



Otto Dix, Judenfriedhof in Randegg im Winter mit Hohenstoffeln, Gemälde Moderne Galerie, Öl auf Holz, 1935.



Heinrich Knirr, Führerbildnis, 1937.

Mies van der Rohe Bau – Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin

La *Neue Nationalgalerie* est le seul bâtiment de Ludwig Mies van der Rohe qui a été construit en Allemagne après la Seconde Guerre mondiale¹. Werner Haftmann, premier directeur de la *Neue Nationalgalerie*, a décrit cette architecture muséographique comme² « [...] *das erste Kunstwerk, das dem Besucher entgegentritt*³ ». Selon Joachim Jäger, c'est plus qu'un musée ou un bâtiment, c'est un jalon dans l'histoire de l'architecture, un monument, une icône⁴. Seulement trois matériaux de construction ont été utilisés pour la construction⁵ entre 1965 et 1968⁶ : De l'acier peint en noir, du verre et du granit⁷. En effet, pour leur architecte allemand et dernier directeur du Bauhaus (1930-1933)⁸, le plus simple était aussi le meilleur⁹. « *Auf einem granitverkleideten Sockel erhebt sich das quadratische Stahldach einer glasverkleideten Halle* »¹⁰. Mais la simplicité de la *Neue Nationalgalerie* est un 'trompe l'œil'. Comme les temples de l'Antiquité, elle a été minutieusement construite à la main avec des pièces faites sur mesure mais bien sûr avec la technologie moderne¹¹. La *Neue Nationalgalerie* se compose de trois "espaces centraux": Le *Sockelgeschoss* au sous-sol, également appelé *Museumsgeschoss* ou *Sammlungsgeschoss*, le *Skulpturengarten* qui lui est adjacent, et la *Ausstellungshalle* en verre située au rez-de-chaussée sur le *Sockelgeschoss*. La *Ausstellungshalle* est accessible par un escalier en granit de l'avant. Les plus grandes surfaces de la galerie sont faites de granit et des dalles de granit ont donc été utilisées dans le hall d'exposition, sur la terrasse, au socle, dans le jardin et au sous-sol¹². Les espaces de la galerie ont été entièrement 'relocalisés' au sous-sol. C'est ce qui a rendu possible la *Ausstellungshalle* sous la forme d'un pavillon en verre. Jusqu'à ce jour, cette salle d'exposition a créé un certain mythe du bâtiment. La salle de 50 mètres sur 50 est "ouverte" de tous les côtés et est couronnée par un toit monumental en acier¹³. Le toit pèse 1200 tonnes et ses dimensions sont à nouveau carrées, 65 par 65 mètres¹⁴. Michael Staffa et Christian Hartmann soulignent que le *Sockelgeschoss* respectivement le sous-sol accueille les fonctions nécessaires pour que la *Ausstellungshalle* puisse rester libre. Cet espace vitré, ce pavillon de verre correspond donc aux exigences de Ludwig Mies van der Rohe en matière de plan universel¹⁵. « *Umgekehrt ist der universale Grundriss die Rechtfertigung für den von Wänden befreiten Raum*¹⁶. » Ce principe déterminera le choix de la structure porteuse, à savoir pas de

¹ Cf. SMB (online)a/ Sontag 1969, p.2.

² Haftmann 1969, p. 14.

³ Haftmann 1969, p. 14.

⁴ Cf. Jäger 2011, p. 11.

⁵ Cf. Wienhold 1969, p. 5.

⁶ Cf. SMB (online)a.

⁷ Cf. Wienhold 1969, p. 5.

⁸ Cf. Hildebrand 1996, p. 9.

⁹ Cf. Wienhold 1969, S. 5.

¹⁰ Sontag 1969, p. 2.

¹¹ Cf. Staffa/Hartmann 1996, pp. 70-71.

¹² Cf. Neue Nationalgalerie (online)a.

¹³ Cf. Jäger 2011, p. 11.

¹⁴ Cf. Neue Nationalgalerie (online)b.

¹⁵ Cf. Staffa/Hartmann 1996, p. 58.

¹⁶ Staffa/Hartmann 1996, p. 58.

supports internes à la pièce, considérés comme "gênants", mais une grille de poutres soutenue par des colonnes en bordure¹⁷. Le toit est donc soutenu par seulement huit colonnes. Le *Altes Museum* de Karl Friedrich Schinkel et ses 18 colonnes ioniques en ont été le modèle. Le *Altes Museum* de Schinkel n'est pas la seule source d'inspiration de la *Neue Nationalgalerie*. Mies van der Rohe a conçu le *Skulpturengarten* comme une extension de l'espace du musée, le sous-sol. Il a pris pour modèle le jardin du MOMA de New York, qui, comme dans la *Neue Nationalgalerie*, est directement adjacent aux salles de collection et est également bordé d'un haut mur¹⁸. «*Blickachsen zwischen den Sammlungsräumen und dem Garten schaffen Sichtbezüge, die ganz im Sinne von Mies eine Einheit von Architektur, Natur und Kunst bilden*¹⁹». Le premier bâtiment avec le «*[...]Konzept eines durch freistehende Wandscheiben gegliederten kontinuierlichen Raumgefüges[...]*²⁰» van der Rohe avait déjà pu le réaliser avec le pavillon de Barcelone, le pavillon d'exposition allemand de l'exposition universelle de 1929²¹. Le concept, initialement proposé pour le *Bacardi-Verwaltungsgebäude* à Santiago de Cuba (1957-1960) et non réalisé, a été largement adopté par Mies van der Rohe pour le musée Schäfer à Schweinfurt et pour la *Neue Nationalgalerie*. Le *Bacardi-Verwaltungsgebäude* ne devait abriter que des installations techniques au *Sockelgeschoss*, tandis que la *Neue Nationalgalerie* devait accueillir la collection permanente, les bureaux administratifs, les ateliers, les salles de stockage et les salles des machines²². Mies van der Rohe a délibérément fait remplacer les murs de la salle d'exposition par des vitres afin de briser les barrières entre l'espace de vie, le monde extérieur et les œuvres d'art. Mies van der Rohe a compris la *Neue Nationalgalerie* comme une maison ouverte et a voulu créer une transition presque invisible entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur et une ouverture délibérée pour le grand public²³. Les grandes surfaces vitrées du hall d'exposition sont destinées à créer un dialogue avec l'environnement urbain. Selon l'idée de Mies van der Rohe, l'isolement de l'art est ainsi quelque peu supprimé. Selon son ordre, par exemple, les rideaux ne doivent être tirés qu'en cas de fort ensoleillement, mais la transparence des rideaux permet au visiteur de voir les silhouettes des bâtiments environnants²⁴. Depuis son ouverture en 1968, la *Neue Nationalgalerie* n'a jamais fait l'objet d'une révision complète. Depuis 2015, la *Neue Nationalgalerie* a été rénovée par Chipperfield Architects et achevée en avril 2021²⁵. Il a été à nouveau ouvert au grand public le 22 août 2021. Le but de cette rénovation était d'éliminer les risques de sécurité, les déficiences et les dommages et la «*[...]visuelle Integrität des Denkmals zu wahren und so viel historische Bausubstanz wie möglich zu erhalten*²⁶»²⁷. Si l'apparence du bâtiment de Mies van der Rohe

¹⁷ Hildebrand 1996, pp. 25- 27.

¹⁸ Cf. *Neue Nationalgalerie* (online)c.

¹⁹ *Neue Nationalgalerie* (online)c.

²⁰ Hildebrand 1996, p. 9.

²¹ Cf. Hildebrand 1996, p. 9.

²² Cf. Hildebrand 1996, p. 16.

²³ Cf. *Neue Nationalgalerie* (online)d.

²⁴ Cf. Pauli 1996, p. 84.

²⁵ David Chipperfield Architects (online)/ SMB (online).

²⁶ SMB (online)a.

²⁷ Cf. SMB (online)a.

n'a été que très peu modifiée²⁸, son environnement et sa collection, ou plutôt ce qui y est présenté, ont beaucoup changé au fil du temps. Lorsque le bâtiment Mies van der Rohe a été inauguré en 1968, Berlin était encore divisé entre Ostberlin et *Westberlin*. La Neue Nationalgalerie était située dans la périphérie de *Westberlin*. Mais avec le *Mauerfall*, le *Mies van der Rohe Bau* s'est soudainement retrouvé au centre de Berlin et a donc été 'déplacé' vers le centre²⁹. «*Inbesondere der neu gebaute Potsdamer Platz veränderte die Situation, bescherte dem Museum eine bewegte Umgebung, die sich in der oberen Halle als urbane Kulisse darbietet*³⁰». Aujourd'hui, la Neue Nationalgalerie fait partie du *Kulturforum*, un lieu d'art, de culture et de recherche, et se caractérise par sa grande diversité³¹. La Philharmonie se trouvait déjà dans le '*Kulturforum*' avant la construction de la *Neue Nationalgalerie* et de la *Staatsbibliothek* dans la rue opposée, à peu près à la même époque. La *Kammermusiksaal* à côté de la Philharmonie a suivi. Le *Kunstgewerbemuseum*, le *Kupferstichkabinett*, la *Gemäldegalerie* et la *Kunstbibliothek* font également partie du *Kulturforum*. Il est prévu de construire un nouveau bâtiment à proximité immédiate de la *Neue Nationalgalerie* respectivement «*[...]eine dringend notwendige Ausstellungsfläche [...]*³² pour l'art du 20e siècle, afin que la collection de la *Neue Nationalgalerie* puisse être présentée de manière exhaustive et permanente³³. Considérant qu'en 1962, le Sénat de Berlin a chargé Mies van der Rohe de construire un musée pour l'art du XXe siècle³⁴. Principalement en raison de l'ouverture de la Hamburger Bahnhof comme lieu d'art contemporain et de la réorganisation des collections de la *Neue Nationalgalerie* après 1990, le Mies van der Rohe Bau est devenu exclusivement un lieu d'art du XXe siècle. La collection va de l'expressionnisme allemand au modernisme occidental international de la fin du XXe siècle. La *Ausstellungshalle* est réservé aux projets spéciaux. En raison de l'architecture unique, tout n'est pas possible et les projets sont donc judicieux qui³⁵ «*[...] ganz spezifisch auf diese Architektur eingehen, Stellung beziehen und nur an diesem Ort denkbar sind*³⁶». Susanne von Falkenhausen déclare à propos de la *Ausstellungshalle* qu'elle est essentiellement destinée à accueillir des sculptures ultramodernes et qu'elle n'est pas faite pour les peintures³⁷. Pour que la collection du modernisme classique puisse également être vue pendant la rénovation de la *Neue Nationalgalerie*, un espace d'exposition a été aménagé à son intention dans la Hamburger Bahnhof en novembre 2015, la "*Neue Galerie*"³⁸. La *Neue Nationalgalerie* a ouvert ses portes avec la présentation de la collection *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, qui comprend des peintures et des sculptures datant de 1900 à 1945, réalisées par des artistes tels qu'Otto Dix, Hannah Höch et Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Il y avait également des

²⁸Cf. David Chipperfield Architects (online).

²⁹ Cf. Jäger 2011, p. 12.

³⁰ Cf. Jäger 2011, p. 12.

³¹ Cf. SMB (online)b.

³² SMB (online)b.

³³ Cf. SMB (online)b.

³⁴ Cf. SMB (online)a.

³⁵ Cf. Jäger 2011, p. 12-13.

³⁶ Jäger 2011, p. 13

³⁷ Cf. Von Falkenhausen 2014, p. 97.

