily chosen;
- the artists are listed alphabetically;
- works with the following characteristics will not be included in the list:
  – those of which the size is bigger than one metre
  – those that consist of oil paint on paper
  – works that incorporate lamps
  – architectural drawings
  – carnets and artist books
  – the collection of illustrations titled *L'oiseau qui n'existe pas* of which the first donation was done before the official opening of the Centre Pompidou
  – diptyques
  – works that consist of series of which each part is framed independently
  – oeuvres that consist of volumes
  – drawings representing a rhinoceros. (Boltanski, 2000: n.p.)

Especially the rules of exclusion turn Boltanski's list into a Borgesian list that is the result of arbitrary, incomprehensible distinctions and categories. The first criterion, aesthetic criteria do not matter, imposes negatively a distinction on the prints and drawings collection of a museum that is usually central to art museums. Whereas museums and archives are closely related