











# Editorial

In her book *Learning from the Germans. Race and the Memory of Evil* (2020) philosopher Susan Neiman, a Jewish American who grew up in the Deep South and has for the last 20 years been Director of the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, juxtaposed Germany's policies on addressing its past with the way the United States has processed its history of racism and slavery. In Neiman's opinion, the German approach to working through its history has been a success that can also be transferred to other cultural contexts. Has it really been such a success? What would a success be? After the series of murders committed by the NSU, an extreme right-wing grouping, the anti-Semitic attack on the Halle synagogue, or the racist murders in Hanau (and the list could sadly be extended vastly), the title of the book at least prompts dismay or irritation. After all, whose memory is publicly manifested? With what means? And who gets forgotten?

There is currently a debate in Berlin over the "Place of Memory and Encounter with Poland". It is intended to be a memorial to the approximately six million Polish citizens who were murdered by the Germans in World War II. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* quoted former member of the German Parliament, Markus Meckel, as saying the Poland memorial is a "false compromise": "Selecting one nation above all others is the wrong path to go down. Then you would actually need to resolve a whole avenue of memorials for all nations who suffered under German occupation and where there were millions of victims."

In Cologne, at almost the same time (on November 9, (!) 2021) the City Council resolved to erect a memorial to the victims of the NSU nail bomb attack in 2004 in Keupstrasse, designed by Berlin-based artist Ulf Aminde. He has developed a virtual memorial that can be activated by an augmented reality app at the top of Keupstrasse and will present video clips from the viewpoint of migrants, highlighting the historical background and the political climate in which the NSU was able to commit the murders. The *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* commented on the resolution taken as follows: "The path to the memorial was about as tortuous and lacking in piety as were the criminal investigations into the attack themselves."

These examples, even if they are exclusively limited to the German context, make it very clear once again how topical and complex the issues are. In the framework of the conference, they have jointly organized on "Counter-Monuments and Para-Monuments. Contested Memory in Public Space", Nora Sternfeld and Michaela Melián explore debates about monuments in public space and the associated aesthetics and politics of memory. The aim is to bring together different forms of knowledge as well as artistic and activist strategies from the fields of anti-fascist memory politics, anti-racist memorial demands, and decolonial iconoclasm. The conference is dedicated to the history of artistic counter-monuments and forms of protest, discusses aesthetics of memory and historical manifestations in public space, and asks about para-monuments for the present.

This issue of the *Lerchenfeld* magazine serves both as a conference programme and furthermore presents in-depth articles and contributions to the topic. These include an essay by Nora Sternfeld on the concept of the para-monument, an interview with Michaela Melián on her artwork *Memory Loops*, an article by Ayşe Güleç and Gila Kolb on the fate of Olu Oguibe's contribution to the last documenta, an introduction to the Dessauer Ufer

initiative, which addresses how best to approach an historical memorial, and an outline of the work of memory within our own institution.

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Fotoessay  
*Annette Wehrmann*

Construing  
remembrance as  
an active process

An introductory  
email conver-  
sation between  
*Nora Sternfeld*  
and *Michaela*  
*Melián*



Michaela Melián and Dr. Nora Sternfeld have for many years concerned themselves in different places and in a variety of projects with historico-political interventions along the interface of art, theory, and activism. When they met up in 2020, now as professors at HFBK Hamburg, the idea arose of hosting a joint seminar which is now culminating in a conference. The objective is to team up to think about the options for, difficulties of, and urgency of remembrance—for the future.

[Michaela Melián] In Germany, which is often termed “the remembrance world champion”, the official culture of remembrance and the related discourse has evolved over many decades. Since Reunification of East and West Germany a little more than 30 years ago, the debates on how history should be approached have become compelling in a new way for society as a whole. This also has to do with the fact that hardly any survivors of the Shoah are now still alive to bear witness to it and, at the same time, right-wing discourses and violent deeds motivated by racism, such as those by the NSU, have truly surged. Against this background, various parties have suggested by way of accusation that Germany has gone too easy on itself in the mode of working through that history and has ignored current trends in the process. Moreover, today a postcolonial angle on the Shoah needs to be considered. By comparison, Austria plays a different role in the discourse on remembrance. There, for many years the comfortable idea prevailed that the perpetrators were to be found in Germany. Thus, there was not a student movement there in 1968 that came out in criticism of the generation of its parents. Artists, writers, directors, and other cultural producers in Austria who explored the relationship to the Nazis were subject to strong public scorn and animosity. An example would be Elfriede Jelinek, who in her plays and texts places her finger in precisely these wounds. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of campaigns and ideas from Austria that radically and uncomfortably question existing types of forms of remembrance. How do you as an Austrian assess the current status in the two countries on remembrance policy and the associated debate?

[Nora Sternfeld] Remembrance—in the sense of public remembrance such as it happens at places of remembrance as in monuments and memorials—is a result of struggles, it is fissured, ruptured, brittle, controversial, and repeatedly has to be reformulated in the present with a view to the future. However, I have the feeling that in Germany a hegemonic “culture of commemoration” has since 1989 replaced critical remembrance work. Remembrance as struggled for seems to have been achieved, but it is also ritualized, emptied, and economized. Things were different in Austria: Here the issue was and continues to be to struggle and wrestle with things. And, as a result, I feel the cutting-edge historico-political projects in Austria are explicitly more bellicose, while those in Germany are more nuanced, function more reflexively.

[Melián] Is that not also a very recent achievement? In the past, activists were surely more sceptical toward artistic interventions?