³⁸Cf. SMB (online)c.

expositions personnelles d'Alexander Calder et de Rosa Barba, ainsi qu'un espace d'exposition dédié à l'histoire de la construction de la *Nationalgalerie*³⁹. L'exposition de Calder ait spécialement conçu pour la *Ausstellungshalle*⁴⁰. Le week-end d'ouverture, du 20 au 22 août 2021, était accompagné du "SUNDAY OPEN featuring Mies in Mind" auquel trente galeries de Berlin ont participé⁴¹.

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³⁹ Cf. SMB (online)d.

⁴⁰ Cf. SMB (online) e.

⁴¹ Cf. *Index Berlin* (online)/ *Kunstforum* (online).

SMB (online)c: «Nationalgalerie. Sammlung der Nationalgalerie», *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (online), Consulté le 19.08.2021: Über die Sammlung <https://www.smb.museum/museen-einrichtungen/neue-nationalgalerie/sammeln-forschen/sammlung/>

SMB (online)d: «Neue Nationalgalerie. Profil der Neuen Nationalgalerie», *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (online), Consulté le 19.08.2021: Profil der Neuen Nationalgalerie <https://www.smb.museum/museen-einrichtungen/neue-nationalgalerie/ueber-uns/profil/>

SMB (online)e: «Neue Nationalgalerie. Wiedereröffnung der Neuen Nationalgalerie ab 22. August 2021», *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (online), Consulté le 20.08.2021: <https://www.smb.museum/museen-einrichtungen/neue-nationalgalerie/ueber-uns/nachrichten/detail/wiedereroeffnung-der-neuen-nationalgalerie-ab-22-august-2021/>

III. Appendice

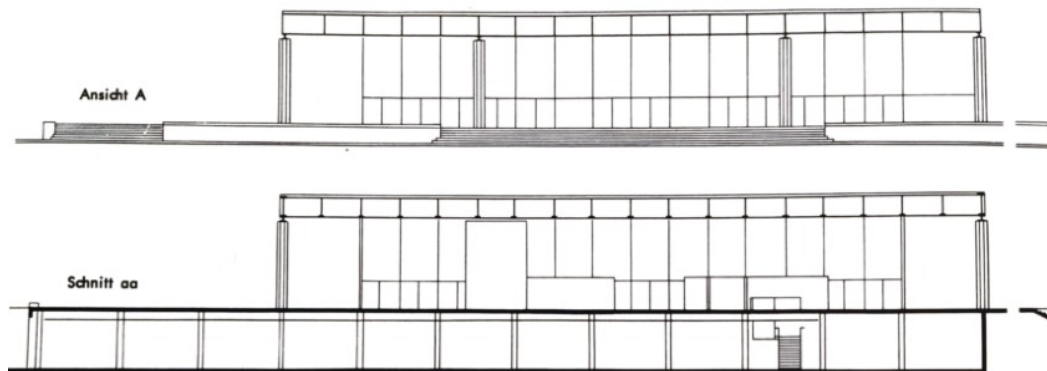


Fig. 1: Neue Nationalgalerie, Ansicht A et Schnitt aa., in: *Beratungsstelle für Stahlverwaltung, Düsseldorf* (éd.), *Stahl und Form. Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin*, Düsseldorf: Verlag Stahleisen m.b.H., 1969, p. 8.

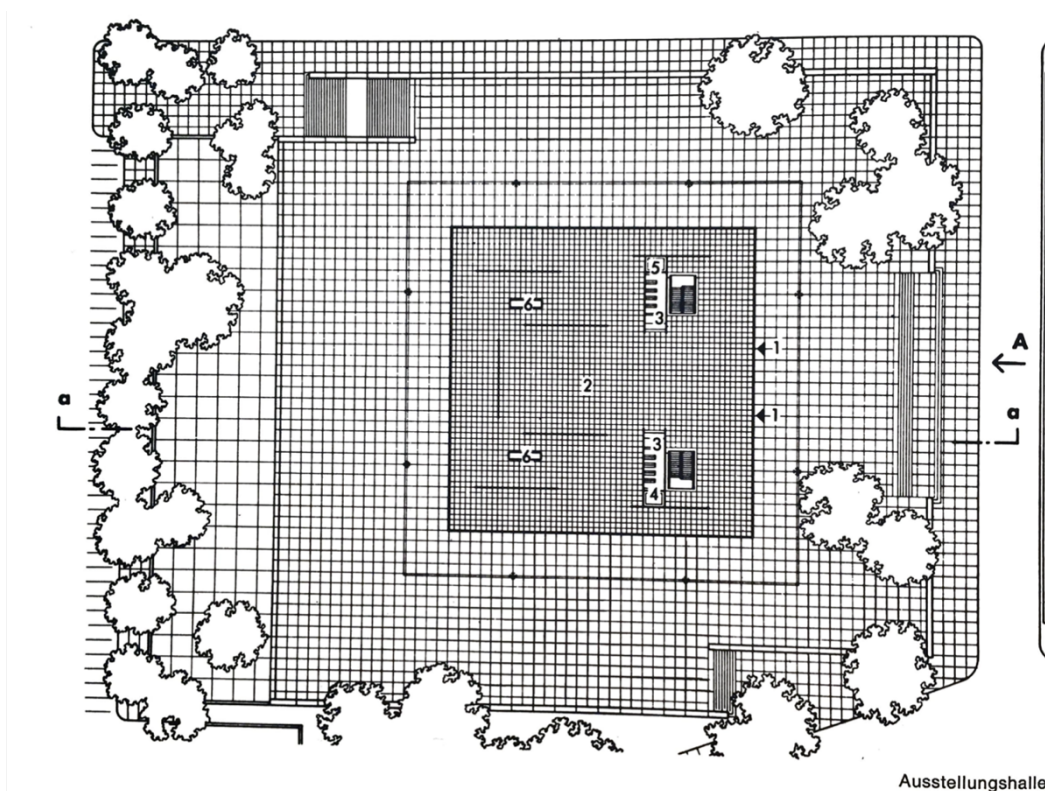


Fig. 2: Neue Nationalgalerie, Vue en plan de la *Ausstellungshalle*, in: *Beratungsstelle für Stahlverwaltung, Düsseldorf* (éd.), *Stahl und Form. Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin*, Düsseldorf: Verlag Stahleisen m.b.H., 1969, p. 8.

Ausstellungshalle

- 1 Eingang
- 2 Ausstellungshalle
- 3 Garderobe
- 4 Aufzug
- 5 Putzraum
- 6 Installationen

Museumsgeschoß
(Untergeschoß)

- 1 Laderampe
- 2 Bewag-Station
- 3 Ventilatorraum
- 4 Lager
- 5 Verpackung
- 6 Sanitärräume
- 7 Hausmeister
- 8 Aufsichtspersonal
- 9 Bibliothek
- 10 Verwaltung
- 11 Direktor

- 12 Gemälde-
Restauration
- 13 großer Raum
- 14 kleiner Raum
- 15 Maschinenraum
- 16 Restaurant
- 17 Depot und
Nebenräume
- 18 Treppenhalle
- 19 Trafostation
- 20 technische Räume
- 21 graphisches Kabinett
- 22 Heizzentrale
- 23 Museumseingang

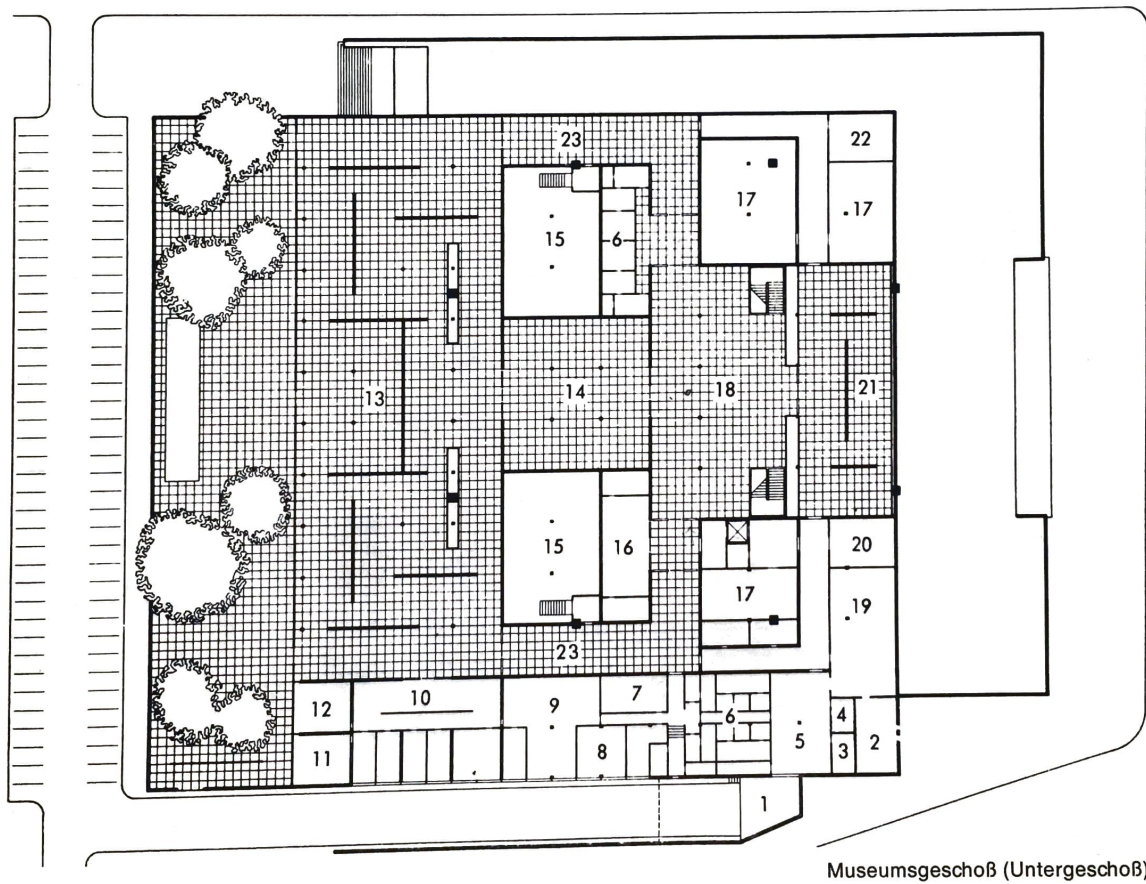


Fig. 3: Neue Nationalgalerie, Legende et vue en plan du *Museumsgeschoss*, in: *Beratungsstelle für Stahlverwaltung, Düsseldorf (éd.)*, Stahl und Form. Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin, Düsseldorf: Verlag Stahleisen m.b.H., 1969, p. 9.

Sie ist mächtig umwoben von Aura und Pathos. Und nach sechs Jahren Sanierung – Termin- und Budgetplanung wurden eingehalten – ist die Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin nun wieder geöffnet. Dieser kostbare Kunsttempel, der radikalste Museumsbau überhaupt, ist das letzte Werk des Architekten Mies van der Rohe. 1968 anlässlich der Einweihung zwar von der Fachwelt als höchst suspekt beurteilt, gilt der Bau heute als einzigartige Ikone moderner Architektur.

Der Anspruch war daher hoch. Von radikalem Neuanfang ist die Rede. Alles müsse infrage gestellt werden, die Kunstgeschichte sowieso. Die westliche Moderne insgesamt sei neu zu verhandeln, versprach der Leiter der Neuen Nationalgalerie, Joachim Jäger, und zog das heute obligatorische Büssergewand an, indem er die mangelnde globale Ausrichtung der Sammlung und fehlende «Nichtmännlichkeit» bedauerte.

Fig. 4: Extrait de texte: Daghild Bartels, «Der Neuen Nationalgalerie fehlt es offenbar an «Nichtmännlichkeit»», in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Feuilleton* (online), 24.08.202, Consulté le 28.08.2021: <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/der-neuen-nationalgalerie-fehlt-nichtmaennlichkeit-ld.1641613>.



Fig. 5: Extrait de texte: Susanne Von Falkenhausen, « Statement zur Sammlungs- und Ausstellungspolitik der Berliner Nationalgalerie », in: *Texte zur Kunst. Berlin Update*, no 94, May 2014, p. 97.

Le Forum Humboldt

I. Introduction

Le Forum Humboldt, situé au centre de Berlin, se dresse fièrement sur l'île au musée, côtoyant ainsi les institutions les plus prestigieuses de la ville. Véritable pastiche, le bâtiment est reconstruit sur le modèle de l'ancien Palais royal prussien. Le Forum est nommé en l'honneur des deux frères Humboldt, philosophes et naturalistes qui marquèrent le XVIII^e siècle¹.

L'établissement est une véritable « machine muséale »², accueillant, au moment de son ouverture, 6 expositions temporaires ainsi que les collections du musée ethnologique de Berlin et du musée des arts asiatiques de la ville, sur un total de 40'000 m²³. C'est en juillet 2021 que le Forum Humboldt ouvre enfin ses portes après 8 ans de travaux et de nombreuses polémiques qui sont d'ailleurs pour la plupart toujours d'actualité. Dès le lancement du projet, le Forum n'a en effet guère fait l'unanimité.

II. Le bâtiment

Afin de cerner au mieux les débats et polémiques liés au Forum Humboldt, il est nécessaire de revenir sur le passé de ce bâtiment. Le Forum, comme mentionné plus haut, est une reproduction de l'ancien château de Berlin, où vécurent les Hohenzollern, riche famille de princes colonisateurs jusqu'à la chute de l'Empire allemand à la fin de la première guerre mondiale. Le bâtiment est ensuite bombardé en 1945 puis rasé en 1950 par le gouvernement de la République Démocratique Allemande (RDA). Le régime communiste inaugure alors le nouveau palais de la République sur ce site. L'infrastructure combine des bâtiments du parlement ainsi que divers lieux de divertissement, tels que des cinémas ou encore des boîtes de nuit⁴. Le lieu disparaîtra à son tour en 2008, pour cause d'amiante et afin de favoriser la reconstruction du palais historique – le Forum Humboldt – qui débutera en 2013. C'est un lieu qui connaît ainsi de nombreux bouleversements tant sociaux, architecturaux, politiques que culturels et voit son visage transformé au gré des décisions des dirigeants⁵.

¹ KUSHNER Jacob, In Germany, A New Museum Stirs Up A Colonial Controversy, History&Culture, National Geographic.

² KUHN Nicolas, Eröffnung des Humboldt Forum Auf den Spuren der Geschichte taucht auch der Palast der Republik wieder auf, Der Tagesspiegel.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ NIEUWLAND Ilja, The Humboldt Forum: A Portal Between Two of Berlin's Identities?, Quioso, Heritage Projects.

⁵ HUMBOLDT FORUM, How Does the Humboldt Forum Deal With Colonial Collections?, Colonialism and Coloniality.

La reconstitution minutieuse des façades baroques – permise grâce à des fragments et des photographies historiques (cf. annexe 1) – est visible sur trois d'entre elles, tandis qu'une quatrième est de composition moderne. L'architecte italien Franco Stella joue de cette recomposition en faisant coexister architecture moderne et baroque, faisant ainsi résonner histoire du passé et regard contemporain sur le lieu⁶.

III. Polémiques

Au dévoilement de son projet, le Forum Humboldt fait déjà débat et la presse ne tarde pas à s'emparer de ce sujet brûlant (cf. Annexe 2). Les polémiques touchent à la démolition de l'ancien palais de la République. Certains y voient en effet des enjeux identitaires avec la perte potentielle d'une partie de l'histoire des habitants de l'Allemagne de l'est qui tomberait dans l'oubli. Mais c'est surtout la gestion dite « irresponsable » du patrimoine colonial allemand mené par le projet qui est grandement décriée.

Le choix de reconstruire à l'identique le palais de princes colonisateurs afin d'y accueillir les collections non européennes de la ville peut en effet paraître contradictoire et laisse à réfléchir sur la provenances de ces divers objets exposés ainsi que sur les circonstances de leur arrivée sur le sol allemand. Le *Tagesspiegel* relève que « Le public a pris conscience du fait qu'un génocide a été commis en Namibie précisément sous le règne des Hohenzollern et que des objets, voire des butins de l'époque coloniale sont désormais exposés dans les murs reconstruits de leur bâtiment représentatif »⁷. Le débat est à vif. Les articles de presse sont donc nombreux à relayer le débat, des manifestations ont lieu et certains artistes n'hésitent pas à prendre la parole pour scander leur profond désaccord et encourager une restitution des objets volés.

Objets phares de ces discussions de restitution sont les bronzes du Bénin (cf. Annexe 3). Rapportés du Nigeria (alors appelé Benin) en 1897 par les soldats britanniques, ils sont alors dispersés dans divers musées européens. Initialement programmés au Forum, ils ne seront finalement pas exposés mais au contraire inclus dans un programme de rapatriement. Cette décision fait suite à de nombreuses années de pourparlers⁸. Il s'agit sans doute, de tous les objets africains présentés dans les musées européens, de l'objet le plus médiatisé et suivi, devenant ainsi en quelque sorte le symbole de tout le débat sur la restitution⁹.

⁶ HUMBOLDT FORUM, How Does the Humboldt Forum Deal With Colonial Collections?

⁷ KUHN Nicolas, Eröffnung des Humboldt Forum Auf den Spuren der Geschichte taucht auch der Palast der Republik wieder auf.

⁸ KUSHNER Jacob, In Germany, a new museum stirs up a colonial controversy

⁹ *Ibidem*.

IV. Ce qu'en dit le Forum Humboldt

Bien conscient des discussions autour du Forum Humboldt, l'établissement s'exprime au sujet de ces débats et n'hésite pas à le faire dans une rubrique « Colonialisme et colonialité » sur son site internet (cf. Annexe 5). La rubrique renseigne sur le rôle du Forum – qui souhaite avant tout se développer dans une approche méthodologique et à travers des processus de réflexion – et fournit également une déclaration du directeur du Forum, Hartmut Dorgerloh sur sa vision du débat qui est la suivante : ¹⁰

“As a publicly funded non-profit project, the Humboldt Forum has a responsibility to reach a broad public and to act on behalf of the general public. We see our cultural work as a social responsibility to connect people and create spaces for exchange.

Whether it's the controversy over reconstructing Berlin's Hohenzollern Palace or tearing down the Palace of the Republic, the current socio-political debates about facing our colonial past, the closely-related discussion about museum collections from a colonial context, or the demands for restitution of objects from these very collections: the public discussions and debates have had a direct influence on the Humboldt Forum – both on the approach and the content of this new cultural center at the heart of Berlin. What effect do these recent public discussions now have on the Humboldt Forum?

Reflective engagement with colonialism and its consequences, as well as addressing the problem of current forms of racism at all levels of social life, are important guiding themes in the Humboldt Forum's programme and profile. In particular, this includes critical examination of Germany's colonial history and the effects of colonial practices, political imagery, and patterns of action and thought, up to the present day.

If the Humboldt Forum wants to be a place that brings together diverse perspectives and creates spaces for debate, we must include voices from diverse local and global perspectives and create trans-disciplinary approaches. The postcolonial debate, which various parties in civil society have been driving forward for many years, has reached to the heart of our society, not least through the debates surrounding the Humboldt Forum. The Humboldt Forum is committed to the practice of listening and sharing – with the hope of opening up new critical and collaborative spaces for debate and action in the future.”¹¹

L'approche du Forum Humboldt peut être perçue comme la volonté de créer un « musée universel » - expression donnée par Neil MacGregor, ancien directeur du British Museum et désormais l'un des trois directeurs fondateurs du Forum Humboldt – un lieu où les gens « de toutes les cultures pourraient venir admirer et apprendre du passé » ¹², un lieu d'échange.

V. Conclusion

Le Forum Humboldt n'est pas uniquement un bâtiment ou un espace d'exposition mais il s'impose comme un lieu qui questionne et encourage la réflexion autour de problématiques telles que la restitution d'objets ou d'œuvres d'art ou encore de la responsabilité patrimoniale des musées. Des collections non européennes sont exposées dans ce lieu qui se veut ouvert et qui a pour vocation de devenir un « modèle et une référence dans la réflexion sur le

¹⁰ HUMBOLDT FORUM, How Does the Humboldt Forum Deal With Colonial Collections.

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

¹² KUSHNER Jacob, In Germany, a new museum stirs up a colonial controversy.

colonialisme »¹³. Pourtant, la symbolique du lieu renforcée par son architecture peut paraître opposée à cette volonté d'ouverture. Cette ambiguïté architecturale semble en effet refléter la situation actuelle de l'avancement de la restitution d'œuvres pillées ; une démarche encourageante mais pourtant très lente dans les faits, une revendication qui ne cesse de questionner...

La présence d'objets issus de pillages coloniaux au sein de musées ethnologiques européens tels que le Forum Humboldt fait-elle bien sens ?

Priver des objets de toute signification symbolique ou rituelle¹⁴ en les exposant hors de leur contexte en tant que simple « objets d'exposition » ne rendrait finalement pas l'expérience totalement « ethno-illogique » ?

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¹³ DESSORGE Pierre, *Musée, avec le Forum Humboldt, l'Allemagne voit ressurgir son passé douloureux*, TV5Monde.

¹⁴ KUSHNER Jacob, *In Germany, a new museum stirs up a colonial controversy*.

VII. Annexes

Annexe 1



Figure 1. Le palais de Berlin vu du ciel, fin des années 1920



Figure 2. Palais de la République, peu de temps après l'ouverture, vu de l'ouest, vers 1976



Figure3. Humboldt Forum, vu de l'est, 2021

Annexe 2 – Article du National Geographic – In Germany, a new museum stirs up a colonial controversy, de Jacob Kushner, 16 décembre 2020

Berlin's Humboldt Forum is reigniting debate over who has the right to own and display Africa's heritage.

For years, the head of a queen sat in storage in a building in Berlin. Her face is smooth, but her head is intricately engraved and topped with a crown befitting a *lyoba*—a matriarch figure from the Kingdom of Benin, in present day Nigeria.

Carved in the early 16th century, it is one of more than a thousand metal sculptures looted by British soldiers as they plundered Benin City in 1897. In the century since, the so-called Benin Bronzes have been bought and sold by museums and private collectors across Europe and North America, and today they are among the most coveted African artifacts in the world.

All of which poses a major problem for Europe's newest museum. Twenty years in the making, Germany's Humboldt Forum opens its doors digitally this week—and intends to open physically next spring—to display thousands of artifacts from Africa, Asia, and beyond. Berlin's Ethnological Museum, from whose collection the Forum will heavily draw, currently controls some 530 Bronzes and other Benin artifacts—the second largest such collection in the world, after the British Museum. Half of the Benin collection will go on display in the Forum.

Late last week, just days before the Forum's inauguration, Nigeria's ambassador to Germany wrote a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel demanding Germany send its Benin Bronzes back, reigniting a controversy over who should have the right to own, curate, and display African heritage to the world.

Across Europe, activists are demanding the return of hundreds of thousands of African artifacts that were stolen or purchased during colonial times. “When we talk about restitution, we don't mean emptying European or American museums of their collections,” says George Abungu, former Director General of the National Museums of Kenya and an advisor to the Humboldt Forum. “The question of restitution is not about returning everything, but [rather] things that have meaning—symbolic significance, ritual meanings—that were taken away. These need to come back home.”