[Sternfeld] That is not entirely true as regards Vienna. Artists there were also activists and vice versa. Perhaps because it was later that it all started happening there... But it is hard to say without generalizing. There is a lot of interaction and much common ground between the activist and artistic forms of

## THE ACTOR PLAYING HAMLET:

I'm not Hamlet. I don't take part any more. My words have nothing to tell me anymore. My thoughts suck the blood out of the images. My drama doesn't happen anymore. Behind me the set is put up. By people who aren't interested in my drama, for people to whom it means nothing. I'm not interested in it anymore either. I won't play along anymore. *Unnoticed by the actor playing Hamlet, stagehands place a refrigerator and three TV-sets on the stage. Humming of the refrigerator. Three TV-channels without sound.* The set is a monument. It presents a man who made history, enlarged a hundred times. The petrification of a hope. His name is interchangeable, the hope has not been fulfilled. The monument is toppled into the dust, razed by those who succeeded him in power three years after the state funeral of the hated and most honored leader. The stone is inhabited. In the spacy nostrils and auditory canals, in the creases of skin and uniform of the demolished monument, the poorer inhabitants of the capital are dwelling. After an appropriate period, the uprising follows the toppling of the monument. My drama, if it still would happen, would happen in the time of the uprising. The uprising starts with a stroll. Against the traffic rules, during the working hours. The street belongs to the pedestrians. Here and there, a car is turned over. Nightmare of a knife thrower: Slowly driving down a one-way street towards an irrevocable parking space surrounded by armed pedestrians. Policemen, if in the way, are swept to the curb. When the procession approaches the government district it is stopped by a police line. People form groups, speakers arise from them. On the balcony of a government building, a man in badly fitting mufti appears and begins to speak too. When the first stone hits him, he retreats behind the double doors of bullet-proof glass. The call for more freedom turns into the cry for the overthrow of the government. People begin to disarm the policemen, to storm two, three buildings, a prison a police precinct an office of the secret police, they string up a dozen henchmen of the rulers by their heels, the government brings in troops, tanks. My place, if my drama would still happen, would be on both sides of the front, between the frontlines, over and above them. I stand in the stench of the crowd and hurl stones at policemen soldiers tanks bullet-proof glass. I look through the double doors of bullet-proof glass at the crowd pressing forward and smell the sweat of my fear. Choking with nausea, I shake my fist at myself who stands behind the bullet-proof glass. Shaking with fear and contempt, I see myself in the crowd pressing forward, foaming at the mouth, shaking my fist at myself. I string up my uniformed flesh by my own heels. I am the soldier in the gun turret, my head is empty under the helmet, the stifled scream under the tracks. I am the typewriter. I tie the noose when the ringleaders are strung up, I pull the stool from under their feet, I break my own neck. I am my own prisoner. I feed my own data into the computers. My parts are the spittle and the spittoon the knife and the wound the fang and the throat the neck and the rope. I am the data bank. Bleeding in the crowd. Breathing again behind the double doors. Oozing wordslime in my soundproof blurb over and above the battle. My drama didn't happen. The script has been lost. The actors put their faces on the rack in the dressing room. In his box, the prompter is rotting. The stuffed corpses in the house don't stir a hand. I go home and kill the time, at one/with my undivided self.

Television The daily nausea Nausea

action. All in all, in the course of the 21st century to date both in Germany and in Austria we have witnessed how the critical focus on Nazi history has been diluted by giving it greater state-driven gravitas—while this suddenly seems to have emerged as the master narrative, the battle zone has been expanded to include remembrance. And it was in the midst of these shifts in policy on history and in the official culture of remembrance that, perpetrated by the NSU, Nazi murders took place in Germany again. And once again they were wiped from memory, ignored, and once that no longer became possible, they were as far as possible marginalized. What does it signify for the work of remembrance if we are forced to say that formulaic remembrance rituals to the Nazi crimes have, on the one hand, become ubiquitous, and, on the other, remembrance of real Nazi murders and the associated demands that the crimes be solved are covered in a blanket of silence? Completely in line with this, cultural studies expert Peggy Piesche commented in an interview with the *tageszeitung* and from a BPOC position: In antiracist remembrance work, “we act like archaeologists, we are continually having to dig up our history. And the very next morning we have to start digging again, because sand has since been blown over it.” I believe this remembrance work with the wind in our faces forms the basis of our conference.

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[Melián] What is more, we also want to talk about what art and artistic interventions can achieve in the work of remembrance. The brief artists have is to find new forms for remembrance, to explore them with new means, media, and processes.

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[Sternfeld] So, from your point of view, what is it specifically that art can achieve?

[Melián] Art can touch, disturb, provoke, and make people inquisitive without at the same time formulating a learning objective. It can document processes and/or store them so that they can be experienced anew; it can update things, but it can also cast them into question or ask new questions or ask questions anew. I am thinking here not just of the fine arts but likewise of literary works, movies, music compositions. For me, personally speaking, the film *Shoah* by documentary filmmaker and director Claude Lanzmann is of immense importance. What is it that is special for you, with your focus on art studies and art education?

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[Sternfeld] For me, three potentials innate in artistic remembrance work are key: First, art has no claim to be neutral; it takes a stance and presents it. For that reason, artistic interventions were and are important elements in the struggles over remembrance. Second, art has an emotional dimension, it creates forms that forge links between what has happened and what could happen and above all raise questions as to what this means for the present. Claude Lanzmann’s oeuvre really is a good example in this regard. And your works are also important interventions between the documentary and the emotional. Third, art has the potential to act as a critical intermediary between participation and alienation. It definitely involves a history of reflexive inclusion, the invitation to square up to things. For me, counter-monuments and para-monuments are an artistic expression of these elements: They take a stance against the hegemonic historical narratives and at the same time open up spaces for critical interaction. They do not legitimate what is, and instead ask whom history “belongs to” and put this up for discussion in a rad-