In 2017, President Emmanuel Macron of France, a nation that colonized large swaths of North and West Africa, declared that France would return the artifacts it stole. In 2018 Belgium, which colonized Congo, was rattled by protests calling for authorities to return some of the 180,000 African artifacts kept in the Royal Museum for Central Africa outside Brussels. The British Museum in London, which owns 69,000 artifacts from sub-Saharan Africa, has notoriously refused to give back or even loan out its improperly acquired African artifacts. (A new museum in Benin City, Nigeria, hopes to change that.)

Germany—having colonized Africa more briefly than other European powers—had so far weathered this storm relatively unnoticed. That is changing as the Humboldt Forum brings the country front and center in the restitution debate.

The Forum is located just a few streets from where, 136 years ago, Europe's leaders convened in the personal residence of King Wilhelm I to carve Africa into pieces for the colonizers. The 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, also known as the Congo Conference, was a bid by Wilhelm and Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to catch up with other colonial leaders in their race to profit from Africa's natural resources, slaves, and craftsmanship.

That controversial history is particularly difficult to overlook on account of the building that Germany's Bundestag chose to house the Forum: the Berlin Palace, the former Prussian palace where Wilhelm's successor, Wilhelm II, lived off Africa's riches.

The Humboldt Forum's long-awaited and oft-delayed inauguration comes at the peak of a global pandemic. But a delay to its physical opening may be the least of its worries. Its creators are facing a vociferous debate over whether a European museum of African artifacts should even exist.

“We as Africans are asking—what do they want to show us by rebuilding this palace of the colonialists? Do they want to show us they are still the ones in power?” says Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, a Tanzanian living in Germany who opposed the Forum's construction. “I have been in the basements in the Ethnological Museum here in Berlin. You find there are thousands and thousands of objects in there that were taken during colonial times. We Africans—we want them back.” [...]

Germany's African territories included parts of present-day Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi in East Africa; Namibia in the south; and Cameroon and Togo in the west. In 2016, the Ethnological Museum established a framework “to research the provenance of problematic holdings,” specifically the more than 10,000 artifacts from Tanzania, some of which were obtained through “violent appropriation and colonial wars.” The museum also invited scientists from Tanzania to research artifacts in the collection, fostering a cross-continental exchange.

“We have very problematic objects in the Tanzania collection, because Germans conquered Tanzania in a very violent way,” Ivanov says. “The Maji Maji wars that Germans conducted in southern Tanzania caused the deaths of at least 200,000 people. A lot of objects are connected with these violent conquests.”

Ivanov says the museum has been conducting provenance research to understand how hundreds of these items came into German hands. For instance, her team of anthropologists traced a set of sculpted figures from Cameroon and a stool from Benin back to their origins. For the Humboldt Forum's inaugural display, they surrounded these artifacts with historical files, photos, films, and other media selected with the help of African curators.

But to do the same for all of the museum's 75,000 African artifacts would be a Herculean task. “Without this research, no Humboldt Forum or ethnological museum can be opened today,” said art historian Bénédicte Savoy, who served on the Humboldt Forum's advisory board. She resigned in 2017 over what she said was the museum's failure to critically investigate its collection. Each item in the collection ought to be thoroughly vetted before being put on display, Savoy says, so that the public knows “how much blood is dripping from a work of art.” (*This forensic archaeologist has identified hundreds of stolen artifacts.*)

Bronze beauties

Of all the African artifacts in European museums, none have garnered more attention than the Benin Bronzes—which, incidentally, are made of brass as well as bronze.

“They’ve become kind of the symbol for the whole restitution debate,” says Jörg Häntzschel, who writes about museums for the German newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. “They’re like the scars of all the objects in European museums, partly because they’re really valuable.” Some have sold at global art auctions for millions of dollars.

“These Benin objects are stunningly beautiful,” says Häntzschel, who has traveled to Cameroon to see African artifacts in their original homes. “And they’re also such a clear-cut case of looting—they were all looted within a few days by this British expedition.” Many were quickly sold off to wealthy collectors in Germany and Austria. [...]

Some believe Germany has a unique responsibility to return its bronzes. After all, it was the Berlin Conference that accelerated the “scramble for Africa” and led to the looting of the bronzes and many other artifacts. Others say the Forum is an inherently racist institution and ought never to have been built. To display colonial treasure in a former imperialist palace harkens back to “times when ‘exotic curiosities’ were displayed in the ‘cabinets of wonders,’” according to No Humboldt 21, a group of activists who oppose the Forum. [...]

According to Savoy, the new museum comes at the wrong time. “Germany is redefining itself as an international, open country,” she says. “It is making huge efforts to accept people from conflict and war zones. So to make a [colonial] museum in this place at this moment—they cannot.”

The first step toward restitution of African artifacts, says Savoy, is for European museums to catalog the objects they have. Germany’s Ethnology Museum owns some half a million artifacts, but the origins of many remain unknown. Last year, the philanthropist George Soros launched a \$15-million initiative to support provenance research aimed at restituting African artwork.

Some activists have taken matters into their own hands. Mwazulu Diyabanza, who advocates for Europe to pay reparations to Africa for colonialism, has gone so far as to steal artifacts back from French museums, arguing that to steal something that was stolen is merely to return it to its rightful place. The act of stealing back African artifacts was popularized in a scene in Marvel’s hit 2018 superhero movie set in Africa, *Black Panther*.

Museum curators counter that artifacts shouldn’t be returned to Africa until there are modern, climate-controlled museums and storage facilities there in which to house them. But last year, Häntzschel discovered that Berlin’s Ethnological Museum had been storing some of its own artifacts under terrible conditions. Its Berlin storage rooms would sometimes flood, leaving artifacts ankle-deep in water. He found similar substandard conditions in museums across Germany. One museum curator told Häntzschel that as many as 15 percent of all the artifacts in Germany have not even been counted. “There is total chaos in German ethnological museums,” she said. [...]

As for the Benin Bronzes, the Forum will devote two large rooms to the Benin exhibit that describe the 1,000-year history of the Kingdom of Benin, as well as the 1897 looting by British soldiers. And in 2018 Germany’s Ethnological Museum joined a handful of other European museums in announcing they would loan back some of the bronzes for the inauguration of a new museum in Nigeria. But others argue such objects should be returned outright.

To Häntzschel, the restitution debate is “not just a question of ownership. It’s a question of how do you deal with your past? It’s a question of what do you *do* with it?”

By putting African objects into showcases and declaring them art, says Rittmeier, we are “disconnecting them from their former use, disconnecting them from being touched, from being felt.” This “cuts the ties with its history.” [...]

Annexe 3 – Les bronzes du Bénin



Annexe 4 – « Notre approche de la question du colonialisme et de la colonialité », disponible sur le site du forum Humboldt (humboldtforum.org)

Mit dem Kernthema *Kolonialismus und Kolonialität* wird sich das Humboldt Forum mit postkolonialen Perspektiven und Stimmen auseinandersetzen und eine *Methodische Praxis* entwickeln, die einen transparenten, dauerhaften Reflektionsprozess über die Kontinuität kolonialer Praktiken in unserer Arbeitsweise und unserem Selbstverständnis befördert. Damit sollen dringend notwendige Handlungsfelder und Narrative für Forschung und Kulturpraxen gefördert werden, im Hinblick auf den Umgang mit den Sammlungen wie der Aufarbeitung und Vermittlung einer gegenwärtigen kolonialen Geschichte für die Zivilgesellschaft.

Mit *Kolonialität* meinen wir all die kolonialen Denk- und Handlungsmuster, die in verschiedenen (Re-)Konfigurationen, kontinuierlich und nachhaltig, die heutigen Realitäten in ehemals kolonisierten und kolonisierenden Gesellschaften strukturieren. Damit wurden Ausbeutung, Gewalt und Genozide an „Anderen“ gerechtfertigt und jener strukturelle Rassismus konsolidiert, der nicht-weiße Menschen auch heute diskriminiert, gar tötet. Das Humboldt Forum verpflichtet sich aus der Kolonialität, die auch den Traditionen und Praktiken von Bildungs- und Kultureinrichtungen wie Museen inhärent ist, auszuscheren. Dies erfordert eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem eigenen Kanon, um binäre Ausschlussmechanismen von Aufklärung und „Moderne“ zu überwinden und marginalisierten oder sogar ausgelöschten Narrativen wieder Raum zu geben. So kann eine *Methodische Praxis* entstehen, die einerseits eine prozesshafte Auseinandersetzung mit bestehenden lokalen und globalen Machtstrukturen ermöglicht und andererseits den kontinuierlichen und kreativen Widerstand gegen oppressive Machtstrukturen würdigt. Das Humboldt Forum möchte dazu beitragen, die Komplexität der kolonialen Geschichte(n) mit ihren Verwicklungen in die Gegenwart und unser aller Lebensrealitäten sichtbar zu machen. Dem liegt die Idee zugrunde, sich ausschließlich im Zusammenhang mit der Welt zu verstehen und die Fähigkeit zu kultivieren, „Neues“ zu lernen.

DANIEL LIBESKIND, MUSÉE JUIF DE BERLIN

MEAGANE ELSIE ZURFLUH

1. Introduction

1.1. La mise au concours du projet architectural

Le projet d'un agrandissement du Musée de Berlin est lancé en 1988, et vise non seulement à étendre l'espace d'exposition du Kollegienhaus, mais aussi de donner un lieu à l'histoire juive. Puisque en effet, depuis la fermeture du "Oranienburger Strasse" en 1938, les lieux dédiés à l'Holocauste sont peu nombreux, et cela est partiellement dû à la division de l'Allemagne. De ce fait, la plus importante exposition de l'histoire juive, se situe dans le Kollegienhaus, sans pour autant y avoir la suffisance qu'elle mérite. La consigne alors donnée dans la mise au concours architecturale est d'ajouter au bâtiment baroque une superficie égale à son tiers, qui serait dédiée au 2000 ans de l'histoire des juifs dans les pays germanophones. La candidature de Daniel Libeskind « Between the Lines » se détache alors des 165 dossiers déposés, puisqu'il propose un projet qui chamboule fondamentalement la perspective donnée du bâtiment.

1.2. Le projet de Daniel Libeskind: « Between the Lines »

A la place d'intégrer la nouvelle surface d'exposition à la première bâtisse, l'architecte souhaite donner à ce bout de l'histoire ce qui semble, du moins en surface, être son propre lieu d'exposition indépendant du bâtiment d'origine. Cependant, la nouvelle aile n'est accessible que par un réseau de tunnels de ciment reliant les deux bâtiments, ainsi les deux espaces sont en réalité connectés, et quelque part, en symbiose. Le réseau est constitué de trois axes différents¹ et portant chacun leur propre symbolique. Libeskind explique cette approche dans les termes suivants :

The new design, which was created a year before the Berlin Wall came down was based on three *conceptions* that formed the museum's foundation: first, the impossibility of understanding the history of Berlin without understanding the enormous intellectual, economic and cultural contribution made by the Jewish citizens of Berlin, second, the necessity to integrate physically and spiritually the meaning of the Holocaust into the consciousness and memory of the city of Berlin. Third, that only through the acknowledgment and incorporation of this erasure and void of Jewish life in Berlin, can the history of Berlin and Europe have a human future.²

¹ Annexes 3,4,5,6.

² « Daniel Libeskind | The Jewish Museum Berlin - part 1 | Inexhibit », <<https://www.inexhibit.com/case-studies/daniel-libeskind-jewish-museum-berlin/>>, consulté le 16.08.2021.

1.3. Le plan architectural

L'ensemble³ est désormais constitué de trois éléments : le Kollegienhaus avec son ajout (2007), le Musée juif de Berlin (1999), et l'Académie (2012). Sur le plan⁴, on remarque les deux lignes que forment la structure, une zigzaguant et l'autre complètement droite, se croisant cinq fois⁵. Elles créent ainsi « The Voids », à savoir les espaces vides, inévitables, en zinc nu, qui se caractérisent par le manque de luminosité et le manque de chaleur. De part cela Libeskind essaye de montrer « l'humanité réduite en cendres »⁶, où ce qui ne peut pas être exposé de l'histoire juive, ce qui a été détruit. L'installation de Menashe Kadischman s'approprie une de ces tranchées, évoquant les visages terrifiés des victimes. « Between the Lines » part du principe que les lignes portent une signification de linéarité, une notion de continuité temporelle ; quand la ligne est fragmentée, comme ici, la temporalité est remise en question⁷. Différentes sphères temporelles naissent de la fragmentation, donnant au terme « d'entre les lignes » une notion d'absence, spécifiquement, une absence de culture juive à Berlin après l'Holocauste. Libeskind crée en quelque sorte une ruine métaphorique pour remplacer la culture et architecture juive détruite⁸.

En 2007, un ajout de verre est construit au Kollegienhaus, et a pour but d'accueillir certaines performances artistiques. L'inspiration de Libeskind est à nouveau ancrée dans une compréhension de l'histoire et de la culture juive, puisque la structure de verre est inspirée du bâtiment typiquement juif : la Soukka. Cette construction est un élément central du culte juif, puisqu'elle fait office de résidence temporaire durant le temps de fête de Souccot. De par le choix de la matière et une architecture indépendante du bâtiment baroque, l'architecte permet à la structure de se suffire « self-supporting like a free-standing table on four legs »⁹ et de ne pas contraster trop fortement avec la délicatesse du Kollegienhaus. Ici, contrairement au Musée juif de Berlin, les bâtiments semblent reliés, mais ne le sont pas.

³ Annexe 1.

⁴ Annexe 2.

⁵ DOGAN et NERSESSIAN, 2012, p.3.

⁶ « Daniel Libeskind | The Jewish Museum Berlin - Part 2 | Inexhibit », <<https://www.inexhibit.com/case-studies/daniel-libeskind-jewish-museum-part2/>>, consulté le 16.08.2021.

⁷ ARNOLD-DE SIMINE, 2012, p.24.

⁸ MENG, 2017, p.552.

⁹ « Daniel Libeskind | The Jewish Museum Berlin - Part 2 | Inexhibit », *art. cit.*

2. Où s'arrête le bâtiment, et où commence le musée ?

Dans l'article de Silke Arnold-de Simine, « Memory Museum and Museum Texte »¹⁰, ce dernier émet une critique de la brouille des lignes entre le médium du musée ou du livre et son contenu. Il confronte pour se faire, l'architecture du Musée juif de Berlin au roman *Austerlitz* de W.G. Sebald. La critique fondamentale que propose Arnold-de Simine, c'est l'esthétisation de la mémoire qui se heurte au narratif voulu par l'institution. Dans le cas de Libeskind, ce dernier rompt, par son architecture extrêmement symbolique, la continuité entre les deux bâtiments. Ce qui était censé être une aile supplémentaire consacré à l'histoire juive devient indépendante et se présente de facto comme un mémorial pour l'Holocauste, plutôt qu'un ajout au Kollegienhaus. Cela a engendré un questionnement « to keep the empty shell of the building as it was, instead of building Peter Eisenman's design of the Holocaust Memorial »¹¹. Cependant, comme on le sait, le mémorial d'Eisenman a tout de même été bâti, mais fonctionne selon Arnold-de Simine, en antagonisme avec le musée et son statut de contre-musée d'un part, et contre-mémorial, d'une autre part. Ainsi, le fait que le musée ne fonctionne pas simplement comme un espace neutre et vierge pour les expositions, met en cause la démarche du mémorial traditionnel.

Arnold-de Simine souligne dans l'architecture de Libeskind, l'entrave à la lecture que sont les « épitextes »¹². Elle définit de ce fait, trois strates d'expériences vécues lors de la visite d'un musée : le niveau de l'expérience¹³, de la métaphore¹⁴ et de l'allégorie¹⁵. Or l'architecte n'a jamais voulu donner à ce bâtiment une trame narrative qui unifierait la compréhension, mais semblait se contenter de donner des explications fragmentées sur les divers éléments¹⁶. Ce concept de fragmentation pour expliquer un événement si tragique est repris dans *Austerlitz* de W.G. Sebald, qui raconte l'histoire d'un homme retraçant la mort de ses parents dans l'Holocauste. A la fois le lecteur et le personnage n'ont que des bribes éparses de la tragédie. Comme chez Libeskind, le drame est traduit par des éléments créant une atmosphère d'inquiétude et d'émotion, mais qui reste relativement insaisissable.

¹⁰ ARNOLD-DE SIMINE, 2012.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ici utilisé dans le cadre de l'architecture, et sont définis comme des communications externes à une lecture/expérience, qui influence la manière dont on la comprend/vit.

¹³ Pas de représentation figurative dans le bâtiment, ou d'iconographie symbolique, qui pourrait désorienter le visiteur.

¹⁴ L'exemple du zigzag dans le bâtiment de Libeskind illustre bien ce phénomène, dans lequel les salles ne peuvent pas suivre une continuité. La droite est constamment interrompue par le zigzag et représente les liens entre l'histoire allemande et juive.

¹⁵ Le niveau emblématique ou la connexion intuitive entre le sens et le signe se perd, quand on n'a pas les explications nécessaires à la compréhension.

¹⁶ « ARNOLD-DE SIMINE, 2012, p.22.

3. Art Space, interrogations et conclusion

Le texte d'Isabelle Graw soulève des questionnements sur l'espace artistique de Berlin comme *Art Scene* à l'instar d'un lieu où l'on réussit son lancement sur le marché, plutôt qu'un « central hub of the contemporary art trade »¹⁷. Et dans ce contexte, on pourrait se poser la question du statut d'un grand architecte comme Libeskind à y produire. Deux éléments se distinguent, soit, le passé tumultueux de la ville, et l'esprit bohémien de production dans une ville qui se reconstruit. Le Musée juif de Berlin, a ouvert la voie à un passé qui n'était plus exhibé depuis quelques dizaines d'années, mais quel est l'impact d'un tel monument dans une ville qui se réinvente et essayes-en quelque sorte de se détacher de son passé ? Le texte d'Arnold-de-Simine se trouve en annexe, puisqu'il traite non seulement le concept architectural du Musée juif de Berlin, mais aborde aussi les enjeux du *Memory Museum* comme concept.

Dernièrement, l'essai Osborne aborde dans son essai la problématique de la « misunderstanding of historical experience embodied in the moralism of so-called memory-work »¹⁸ dans l'utilisation de l'art comme mémoire dans la dé-conceptualisation de l'art. Dans le contexte d'un bâtiment agissant à la manière d'un mémorial, la question d'art *as space* and art *as memory* semble cruciale à aborder. De plus, Osborne soulève la question suivant sur la relation entre l'art contemporain et l'architecture : What is the function of 'architecture' in the discourses and practices of contemporary art ? Par rapport à l'extrait ci-dessous, il serait intéressant de s'interroger sur la fonction architecturale dans le bâtiment de Libeskind.

Architecturalization: three questions

If 'sculpture' is an ontologically redundant category in contemporary art (despite its perennial curatorial revival as a way works that rendered it redundant), 'architecture' is a term without which contemporary art would be hard-pressed to continue to exist. If, as Duve has argued, in the nineteenth century, 'painting' was the name for art (and thereby the most ontologically privileged of medium-specific categories), in the 1960s something like 'architecture' became, if not the new name for art, then certainly, for many, its model. Similarly, just as it was by appropriating (and notionally reapplying) the name 'painting' to ready-mades that Duchamp invented a generic art, so it has been by appropriating (and notionally reapplying) the name 'architecture' to various art activities that art since the 1960s has transformed its spatial ontology. These practices have of presenting the very strong conceptual components. Like textualization, architecture was thus a mediating practice that combined an expansion and transformation of art's spatial ontology, with a conceptual turn. Architecture has been a primary bearer of the conceptuality of contemporary art. In this regard, architecturalization appears as one of an accumulative series of art-historical revisions of the art of the 1960s, the most important of which have been those stressing the roles of performance, conceptual photography, and the internationalism of the US-centered artistic community of the 1960s and early 1970s. Each is bound up with the conceptual character of contemporary art. There is a complex multiplicity of interacting lineages of negation at work here in the art of the 1960s that converge into the problematic of post conceptual art, of which these successive historiographical revisionisms represent the four

currently most significant aspects.¹⁹

¹⁷ GRAW, 2014, p.42.

¹⁸ OSBORNE, 2013, p. 144.

¹⁹ OSBORNE, 2013, p. 141.

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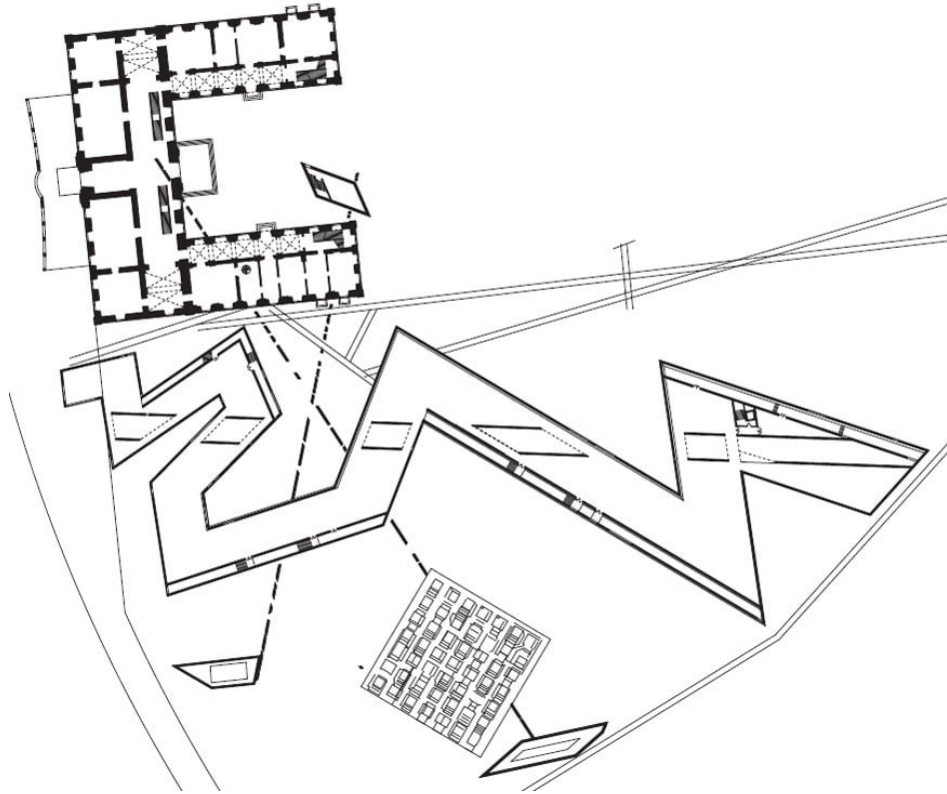
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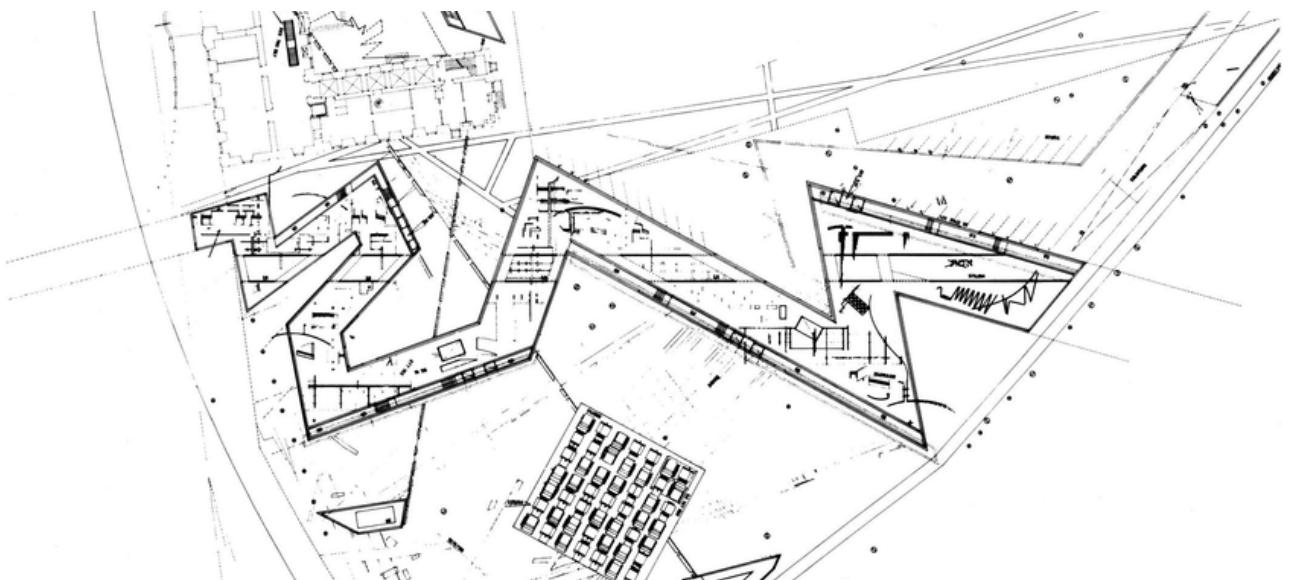
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5. Annexes