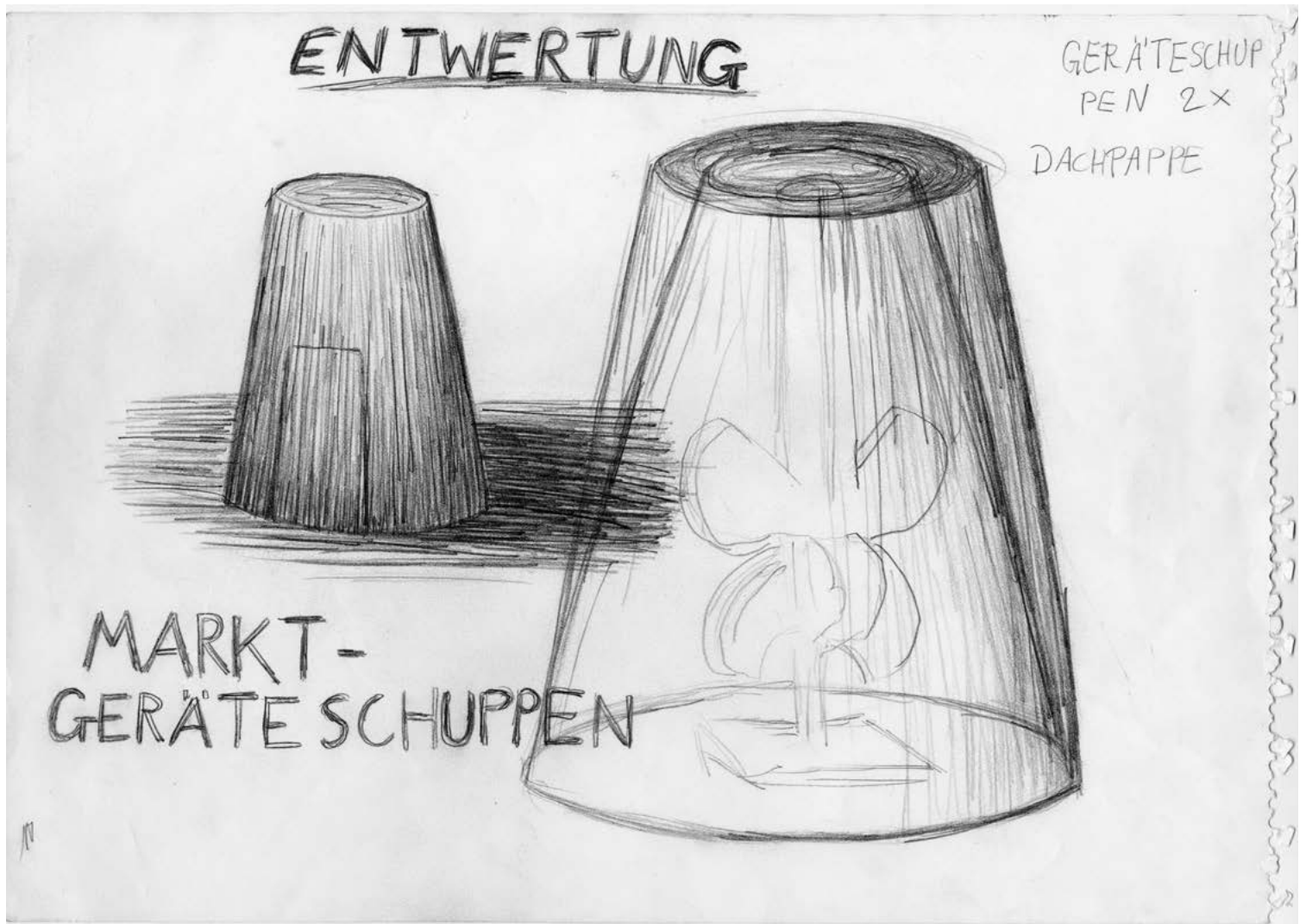
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ical democratic sense. However, not everything can always be realized exactly the way the artist conceived it. For example, works in public space are also the result of compromises. Last semester you reported on several occasions on the actual problems encountered realizing projects in the public space. Could you summarize your experiences in this regard?

10 [Melían] Many of my works in public space in recent years were commissioned by municipal authorities and expected to fulfil a very specific function for remembrance policy. The projects are not perhaps overly comparable, but in principle I notice that the task of bringing certain historical occurrences into the present and thus into our minds is often assigned to artists. And the artists then have to balance a tightrope between their own standards for a successful artwork and the expectations of the client, meaning the political bodies and public—whereby the latter have usually been tussling for years over commissioning a work on the particular theme. What we repeatedly see is that the clients or the public do not then agree with the artistic proposals. Because precisely in the case of complex and emotional themes such as the Shoah, expulsion, discrimination, racism, and acts of terrorism, the expectation persists that what the client will get are strong, visual and emotional ideas. Whereas many artists today have strong reservations against autonomous artistic formulations that fill the urban space purportedly for all eternity. Rather, the artists seek solutions that construe remembrance as an active process in which they wish to participate through their work.

20 [Sternfeld] Do you have an example in mind which fleshes that out a bit?

[Melían] Let me take that as an opportunity to talk about Annette Wehrmann (1961–2010), whose works we are presenting in the illustrations in this issue of



this *Lerchenfeld* issue. Based in Hamburg, she studied at the HFBK Hamburg and as an artist she was a past master of the temporary occupation of the public space without having been hired by some public body to do so. With her interventions, she popped up at specific locations and used them to create temporary markings. A prime example would be her 1997 work *Flohmarkt/Marktbüro* (Flea Market/Market Office) on Fleetinsel in Hamburg in the context of *the map is not the territory* exhibition. The plaza is located between downtown Hamburg and the working-class district of Neustadt; the City of Hamburg sold it off in the 1990s and it thus became the private property of a real-estate company. On the square, the new owners then erected the four-meter-high sculpture *Flor Urbana* by Hamburg sculptor Jörn Pfab (1925–1986). For her *Flohmarkt/Marktbüro* project, Wehrmann enclosed Pfab's piece in wood the way weather-sensitive sculptures in the public space are shrouded in winter to protect them. For the duration of the exhibition, the wooden pavilion was used as the market office for a public, non-commercial flea market and as a meeting place. With this project, Annette Wehrmann succeeded in turning a space where there are no longer any places for people to tarry unless they wish to buy something into an at least temporary venue for the public to use. And by shrouding a *Drop Sculpture* intended to enhance the no longer public plaza in cultural and decorative terms, at the same time she directed our attention to the artwork, to its function in relation to the square's history. Wehrmann's cone-shaped envelope for *Flor Urbana* remains inscribed in the memory of the city as the invisible marking of the privatized urban square.

[Sternfeld] And this is the very sense in which we want our conference to be an assembly. The contributions chosen for this magazine constitute artistic and scholarly research and strategies that create places of remembrance and explore them, but which also take issue with the exclusions and implicit history of violence innate in hegemonic forms of remembrance. They consider remembrance as something we need to fight over, take a stance, underscore what has happened, and look for new spaces to negotiate what this means for the present day.

← [Seite 6] Quote from „Hamletmaschine“ by Heiner Müller (*Hamletmaschine and other Texts for the Stage*, PAJ, 2001, p. 56).