Annexe 1 – plan du site du Musée juif de Berlin et du Kollegienhaus, Berlin.
<https://www.inexhibit.com/case-studies/daniel-libeskind-jewish-museum-berlin/>



Annexe 2 – plan du site du Musée juif de Berlin et du Kollegienhaus, Berlin.
<https://www.inexhibit.com/case-studies/daniel-libeskind-jewish-museum-berlin/>



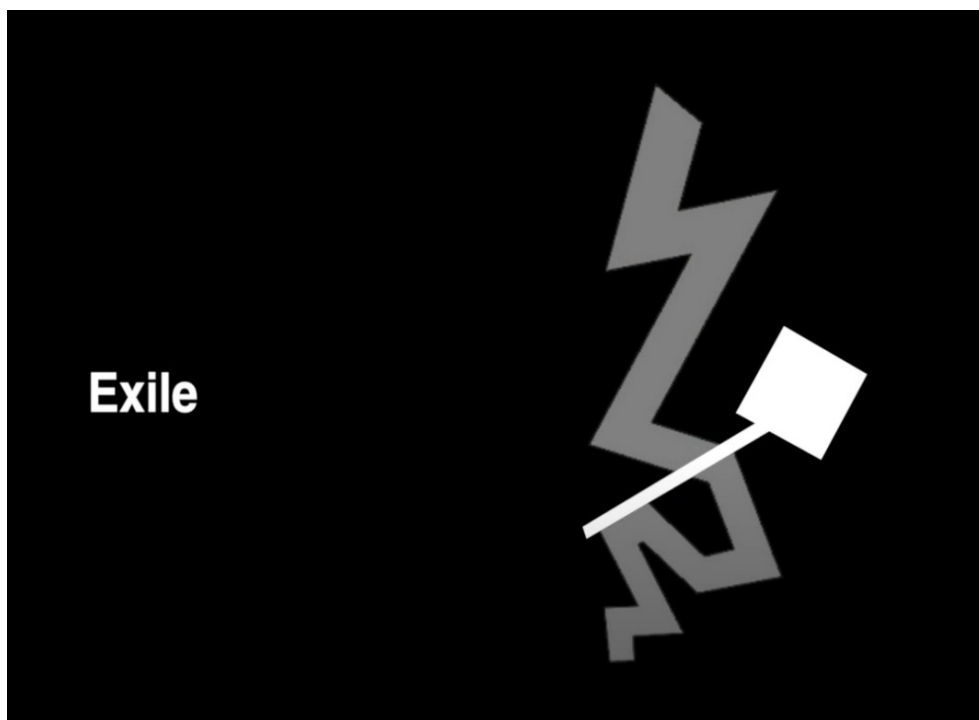
Annexe 3 – plan des tunnels du Musée juif de Berlin
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Memory Museum and Museum Text

Intermediality in Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum and W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*

Silke Arnold-de Simine

Abstract

In the last 20 years the institution of the museum has gone through a period of redefining its role and its functions in society, its forms of representation, its authority in discourses on the past and its objects. The stated aim of many of the 'memory museums' which were established during this period is to invite reflection on the aestheticization of memory and on the fact that the exhibition is seen as a narrative which is challenging conventional codes of perception. By granting a voice to what has been left out of the dominant discourses of history and of everyday experience, they try to integrate diversified and sometimes even incompatible narratives – a mode of representation that has so far been the domain of art and specifically literature. This contribution argues that it is not only between the museum and the memorial that distinctions between different memory media are getting blurred: examples such as Libeskind's Jewish Museum, which wants to be read as a text, and W.G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz*, which he described as an alternative Holocaust museum, indicate that aspects of intermediality gain importance in the contemporary memorial landscape.

Key words

Austerlitz ■ intermediality ■ Jewish Museum, Berlin ■ Daniel Liebeskind ■ memory ■ museums ■ W.G. Sebald

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ACCORDING TO neurophysiologists our personal memory is not based on information retrieval but on re-imagining – it is elusive, highly selective and cannot be trusted (Loftus, 1995: 47ff.). But in recent scholarship as well as in popular endeavours to ‘come to terms with’ difficult pasts, accounts of personal memories take centre stage, not only because they are seen to be more engaging but because they also seem to provide a democratic and ethically responsible way of approaching the past. Ideals such as disinterested objectivity, detachedness and clear distinction between past and present have been questioned from within historiography by scholars such as Hayden White, but even more importantly they are considered inappropriate in an ever growing remembrance culture in which the emphasis is on emotional investment rather than on historical knowledge. This is based on the assumption that knowledge about atrocities alone does not prevent violent histories from happening again, but that instead a degree of imaginative empathy is being called for in order to ensure moral responsibility. Much of the current popular remembrance culture in western countries is implicitly based on this rather schematic and simplistic opposition between ‘traditional historiography’ and ‘cultural memory’.

But what is ‘cultural’ or ‘collective memory’? The term is very much contested among historians and endlessly discussed by memory scholars: Aleida Assmann attempts to differentiate Maurice Halbwachs concept of ‘collective memory’ which, just like history, is actively constructed by social institutions ‘with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places, and monuments’ (Assmann, 2004: 26) and – one might like to add – museums. Museums ‘engender and consolidate social *practices*’ (Williams, 2007: 5) of remembrance. According to Susan Sontag and other critics it would be more accurate to talk about ‘collective instruction’ (Sontag, 2003: 76), which shifts the focus to questions about authority and ideology, that is, who is instructing, who is instructed and for what purpose? The crucial question here is not only what means we deploy to remember the past but what we gain for the present from doing so. To tackle this question it is necessary to investigate recent changes in the ‘basic grammar of the construction of political memory’ (Assmann, 2006: 219) and in the institutions concerned with it.

In the last two decades the museum has gone through a period of re-defining its role and its functions in society, its forms of representation and its aims. These changes in museological discourse have resulted in a new type of museum that has made its appearance in diverse cultural, geographical and political contexts: the ‘memory museum’ could be described as an alternative version of the history museum. These museums define themselves not just as sites of academic and institutional history but as spaces of memory, exemplifying the shift from a perceived authoritative master discourse on the past to the paradigm of memory which supposedly allows for a wider range of stories about the past – a claim which needs to be critically interrogated.

Susan Sontag has used the term ‘memory museum’ as a generic term for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC (1993), for the Jewish Museum in Berlin (2001) and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (redesigned Holocaust History Museum 2005): ‘The memory museum in its current proliferation is a product of a way of thinking about, and mourning, the destruction of European Jewry in the 1930s and 1940s’ (Sontag, 2003: 77). However, increasingly the genre of the memory museum is not restricted to Holocaust museums but can be seen to address very different historical events and periods. Holocaust iconography is often employed to ensure international attention and the Holocaust museums have provided a frame of reference and a template by which other modern atrocities world-wide are remembered and commemorated. Paul Williams uses the term ‘memorial museum’ to define ‘a specific kind of museum dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind’ (2007: 8).

I would argue that the genre of the memory museum has diversified into a range of ‘sub-genres’ which see their role both in preserving and embodying memories not only in relation to recent events of mass suffering, but to a much wider range of historical periods and experiences. Both Sontag and Williams categorize the museums according to the historical events they deal with. But more importantly, the memory museums share certain representational strategies. A museum can be described as a multimedia platform on which different medial practices can be combined: an exhibition works with objects, but increasingly also with texts, images and audiovisual representations in a spatial arrangement. The museum is based on a loose association of these medial practices which are sometimes used to comment on each other, sometimes layered next to or on top of each other. The Jewish Museum in Berlin, for example, is not simply an accumulation of several medial practices, but can be described as ‘intermedial’: it attempts to evoke altermedial semiotic frameworks to explore the limitations of different representational concepts and strategies.

Taking into account the different possibilities of medial interrelations and transformations, Wolf defines three widely accepted versions of intermediality which form the basis of current research in intermediality: (1) ‘primary intermediality’ in which the amalgamation (‘*Verschmelzung*’) of at least two distinct media is constitutive, e.g. a song which is per se partly sound, partly text, (2) ‘secondary intermediality’ as the subsequent transformation of a work into another medium (medium transfer), e.g. a picturization, and (3) ‘figurative intermediality’ which indicates that within the given parameters of a medium the structure is transformed so that it results in the reproduction of another medium, e.g. freeze-frame in a film (Wolf, 1998: 238ff.).

This last definition describes a phenomenon which goes beyond the simple combination, conversion or transformation of medial practices – it is the structural repetition of one medium in another medium (Paech, 1998: 16). It means that a medium which is normally latent because it is

only seen as a transmitter appears in another medium as content and becomes thereby visible. It results in a self-reflexive commentary which, in highlighting medial capacities and restrictions, reflects on the general conditions of media.