← Annette Wehrmann (1961–2010), sketch for the flea market/market office, 1997, for the exhibition *Bridge – the map is not the territory*, AG Fleetinsel, Hamburg, 1997, VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn

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# Conference: Counter-Monuments and Para-Monuments. Contested Memory in Public Space

*December 2 – 4,  
2021  
Programme*

With contributions by: *Heba Y. Amin* (Artist), *Ulf Aminde* (Artist), *Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock* (Curator and Researcher), *Max Czollek* (Poet and Journalist), *Talya Feldman* (Artist), *Eduard Freudmann* (Artist), *Julia Friedrich* (Art Historian and Curator), *Claas Gefroi* (Architecture Theorist and Journalist), *Ayşe Güleç* (Curator, Art Educator, and Activist Researcher), *Minna Henriksson* (Artist and Artistic Researcher), *Lee Hielscher* (Researcher and Activist), *Leon Kahane* (Artist), *Martin Krenn* (Artist, Artistic Researcher and Curator), *Tania Mancheno* (Researcher), *Olu Oguibe* (Artist), *Daniela Ortiz* (Artist and Activist), *Anja Steidinger* (Artist, Professor of Art Education, HFBK Hamburg), *Stephan Trüby* (Architecture Theorist and Publicist), *Mirjam Zadoff* (Historian and Director of the Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism)

Since the Black Lives Matter movement at the latest, public memory has been highly contested again: Around the world, activists are toppling monuments, demanding the renaming of streets, intervening in historical narratives, and imagining other memorials. Based on a seminar by Michaela Melián and Nora Sternfeld in the summer semester of 2021, the conference at the HFBK Hamburg deals with debates about monuments in public space and the associated aesthetics and politics of memory. The aim is to bring together different forms of knowledge as well as artistic and activist strategies from the fields of anti-fascist memory politics, anti-racist memorial demands, and decolonial iconoclasm. In the process, we also encounter discourses and practices of a contested memorial culture in Germany, which was highly reflexive in the 1990s, has increasingly become a factor in tourism since the 2000s, and which is now being questioned particularly with regard to its post-colonial gaps. Questions in the context of the conference will be: Whose memory is manifested publicly? By what means? What is a “lieu de mémoire” in a neoliberal world? What should not be forgotten? And what role does iconoclasm play in this? The conference is dedicated to the history of artistic counter-monuments and forms of protest, discusses aesthetics of memory and historical manifestations in public space, and asks about para-monuments for the present.

Thursday, December 2, 2021, 17.00 – 19.00  
HFBK Hamburg, Aula

17.00 – 17.20

Introduction

Michaela Melián and Nora Sternfeld: Aesthetic Procedures and History Politics in Public Space

17.20 – 18.00

Panel discussion: Ayşe Güleç, Michaela Melián, Nora Sternfeld, Mirjam Zadoff: Against the Grain. On Memory Work

18.00 – 18.30

Olu Oguiibe in dialogue with Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock: Monuments to the Vulnerable

18.30 – 19.00

Presentation of Para-City-Walks organized by HFBK students

Imke Eppelmann, Matthis Frickhöffer, Jessica Herden, Eve Larue, Sophia Leitenmayer, Lena Sandhof, Cara Theres Petrovic, Kervin Saint Pere, Janne Wagner



← Eduard Freudmann, SCHANDE – Golden letters on the plinth of an antisemitic monument, resembling the shape of graffiti, Vienna, October 2020; photo: Schandwache

9.00 – 12.30

Para-City-Walks organized by HFBK students

Meeting point: HFBK Hamburg, entrance hall

14.00 – 15.00\*

Heba Y. Amin: The Devil's Garden (project in progress)

During World War II, the North African desert formed the backdrop for a power struggle over colonies between European armies. The Devil's Garden explores narratives related to the German Africa Corps and their lingering presence in northern Egypt. Through trajectories marked by colonial warfare and failed political movements in North Africa, Heba Y. Amin examines the use of technologies for hegemonic power and the techno-fossils they leave behind. In her most recent work, she looks at the story of a Nazi pyramid located in El Alamein commemorating a World War II German fighter pilot dubbed "The Star of Africa". Her work reveals the story of modern technological progress as one of empire and colonial exploitation and examines the concepts of domination and authoritarianism exercised through technology. The Devil's Garden uncovers the residue of European ideologies and the associated repercussions for local populations impacted by conflicts that were never theirs.

Eduard Freudmann: Schandwache – Vigil of Disgrace

On October 5, 2020, an artistic intervention was carried out at the monument to the antisemitic politician Karl Lueger, a former Mayor of Vienna. Golden letters were applied to the monument – SCHANDE – marking the monument as what it is: a DISGRACE. The letters were cast out of concrete and painted gold. Their shape resembles that of graffiti that had been painted by unknown individuals on the same monument's plinth three months earlier, in early July 2020. Right after the golden letters had been applied, a group of artists consisting of Anna Witt, Simon Nagy, Gin Müller, Mischa Guttmann, and Eduard Freudmann started a Schandwache—a "vigil of disgrace"—in front of the graffitied monument. The Schandwache was carried out in collaboration with 15 cultural and political organizations. Activists from the organizations stood guard for one week to protect the original graffiti from being removed by the city authorities. The initiative demanded that the monument be artistically reconfigured or removed and declared that until the reconfiguration or the removal is carried out, the graffiti must remain. The action took place the week before Vienna's local elections. Four hours after the opening of the artistic intervention, a group of neofascists appeared at the monument to knock off the golden letters. However, there was plenty of support from civil society and political organizations as well as extensive media coverage. As a result of the Schandwache, the graffiti has remained on the monument until this day. In April 2021, Vienna's City Secretary for Culture officially initiated the process of artistically reconfiguring the monument, a process in which some of Schandwache's protagonists are involved.

15.30 – 16.00\*

Daniela Ortiz in dialogue with Anja Steidinger: The Beautiful Moment to See them Fall

16.30 – 18.00\*

Ayşe Güleç: The Violence After the Violence. The Fate of the Memorials to the Victims of Racism