The stated aim of many of these ‘new museums’ (Message, 2006)¹ is to probe their limits as media of memory and to invite reflection on the representational and mediated quality of history. Rather than being perceived as remains of a lost past, certifying its demise, museum objects are considered to be the material hinges of a potential recovery of shared meanings, by means of narrativization and performativity. By granting a voice to what has been left out of the dominant discourses of history, diverse and sometimes even incompatible narratives have supposedly been granted a locus in a museal space that claims to aspire no longer to any totalizing synthesis, but to a mode of representation that has so far been the domain of art, film and literature. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC (1993), for example, is not so much seen as ‘a history museum in the traditional sense’, but as a ‘narrative museum’ (Pieper, 2006: 28ff.) whose emotional impact is supposed to resemble that of ‘novels, plays or motion pictures’ (Weinberg and Elieli, 1995: 17). Tom Freudenheim, the former Deputy Director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, described the permanent exhibition of the museum in an interview in 1999 as follows:

About half of the building will be a permanent exhibition, its narrative story. We have written a story and are in the process now of figuring out how to tell that story. Most museums start with material they have and then figure out what the story is that they can tell about the material they have. We are not starting out with objects, we’re starting out with a story. Our narrative has been generally laid out. We look at that story and say, how do we tell that story in the context of a museum? What are the artifacts that we need in order to tell that story? . . . And, what part of the story can’t be told through artifacts, but may have to be described in some other way – audio, video, models, reproductions, photographs? (Freudenheim, 2000: 40).

Rather than being instigated and set up around a collection, memory museums assume an initiative role in singling out past events which help to address issues around current controversies. The story becomes the object of the exhibition insofar as it is not the objects themselves that are distinctive, but the associated history to which they are attached. The aura of the authentic object is that it is a ‘witness’ and memory repository providing a quasi authentic experience for the re-living and retracing visitor. As remains recovered from destruction and loss, the artefacts also provide evidence. At the same time they are centred around a narrative for which they act as illustrations. The narrative privileges the spectacle and is mainly told through audiovisual props, theatrical displays and visual stimuli. Photographs in particular are used to create a sense of immediacy and

reduce the space between the living and the dead. Visitors are invited to a sensory, haptic experience thereby breaking one of the central taboos of the traditional history or art museum. The memory museums thus redefine their functions in and for communities not simply by diversifying the narratives they tell but more importantly by renegotiating the processes of narration and the museal codes of communication with the public. Thus, although the museum is traditionally situated in the realm of 'political memory', memory museums want to be seen as forums of the communicative memory of the victims and survivors by collecting and displaying donated memorabilia and oral testimonies of witnesses. Autobiographical storytelling is part of the museum's function of giving voice to individual fate and transforming bystanders into 'secondary witnesses' (Baer, 2002: 87). The key feature of all the memory museums is that they encourage visitors to empathize and identify with individual sufferers and victims, as if 'reliving' their experience, in order to thus develop more personal and immediate forms of engagement.² Aiming principally to achieve an emotional impact, memory museums provide people with an experience and confront them with a moral imperative – which more often than not places them at odds with their self-proclaimed objective of self-reflexivity. The stated aim might be to disturb the visitors into a state of active responsibility, yet as a site of moral and national instruction the openness of this 'text' is limited, not least by interpellating a predetermined moral subject. In addition, as Susannah Radstone has pointed out, these 'processes of identification with suffering [also act] as replacements for more traditional modes of political allegiance formation' (Radstone, 2008: 34).

These 'new museums' try to tread a fine line between history and memory, between transnational and national memory cultures, but also between different memory media such as the memorial and the museum. Paul Williams claims that during the last 20 years a large number of new museums commemorating violent histories which led to mass suffering, such as genocides, wars, dictatorships and displacements, defy these distinctions. This is in part due to massive changes in our remembrance culture: in the 19th century monuments and museums became instruments for defining national identity by interpreting the past in a coherent and often heroic narrative which encouraged pride or at least unequivocal identification with the nation. They were sites of national instruction and established a hegemonic narrative based on the notion of superiority or martyrdom. Jay Winter argues that the First World War marked a shift in commemoration paradigms as monuments and ceremonies became the centre of public mourning, a place for the bereaved to grieve for individual soldiers whose deaths were nevertheless redeemed within a narrative of communal sacrifice for a greater good. It sparked a development towards memorials which would not only commemorate the heroes but also mourn the nation's dead while still serving as sites of shared national values and ideals (Winter, 1995).³

A fairly recent development in the global landscape of remembrance is to acknowledge, remember and mourn those who were victimized by one's

own country, although these apologies are usually poor substitutes for concrete reparation: the rituals of an apology indicating an admission of guilt, such as Clinton's apology for slavery (1998) or, ten years later, Australia's prime minister Kevin Rudd's apology to the Aborigines, have become recurring features. These admissions of guilt are often also transformed into permanent structures such as memorials and museums which indicate a change in the global landscape of remembrance and commemoration. They refer to events which are difficult to remember because they can be cast neither in a heroic nor in a martyr-like narrative. As such they form the focus of politically charged trans-cultural debates and controversies around the ethics and aesthetics of remembrance. And nowhere is this change in the memorial culture more visible than in Berlin's dense landscape of remembrance. Here memorials and museums function as material focus for the most fierce and controversial debates around questions concerning not only the interpretation and aesthetics of remembrance of the Nazi past but also of the legacy of the GDR.

This changed aesthetic of remembrance tries to avoid so-called 'wreath dumping places', opting instead for 'counter-monuments' (Young, 1992) which are supposed to startle onlookers and force them into thinking about the memorial and what it stands for. These memorials are increasingly complemented by more didactically-oriented documentation centres, which provide a narrative that is distilled from the heated public debates surrounding these projects. Thereby the aesthetic ambiguity of the memorial is counter-balanced by historical background information or, as critics would say, its intractable character is thereby compromised: the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (opened 2005) has such a documentation centre, as has the Wall Memorial Ensemble Bernauer Straße (1998). At the same time Libeskind's building of the Jewish Museum (2001) is just as much perceived as an (architectural) memorial as a museum. Indeed, it could be argued that two very distinct commemorative functions come into conflict in this institution: we are used to thinking about the commemorative functions of memorials and the ceremonies attached to them as very much akin to burial rites which are supposed to honour the dead and establish a community united in mourning and in the resolve to prevent the cause for such grief in future. Memorials are places for reverent commemoration and passive contemplation; museums, on the other hand, are educational institutions tasked with critical interpretation and historical contextualization. 'The coalescing of the two suggests that there is an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of past events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts' (Williams, 2007: 8).

However, it is not only between the museum and the memorial that distinctions between different media of memory have become blurred: Libeskind wants his Jewish Museum in Berlin (2001) to be read like a text and W.G. Sebald claimed that he envisaged his prose text *Austerlitz* (2001) as an 'alternative Holocaust museum'.⁴ This was not a random remark: a few years earlier in an interview with Volker Hage regarding his essays on areal warfare he had already mentioned the museum as a model

for his writing (Hage, 2003: 268ff). Sebald (b. 1944) and Libeskind (b. 1946) emerged to prominence simultaneously – both belong to the same generation, both were influenced by thinkers such as Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, and both wrestle with the same problem: the ethics of art and representation after Auschwitz. Their respective medium, its qualities and technologies, its characteristics and its limits which co-determine how we perceive what is mediated, are at the centre of those reflections. Obviously the very different cultural and social positioning of their chosen media needs to be taken into consideration: architecture and the institution of the museum occupy a very distinct intersection between political and artistic forms of representation and respond, as such, to a different framework than a literary text. They also have a different context of reception, which in the case of the museum has a social and ritual element not present in the serial readership of books.

Nevertheless, these examples indicate that the limits of specific forms of representations of the past are now being tested. They constitute an intricate part of an advanced and self-reflexive memorial landscape. I would argue that there is a trend towards a diversification of memorial culture combined with a hybridization of media which can be read as a response to the ambiguous and sometimes even conflicting demands on these new museums, memorials and on remembrance work in general, especially when the challenge is to speak about what is deemed unspeakable and visualize what is deemed unimaginable.

The Jewish Museum, Berlin (2001)

The Jewish Museum in Berlin was never supposed to be a Holocaust Museum⁵ and, in contrast to the expectations of mainly international tourists, visitors (the majority of which are gentile Germans; Chametzky, 2008: 239) are certainly not encouraged to experience it in this way. The planners originally envisaged an additional wing in the already existing city museum which would be both autonomous and integrative, in an attempt to show Jewish history and culture as a dimension of Berlin's and Germany's historical and cultural landscape.⁶ However, since the building shell of the annex was opened to the public in 1999 (two years before its official opening as a museum with exhibits), Daniel Libeskind's highly symbolic architecture and the architect's accompanying annotations have led many visitors to interpret the very distinct extension as a Holocaust memorial. During the two years in which the still empty building could be visited by the public, it attracted 350,000 visitors, 15,000 in October 1999 alone (Smith, 2010: 152). The idea was put forward to keep the empty shell of the building as it was, instead of building Peter Eisenman's design of the Holocaust Memorial (Pieper, 2006: 242ff). This in turn caused concern in Berlin's Jewish community and in the Berlin Senate, who saw the museal programme of the institution threatened.⁷ The building's statement has since then been seen to be almost in conflict with the permanent

exhibition.⁸ Its architecture refuses to function as a blank and neutral canvas and brings forward its own interpretation. It 'demonstrates that the line at which the building stops and the museum apparatus begins is becoming ever more occluded' (Stead, 2000: 2). But it also calls into question the function of the traditional memorial, encouraging visitors to engage not only on an emotional but also on a visceral level which goes beyond a ritualistic response. Libeskind's design for the Jewish Museum has been interpreted and celebrated as a counter-memorial and a counter-museum in which Libeskind has given expression to the crises in commemoration practices.

It has been claimed that Libeskind's design would be better described as a philosophical program or an architectural manifesto (Smith, 2010: 142): in addition to the architectural code and the visceral experience the completed building itself provides, Libeskind's conceptual writings and annotations constitute a multi-layered matrix. Without taking the architect at his words (which would be naïve) or claiming that the Jewish Museum is identical with Libeskind's design or his theories, it nevertheless cannot be ignored that these 'epitexts'⁹ have become an integral part of the building and the museum. On the basis of these epitexts the architecture can be read and experienced on three different levels:

1. Level of experience: the building creates an experiential space which does not aim for figurative representation or iconographic symbolism, but tries to generate visceral reactions and emotionally as well as psychologically disturbing effects of disorientation in museum visitors.
2. Level of metaphor: the six 'Voids' which cut vertically through the building, interrupting both representational and temporal continuity along the museum's horizontal axis, cannot be experienced by moving through the rooms; they can be seen, but cannot be entered or put to use and therefore suggest a metaphorical or rather metonymical reading: the 'Voids' are created at the intersections between the zigzag line and the disrupted straight line on which it centres, thereby representing the inextricable links between German and Jewish history. According to Libeskind, the empty Voids mark the violent historical rupture and the absence created by the annihilation of people, their community and culture: 'The Void is the impenetrable emptiness across which the absence of Berlin's Jewish citizens is made apparent to the visitor' (2009). The visitors' way through the building is continuously interrupted by empty spaces which are partly closed off or can only be crossed on bridges, in an attempt to break off any linear or coherent reading of the exhibition. In his competition entry Libeskind stated that 'the museum form itself must be rethought in order to transcend the passive involvement of the viewer, actively confronting change' (Libeskind, 2001: 29). It becomes the visitors' responsibility and therefore also their choice if and how to engage with these spaces on a cognitive and emotional level.
3. Level of allegory: Libeskind describes the building as an 'emblem', which means that there is no intuitive connection between meaning and sign – it

cannot be decoded without adequate knowledge. He stresses the constructedness of the building, its assembled parts and the philosophical basis of the design. His naming of different elements of the building, such as the Garden of Emigration and Exile (which is also called the E.T.A. Hoffmann Garden or the ‘upside down’ garden¹⁰), and his explanations of the design – which are frequently quoted in the museum’s guide books and publicity material – have become an integral part of how the museum is interpreted, not only by scholars but also by visitors. His comments were continuously modified according to the changes he was forced to make on the design, but also later in response to museum visitors’ reactions, which also meant that the publicity material on the Jewish Museum was regularly amended. However, Libeskind never aimed to provide a logical or linear narrative or transmit a totalizing unity; on the contrary, he seems to be content that his comments are as fragmented as the building itself.