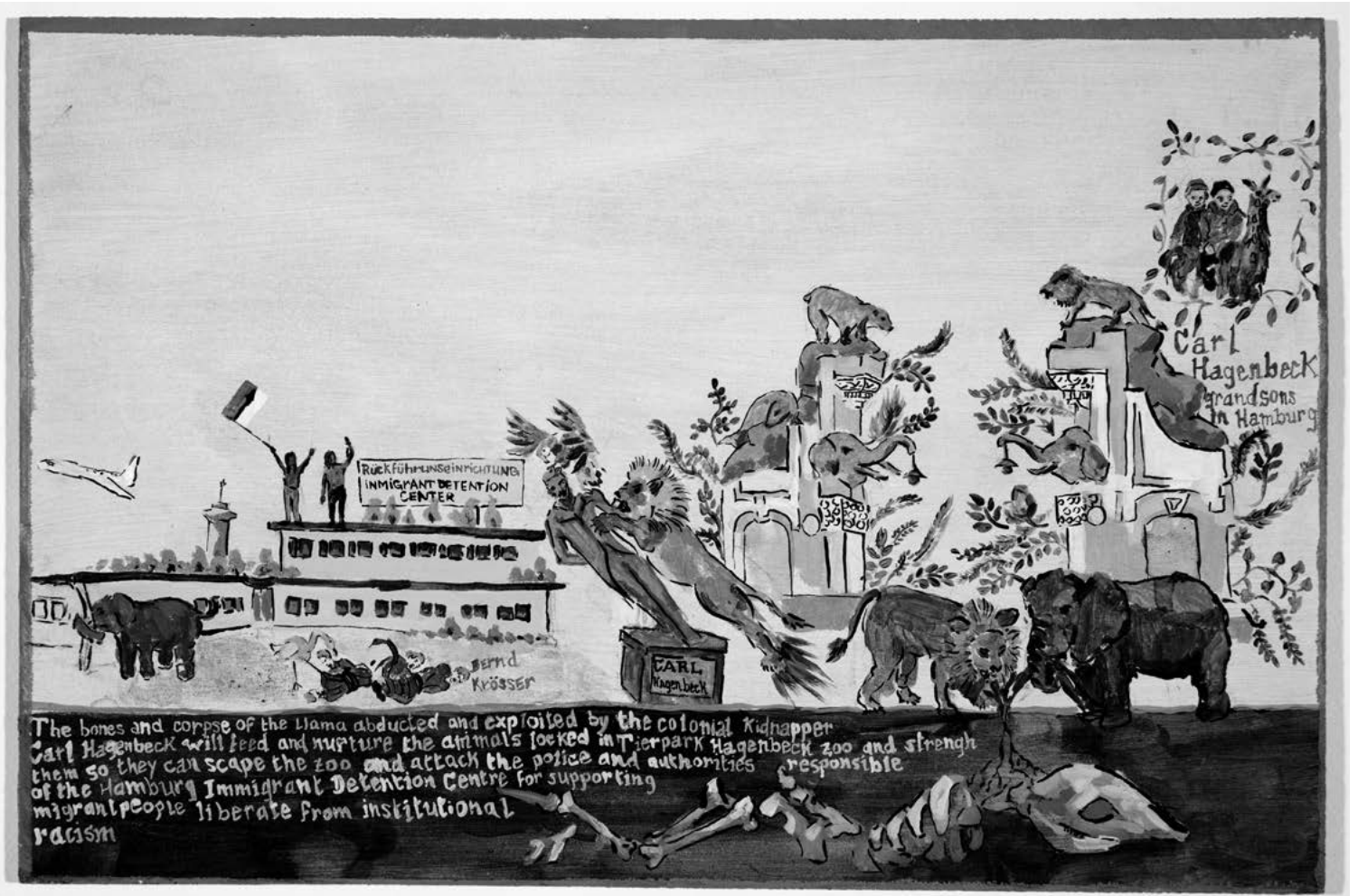
Since the racist pogroms in Mölln, Solingen, Rostock, and Hoyerswerda in the late 1990s, Germany has seen the emergence of commemorative sites for victims of racist, right-wing terrorist violence. Since that time and still today, these have had to be established by relatives and friends or activists, and even after the neo-Nazi NSU became public in November 2011, remembrance had to be established first and foremost. At first chains of lights were put in place by the authorities but these, just as after the racist murders of the 1990s, were both representative of the state and not very long-lasting, so the fight for a lasting form of remembrance was left up to the survivors and relatives of the victims. Afterwards, memorials for the victims were set up by city authorities in Kassel, Dortmund, Rostock, Nuremberg, and Munich, for example—albeit frequently by no means close to the crime scenes. In this way, the concerns, wishes, and interests of the families of the murder victims were left out, ignored, and fell on deaf ears. This not hearing, or not wanting to hear, can be regarded as the violence after the violence. Yet this also has material manifestations: Memorials such as the commemorative stele for Halit in Kassel, for example, have been vandalized several times. Meanwhile, activists in Nuremberg commemorate Enver Simsek with a portrait close to the flower stand in the city where he was murdered, but the image has been destroyed several times, the name smeared, the eyes scratched out. Following threats by the AfD, the obelisk known as *The Strangers and Refugees Monument* by Olu Oguibe was removed from the city center after documenta 14, dismantled on the night of German Reunification Day. In this context, too, we can talk about violence after the violence. So what do the memorials tell us about their settings? How do we understand the way, state institutions deal with memorials to racist incidents and acts, and which counter-monuments and para-monuments do we need that negotiate the past, present, and future at the same time?

Ulf Aminde: The Bomb After the Bomb

Racist terror functions in its effort to annihilate people precisely in the interweaving with more subtle ways of making them invisible and inaudible. Everyday racism, institutional and structural relations of violence, and the knowledge of the dominant society inscribed in the majority white German authorities prolong and potentiate the Nazis' will to annihilate. In Cologne, a bomb in a cake tin exploded in a grocery store in Probsteigasse in 2001. The store owner's daughter survived the attack, seriously injured. In 2004, a nail bomb aimed at mass murder exploded in Cologne's Keupstrasse, injuring more than 22 people, four of them seriously. It was not until 2011 that it became clear what those affected had already suspected: both attacks were motivated by right-wing terrorism and were committed by the NSU network. Their racist ideology was clearly



- Talya Feldman, *The Violence We Have Witnessed Carries a Weight on Our Hearts*, 2021, Jewish Museum Berlin, installation view; photo: Yves Sucksdorff
- ↓ Daniela Ortiz, *The rebellion of Roots*, 2020, series of 15 paintings acrylic on wood; Courtesy the artist



aimed at unsettling the post-migrant society. In the Keupstrasse attack in Cologne, the authorities investigated the victims in a perpetrator-victim reversal for seven years and suspected them of being behind the attack themselves. Today, those affected speak of the “bomb after the bomb”, and it was not until 2014 that the city of Cologne decided to realize a memorial. In 2016, the jury, which included those affected, unanimously selected the design for a memorial commemorating both bombings. The memorial at Keupstrasse refers to the racist investigations of those affected that went on for seven years, and as a counter-space to this there are plans to create a public testimonial by placing a concrete floor slab at the entrance to Keupstrasse with a participatory film archive. Those affected by racist and antisemitic violence will be invited to participate in an annually financed board of trustees.

Lee Hielscher: Relating Memories. How Demanding a Collective Memory Questions How Society is Produced

When the NSU revealed their existence to the public ten years ago, the terrorist group was often framed as the first terrorist neo-Nazi organization. In fact, they are direct successors to racist terror groups that started their activities back in the 1980s. Introducing the struggles of commemorating the first officially registered victims of racist terror in the Federal Republic of Germany, namely Nguyễn Ngọc Châu and Đỗ Anh Lân, this talk will examine how demands for street names for victims reshape the urban topography of memory and how victim-focused political activism brings a new context to experiences of migration, racism, and the Viet-diaspora. While the murder of Nguyễn Ngọc Châu and Đỗ Anh Lân had a lot of official attention and collective mourning, their families and other victims were not supported in their struggle for justice. Instead, their tombstones were removed and a memorial was erased 20 years ago. The quest to reinstate a place of commemoration is still facing bureaucratic obstacles and controversial discourse in some Viet-German communities. This raises the questions: What is society's relationship to the two victims? Why is it not possible to commemorate them?

18.30 – 20.00\*

Julia Friedrich: No Longer Standing. How to Deal with a Nazi Artwork from Museum Ludwig's Collection

Fritz Behn's bronze sculpture *Standing Woman* (1935/36) is a clear example of Nazi aesthetics. The full-frontal nude demonstrates strength and determination. With its smooth and expressionless shape, the broad pelvis and the powerful pose, the statue symbolizes the ideal of the German woman of the Nazi era. Its maker, the sculptor Fritz Behn, was a National Socialist from early on, an anti-Semite as well as an outspoken colonialist. As an artist, Behn is most known and still admired for his many animal sculptures in public spaces, such as the *Gorilla Bobby* at Berlin Zoo from 1938. But he also created portrait busts of West German president Theodor Heuss, of “Jungle Doctor” Albert Schweitzer, and of Pope Pius XII in the 1950s. The sculpture *Standing Woman* stood in place in the central recreation area Rheinpark

in Cologne from 1962. A plaque next to it marked it as part of Museum Ludwig's Haubrich Collection, which is a surprise given that the lawyer Josef Haubrich (1989–1961) was a defender of German Expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* during Nazi Germany. As Museum Ludwig received the collection as a gift as early as 1946, the statue is in our custody. In her presentation she will reflect on the questions that arose about how to deal with the sculpture and the answers we gave that led to its dismantling in 2018. This also involves comparison with a much more prominent monument by the same Behn, the *Elefant*, aka the *Reichskolonialdenkmal*, aka the *AntiKolonialDenkmal* in Bremen.

Martin Krenn: Participatory & Collaborative Monument Projects

In his lecture, Martin Krenn will present four of his projects, which intervene in historical-political discourses. Back in 2010 Krenn and students at the University of Applied Arts Vienna initiated the open-call project *re-design the site of the Lueger Statue, transforming it into a monument against antisemitism and racism*. More than ten years later, in 2021, the City of Vienna finally appears willing to fulfil the demand of the open call, although to date it is not clear in what form and when the redesign of the monument will take place. The *Gedenktafel Hotel Metropole* (Hotel Metropole commemorative plaque, 2015) was a public performative intervention that commemorated the “Aryanisation” of the former Hotel Metropole, as well as its transformation into the Gestapo headquarters in Vienna. It was realized with students of the Culinary School Judenplatz (GAFA). *Memorial at the Friedenskreuz St. Lorenz*, meanwhile, is a project that is dedicated to the transformation of a historical problematic legacy, in which the artist responds to a so-called peace cross that was erected in the 1960s to honor the former Wehrmacht soldiers of the Jokisch combat group. By installing a metal mesh with a photo montage by John Heartfield in front of the cross, Krenn questions the glorification of this combat group. At the end of the lecture, Krenn will show excerpts of a film that is part of the media installation *Austria is a Wonderful Country* (2020, D, 33 min.), which recalls the brutalities and subjugation that took place during the “Anschluss” of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938. With the participation of the Austrian population, Jewish men and women were forced to wash away political slogans by the former Austro-fascist “Ständestaat” (Corporative State). The film is based on original quotes from eyewitness reports and image descriptions of historical photos.

Max Czollek: The Future of Memory

Radical diversity already characterizes European societies today. This has an impact on their understanding of self, ranging from political ideas to public forms of remembrance. At the same time, we continue to operate with political concepts and models of remembrance that do not, or do not sufficiently take this reality into account. One project aiming to change that is the Coalition for Pluralistic Public Discourse (CPPD) by Dialogue Perspectives/the Leo Baeck Foundation, which invites young intellectuals, artists, and academics to develop creative, civic, educational and didactic concepts and ideals for the pluralization of European remembrance cultures.

10.00 – 11.00\*

Leon Kahane: Schuld und Erinnerung / Guilt and Memory

Whenever people in Germany talk about the memory of the Shoah and how to deal with their own history, the question arises as to the guilt of the descendants. In the art field, this has recently been clearly demonstrated by the example of the art collector and shareholder Julia Stoschek. Is Julia Stoschek guilty that the family business founded by her great-grandfather Max Brose benefited from slave labour? Hardly likely! Then what are we still talking about when the question can be clarified so easily? In the lecture this question will be addressed from the perspective of Jewish cultural history. The importance of one's own guilt is a recurring motif in Judaism. Guilt is not something that you overcome in order to overcome part of your own history, but rather the contrary: In Judaism, awareness of one's own guilt is the condition for the development of the self-responsible individual. No conscience without guilt and no responsibility without conscience. So it is by no means about finding someone to blame, but about understanding that one can be effective as an individual and thus also be at fault for good and bad. The defense against guilt is a form of externalization in which one's own guilt and responsibility for one's own actions and work is transferred to others. This relief principle can be described as a cultural technique that has always been inextricably linked with the development of anti-semitic conspiracy ideologies. The memory of guilt, on the other hand, follows an enlightenment principle and is a task that every generation must deal with anew in order to remain effective and defensible.