The title of the project – ‘Between the Lines’ – evokes a paradigm in which neither space nor time holds primacy but both are inextricably linked (Vidler, 2000: 235). Lines can potentially have a spatial or a temporal meaning: with the help of timelines we organize our individual life and history. A timeline evokes the notion of time as a linear continuity, but a position between the lines suggests that they are potentially asynchronous and that this continuity can be undermined. In a spatial sense lines define and limit different spheres. Lines can separate but also connect. In terms of architecture, the title indicates that it is not the shell of the building but the space which is created between those lines of walls, and especially the voided spaces, which form the core of the design. The space between the lines implies the notion of a gap, an absence, embodied in the idea of the Voids indicating the absence of Jewish life in Berlin after the Holocaust.

Libeskind calls his building an ‘emblem’, which draws attention to the fact that emblems combine media such as image and text and are therefore intrinsically intermedial.¹¹ The phrase ‘between the lines’ is probably most often used when talking about a text or the reading of a text. Whenever we are asked to read between the lines our attention is drawn to a meaning that cannot be deducted from the words in a literal sense. The building rejects a narrative or visual representation which could be recognized from a privileged vantage point. But how can we read a building between the lines? In this case, I would argue, by following up the various intermedial references: according to Libeskind, he ‘designed the Jewish Museum . . . on principles that were not necessarily solely architectural but rather para-architectural, using literature, music, and history not as metaphors, but rather as organizational structures’ (Libeskind et al., 2003: 25), claiming that ‘the museum is not only a building, but it is also an emblematic reading of the city itself’ (Libeskind, 1994: 11). He distilled a cultural map from the cityscape of Berlin by drawing lines between former residences of its composers, writers and poets, connecting Jews as well as non-Jews in

an ‘irrational and invisible matrix.’¹² By joining those dots Libeskind also created the image of a compressed and distorted Star of David, fragments of which correspond to the layout of the building. Therefore Berlin’s urban space constitutes not just the surroundings of the museum, and equally its history is not just the subject matter of the exhibition, but they form part of the museum’s building itself.

In his allusion to the abrupt end of Schönberg’s unfinished opera *Moses and Aaron* (1932) and his attempt to complete architecturally what could not be completed in musical terms, Libeskind also reminds us that musical notation is written ‘between the lines’, e.g. by typing his competition entry onto music paper:

At the end of the opera Moses doesn’t sing, he just speaks, ‘Oh word, thou word, [which I lack!]’ addressing the absence of the Word, yet one can understand it as a ‘text’. This is because when there is no more singing, the missing word which is uttered by Moses, the call for the Word, the call for the Deed, is understood clearly. I sought to complete that opera architecturally and that is the second aspect of this project. (Libeskind, 2009)

With this opera Libeskind evokes the age-old contest between word, image and sound in posing the question of which art form can provide access to the truth (and to God) – the abstract word or the concrete image. In basing his design on the invisible and on the abstract, he ties it in with an aniconism which condemns the urge to worship and adore a man-made fetish which induces man’s ensnarement in his own imagination (J. Assmann, 2005: 3) and refuses to compromise a thought in order to make it more accessible. In the Bible (Deuteronomy, Chp 4, 15ff.) it is the word, not the image, which is the medium of the veneration of God. The image is not questionable because God is unimaginable, but because God’s medium of choice in which he speaks is the word. The word is the foundation of the law, of justice, not cult.

The visitors are also invited to move ‘between the lines’ as the visual and tactile experience generated by the encounter with the building induces a sensory destabilization and pervasive feeling of fragmentation and incoherence, of a series of disconnected moments. The visitor is led through the underground level on three intersecting axes which do not correspond with the outer zigzag form of the building. They are narrow, windowless and coldly lit corridors: (1) the ‘Axis of Continuity’ is gently inclined and ends at a steep staircase leading to the exhibition on the two upper floors which covers 2000 years of Jewish history in Germany. (2) The ‘Axis of Exile’ leads to the ‘Garden of Exile’: a walled cobble-stoned outdoor square with a sloping floor and 49 tilted concrete columns towering over the visitors’ heads. (3) The ‘Axis of Holocaust’ ends in the ‘voided Void’, as it has been called by Libeskind, which is also outside of the main building and only connected to it on the underground level. It has become known as the ‘Holocaust tower’, a clear indication of how visitors try to concretize

Libeskind's more abstract spaces by (re)naming them. In the aisle leading to the tower an information board informs the visitors about this discrepancy, insisting that Libeskind's architecture is open to interpretation.

One can understand how visitors have come to read this space symbolically: the visitors enter the tower through a heavy metal door which falls shut and leaves only a glimpse of light protruding through a corner slice from great height. They find themselves in a bare, concrete space which is not insulated or heated. This very problematic interpretation of the 'Holocaust tower' assumes that we can have a physical experience which evokes and helps us to understand the enormity of dying in or living through the Holocaust. This interpretation might also fall short of the space Libeskind has created: the claustrophobic room is completely empty and throws the visitors back onto themselves, encouraging them to contemplate this sensation. Because the façade and the interior and the floor plan of the underground and the upper levels do not correspond, the visitors' ability to locate themselves is undermined. The insecurity about one's own position denies the visitors a stable viewpoint. Thereby Libeskind's design seeks to subvert the traditional ways in which visitors visually navigate a museum space. The visitors find themselves in 'unhomed', 'uncanny' surroundings:

the stabilizing function of architecture, by which the familiar is made to appear part of a naturally ordered landscape, will be subverted by the anti-theoretical effects of the unfamiliar. It is a memorial architecture that invites us into its seemingly hospitable environs only to estrange itself from us immediately on entering. (Young, 2000: 2ff).

The feeling of disorientation and irritation which the architecture wants to invoke in the visitor through slanted halls, diagonal window slits and claustrophobic spaces is not in imitation of the situation of the persecuted Jews, but first and foremost an attempt to undermine the interpretational security of the museum visitor and to evoke that which was once familiar but is now defamiliarized, that of which the nation had voided itself. It does not suggest that it offers an authentic experience or that the visitors could immerse themselves in the victims' fates. An understanding of the complexities of Jewish-German history can only be achieved through an active and laborious engagement with the interplay between the conceptual levels of the architecture, the exhibition and Libeskind's (as well as others') accompanying writings which open up endless correspondences between fragmented references.

The museal presentation on the underground level focuses on individual biographies and few, sparsely told family histories of persecution, escape and annihilation, delivering only fragments which defy the urge to produce a grand narrative. Slanting vitrines are recessed into the walls and exhibit changing displays: relics such as photos, letters, postcards and other keepsakes which have been donated by family members and whose

presence is the more poignant in that they testify to their owner's disappearance. This is emphasized by a black border in the shape of a passepartout on the glass which could be read as a mourning band. The objects are accompanied by commentaries from survivors or lenders that do not add up to a closed narrative. This exhibition aims to create sympathy for the suffering of others, but denies a passively sentimental or self-indulgent identification with the victim status or a cathartic experience – the responsibility of understanding rests firmly with the visitor. In contrast to Holocaust museums, the exhibition does not show any images or traces of the extermination: the almost complete annihilation of European Jews and their culture has become part of the museum architecture in the form of the Voids. These disruptive, counter-representational strategies can be understood as functional equivalents to the way Sebald has likewise attempted to expose the 'voids' in the materiality of language and the continuity of narrative by way of other media and their temporalities: in *Austerlitz* (2001) the sensual evidence of objects, the immediacy of voices, the tangible trace of photographs as emanations of the subject and the life-like presentation of film which are on different levels revealed to be manipulations based on wilful staging and theatricality, all refuse to provide the protagonist with a consistent account of what happened to his parents. Not only do these media refuse to coalesce into a coherent narrative which would enable him to link up with a family history and a cultural tradition that has been violently broken off, their representations also remain elusive, fragmentary and decontextualized.

W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001)

Published in the same year the Jewish Museum was opened, W.G. Sebald's literary experiment *Austerlitz* (2001) is in some ways a very similar memory project – albeit in the medium of writing – concerned with the ethics and the representational limits of memory. It has often been remarked that the Holocaust, which Sebald rarely touches upon directly in his writing, has nevertheless been at the centre of it. This claim is certainly true for *Austerlitz*, in which this void spurs his meandering narrative. *Austerlitz* is not a survivor testimony or witness account: the narrator is a German, born in 1944 and therefore clearly a 'nonwitness' (Weissman, 2004: 20) of the Holocaust. He informs the reader right at the beginning of the fact that he grew up among the perpetrators (Sebald, 2001: 13). He is, however, asked to become a 'secondary witness' by listening to the protagonist Austerlitz telling his survivor's tale, related to him in instalments on various encounters. The narrator acts not simply as a passive listener and medium, but feels the obligation to testify to the laborious and painful process of recollection, conscientiously conveying the stories that thereby emerge (Baer, 2002: 89–92). The project of secondary witnessing¹³ requires a self-conscious documentation which is why the narrator records his own memories and feelings.¹⁴

The protagonist Austerlitz, whose life story we are told, was a child on one of the Kindertransports,¹⁵ an identity that was suppressed and consequently lost to his own memory. He is dispossessed of an event which nevertheless dominates and defines his life, resulting in radical self-estrangement. The text describes how Austerlitz regains knowledge of this event, its place in history and effect on himself, through a range of media: architecture, radio, archive, museum, through texts, film, photographs and objects. *Austerlitz* explores their mediating capacities to relive things observed, but not experienced or – alternatively – experienced but not remembered. It suggests that the only chance to reconstruct what was never fully experienced is via a complex interplay between witness accounts and various media of memory. The text explores how their different medial characteristics promise or indeed provide different ways of accessing the past. The enigmatic objects of a collection of curiosities are contrasted with the structured approach of a modern history museum: visual media such as film and photography compete in Austerlitz's quest for an image of his mother, the access to cultural memory provided by books is complemented with the communicative memory of Austerlitz's former nanny Vera, a purposeful archival search is set off against involuntary memory triggered, for example, by smells when Austerlitz enters his childhood home in Prague. Smells or tactile experiences which form part of our somatic memory and get triggered by rediscovered objects and places have nevertheless to be spelled out in letters and signs ('signs and characters from the type-case of forgotten things'; Sebald, 2001: 214).

The protagonist delves not so much into the depths of his own traumatized individual memory but through the realms of mediated memory (Assmann, 2004: 22). It is this path of discovery which he tells in intervals to the narrator and which the narrator writes down. The relationship between the narrator and the protagonist is constantly reflected: the exact time and place and the context of their encounters are recorded, and the development of their relationship, its interruption and their accidental encounters, are documented. Although this approach bears certain resemblances to the principles of oral history, it also differs by drawing attention to the fact that Austerlitz's access to his own memory is blocked and that we hear his story not from himself but through the German narrator. The narrator acts as a secondary witness who is asked to testify not to the events themselves but to a mediated reconstruction of traumatic memories.

Many critics have commented on the fact that Sebald's texts can be seen as travelogues conveying journeys that transcend time and space. The anachronistic style¹⁶ of Sebald's meandering prose has been described as a 'Poetik der Verlangsamung' ('poetics of slowing down'; Hutchinson, 2009: 22): by walking through space, his travellers also roam through time, through the historical layers of the city and landscapes they explore. Just as in the museum the movement through space is also a passage through time. Publicity material for the Jewish Museum repeatedly talks about taking visitors on a 'time travel'. In the museum objects acquire meaning