Talya Feldman: *Wir Sind Hier | We Are Here*

Over the last decades, survivors of right-wing terror in Germany and families of victims have fought to reclaim their right to remembrance in the public space. These fights have been with city officials, with neighbours, with politicians, with artists, with media figures, and with law enforcement. These fights have been for the right to be heard, to be seen, and to activate change in politics, justice, and civil society. These fights have been for language and for physical space: street names, park circles, rooms of solidarity, schools, parks, and monuments. *Wir Sind Hier | We Are Here*, a new project by Talya Feldman in collaboration with families of victims, survivors, and initiatives across Germany combating right-wing terror, examines what it means to remember and claim remembrance in a digital space, that which has been—or is still being—fought for in the analog. The voices of those most affected by right-wing violence and their demands for remembrance are made both visible and audible, existing forever in the public space as a digital space—a space of collective mourning and resistance. This platform is designed by Talya Feldman and Tuan Quoc Pham and will be featured by the Kunstverein in Hamburg in January 2022 as part of their KV Digital exhibition series.

11.30 – 12.30\*

Minna Henriksson: Disappearing and reappearing Lenins

My presentation will address the politics of public space memorials in Finland and Latvia through the case study of Lenin memorials. Finland is promoted as a Western liberal democracy, which includes the oft-repeated statement that statues are not toppled and street names are not changed even though ideologies change. In Finland, this would have not even been possible, because no radical ideological change has yet happened; Finland has continued to be a bourgeois democracy ruled by the white hegemony, granted by the victory in the brutal Civil War in Finland in 1918, which took place just months after the declaration of independence. Lenin's role in Finland's independence was central, but the various Lenin memorial plates, statues, and a park all date back to the 1970s and the specific political strategy practiced then, known as 'Finlandization'. Rather than demonstrating greater tolerance than in 'new democracies', Finnish public space politics seem to be trapped in their own narrative. In Finland, although many would like to, it is impossible to topple the Lenin statues, as this action would signal the end of one ideology and the beginning of another. There have been attempts to make Lenin statues disappear in other ways. To contrast with the case of Finland, I follow the destiny of the main Lenin statue in the center of Riga that was demonstratively and symbolically toppled in 1991, marking a new era in Latvia's history. This statue, having been moved from one storage depot to another in the outskirts of Riga after its dismantling, was finally stored in an area that got privatized. Perhaps no-one in the city administration cared for or remembered the statue when the property changed hands, but the new owner obviously saw the value of the statue, as he refuses to give it back to the city. Elsewhere in Baltic countries, sculpture parks have been made, where the statues of the socialist regime are placed. These have become highly popular.

Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock: Hundred thirty and one bodies in a garden full of ghosts—On absence in contemporary archives

In a room of its own we are commemorating death, poorly. Barkcloth textiles, metal deities, jewelry, and writings pile up in toxic containers, uncontextualized in arranged institutions. The accumulated treasures hidden in dark places that mark the aftermath of a global plundering of artefacts and bodies alike are testimonies of absence and incapability of commemorating death. The competitive drive to accumulate fetishized objects en masse has not only profoundly disrupted the relationship with how one can and is remembered but also dispossessed communities of the creations that underline their being. Through the constructed gaps in commemoration, one's existence becomes fragmented, governed by structures that disrupt the wholistic relationship to sense space and time. Archives are therefore not only toxic spaces that hold chemicals to artificially preserve what is not for the archivist to hold captive, but inaccessible graveyards depriving communities of re-centering through their epistemologies and imaginaries.



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13.00 – 14.00  
Lunch break

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14.00 – 15.30\*

Tania Mancheno: What is the Sound of a Monument? Soundscapes of Decolonial Memories in Hamburg

What is the sound of a monument? Can oral history be transformed into a memorial and if so, what language would it speak? Departing from the Koselleckian idea that national heritage is nowhere neutral and always fragmental, and Françoise Vergès' conception of national history as a transcontinental construction, in this presentation I will discuss the possibilities of decolonizing sites of colonial heritage in the city. To this end, I will first briefly introduce Koselleck's and Vergès' critiques on monuments by applying their arguments to selected examples in the city of Hamburg. In a second step, I will present my activist research and ongoing artistic projects, which seek to build soundscapes of decolonial memories. I will mainly focus on the collective affective cartography "What Does Hamburg Mean to You?" (Was bedeutet Hamburg für Dich?), which consists of a series of interviews with critical non-hegemonic and diasporic voices of Hamburg, and *The Crack Between the Lion's Feet* (Der Riss zwischen den Löwenfüßen, 2020), which is an acoustic intervention in the city's anthropological museum. Both features can be visited prior to the presentation at the following locations: <https://kolonialismus.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/was-bedeutet-hamburg-fuer-dich/> and <https://markk-hamburg.de/audio/>.

Stephan Trüby: Right-wing Spaces

Is there an architectural and urban-planning agenda behind the politics of contemporary right-wing populist, right-wing radical, right-wing extremist, and (neo-)fascist forces? And if so, to what extent does the so-called "middle of society" make itself an involuntary assistant in this? These are the guiding questions behind the lecture by Stephan Trüby, who builds on his book *Rechte Räume. Politische Essays und Gespräche* (Right-wing spaces. Political essays and Conversations, 2020). By way of background to Trüby's research: Many Western liberal-leaning democracies are currently seeing a rollback of society that was barely thought possible until a few years ago. The lecture outlines how the political right in Germany and beyond is attempting to shape architecture, town, and country.

Claas Gefroi: How Much (and What) Memory Does the Future Need? Built Testimony of Hamburg Jews

The first Jews arriving in Hamburg in 1580 were Portuguese and Spanish Sephardim fleeing the Inquisition. They were followed by Ashkenazi Jews from the German-speaking countries as well as Eastern Europe. Both reform-oriented and more traditional and conservative Jews developed and cultivated their different cultures in Hamburg, each building their own temples and synagogues. Under National Socialism, many of these buildings were destroyed, including the Bornplatz synagogue and thus the largest, most important synagogue in northern Germany, while others were closed, confiscated, and repurposed. After the end of World

War II and Nazi-Germany rule, the Jewish community was re-established as a unified community, finding its architectural expression in the new synagogue at Hohe Weide. Architectural legacies that had been preserved, meanwhile, fell into disrepair despite their heritage-protection (Poolstrasse Temple), or were and continue to be used for other purposes (Rolf Liebermann Studio in the former synagogue on Oberstrasse). Recently, the Jewish community's proposal to build a central synagogue once again on Bornplatz has led to fierce controversy, with reactions coming even from Israel. The dispute was sparked by the fact that the community wanted to design the new building closely along the lines of the destroyed Bornplatz synagogue, which critics view as a form of historicism that negates history. In addition, construction of the building would entail the removal of a bunker built during the Nazi era and now heritage-protected, as well as a floor mosaic created as a memorial by the artist Margrit Kahl. Politicians have supported the plan: In November 2020, the budget committee of the Bundestag released 65 million euros for the reconstruction of the synagogue. The same amount again is to come from the City of Hamburg's budget. The developments relating to the Bornplatz synagogue, not least, raise a number of questions: How should we view Hamburg's handling of recent Jewish (building) history? Is the city living up to its responsibility to preserve and maintain (former) Jewish sacred buildings? Is the approach to existing buildings and the plans for the new building also an expression of ideology, attitudes, taste preferences? If yes, then which ones? And finally: What role does the past play in shaping the future? I would like to explore all this in my lecture.

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16.00 – 17.00\*

Debriefing Session with Michaela Melián and Nora Sternfeld

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Viewing area with installations by Para-City-Walks group in the four vitrines and video screenings by Junya Fujita, New Media Socialism, Kervin Saint Pere in the Aula at HFBK

\*Followed by a Q&A session

- ← Proposal by Ulf Aminde for the memorial commemorating the NSU nail bomb attack at Keupstraße in Cologne on June 9, 2004. The realization was decided by the city of Cologne on November 9, 2021; photo: Ulf Aminde
- ← Olu Oguibe, *Monument for strangers and refugees (Das Fremdlinge und Flüchtlinge Monument)*, documenta 14, Kassel, 2017



- ← The Tempel at Poolstraße, Hamburg, 2021; photo Markus Dorfmueller / Johanna Klier, [www.dorfmuellerklier.de](http://www.dorfmuellerklier.de)
- ↙ Lenin sculpture in Riga; photo: Minna Henriksson
- ↓ Heba Amin, *Fruit from Saturn*, 2020, Center for Persecuted Arts in Solingen, installation view; photo: Markus Rack
- Martin Krenn, *Gedenktafel Hotel Metropole* (Hotel Metropole commemorative plaque, 2015); photo: Martin Krenn



# Conference: Counter-Monuments and Para-Monuments. Contested Memory in Public Space

*December 2 – 4,  
2021  
Speakers*





Artist Heba Y. Amin engages with political themes and archival history, using mediums including film, photography, archival material, lecture performance, and installation. Her artistic research takes a speculative, often satirical approach to challenging narratives of conquest and control. Amin is a Professor of Digital and Time-based Art at Akademie der bildenden Künste Stuttgart, the co-founder of the Black Athena Collective, curator of visual art for the journal *Mizna*, and currently part of the editorial board of the *Journal of Digital War*. She was awarded the 2020 Sussmann Artist Award for artists committed to the ideals of democracy and anti-fascism, and was selected as a Field of Vision Fellow, NYC (2019). Amin's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions including at The Mosaic Rooms, London (2021), the Böttcherstrasse Prize Exhibition, Bremen (2018), the Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam (2020), the Quai Branly Museum, Paris (2020), the MAXXI Museum, Rome (2018), the Liverpool Biennial (2021), the 10th Berlin Biennale (2018), the 15th Istanbul Biennale (2017), and the 12th Dak'Art Biennale (2016), to name but a few. Her latest publication, *Heba Y. Amin: The General's Stork* (ed. Anthony Downey) was recently published by Sternberg Press (2020), and her works and interventions have been covered by the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Intercept*, and the *BBC* among others. Furthermore, Amin is also one of the artists behind the subversive graffiti action on the set of the television series *Homeland* which received worldwide media attention.



Ulf Aminde is an artist and filmmaker. His productions often negotiate public space and/or are also shown there, and many of them are about or even initiate collaborations and collective learning environments. His latest works concentrate on memory and resistance. In Cologne he is developing a film-based and - with the help of augmented reality - also participative monument in memory of the racist attacks by the terrorist NSU network in Probsteigasse and Keupstrasse. In 2020, together with Manuel Gogos, he initiated the *Monument of Migration - Street of Labor*, in which the European road network can be experienced as a transitory and resistant place. He is also Professor of Performative Spaces at the Weißensee Kunsthochschule in Berlin. There, he initiated in particular the \*foundationClass for artists who were forced to flee their home countries, and the \*foundationClass collective that emerged autonomously has been invited to documenta 15 (2022). His exhibitions and projects include 4th Berlin Biennale, Havana Biennial, KW Berlin, Volksbühne am Rosa Luxemburg Platz, Berlinische Galerie, NGBK Berlin, ZKM Karlsruhe, MARTa Herford, Steirischer Herbst, Schirn Frankfurt, Kästner Gesellschaft Hannover, MoCA Taipei, Kunstverein Heidelberg, Staatstheater Mannheim, Kunstverein Wolfsburg, and Galerie Tanja Wagner.



Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock is a curator and researcher at SAVVY Contemporary, where she is part of the participatory archive project Colonial Neighbours. She received her MA in Postcolonial Cultures and Global Policy at Goldsmiths University of London. In her work within the permanent collection of SAVVY Contemporary she looks for colonial traces that are manifested in our present. The collaborative archive dedicates itself to discussing silenced histories and to the de-canonization of the Western gaze through objects and the stories behind them. With close collaboration from artists, initiatives, and activists, the archive is activated through hybrid forms of practice. Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock assisted the management for the documenta 14 radio programme *Every Time a Ear di Soun* at SAVVY Funk in Berlin (2017), supported the artist Bouchra Khalili with several projects and exhibitions (2015/16), and worked on a year-long research project on Julius Eastman in a collaboration between SAVVY Contemporary and the Maerzmusik festival (2017/18). In 2018, she produced Agnieszka Polska's commission for Germany's National Gallery Prize show in the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin (2018/19). Lately she has been co-curating the year-long research and exhibition program *HERE HISTORY BEGAN. TRACING THE RE/VERBERATIONS OF HALIM EL-DABH* (2020/21).



Max Czollek is a poet, publicist, and political scientist. He received his doctorate from the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at the Technische Universität Berlin and is particularly well known for his theatrical and essayistic work surrounding memory culture, integration, and Jewish identity in postwar Germany. Theater works include *De-Integration. A Congress on Contemporary Jewish Positions and the Radical Jewish Culture Days* at Maxim Gorki Theater, as well as the international Jewish-Muslim Hegemony Days. His essays *Desintegriert Euch!* (Disintegrate!) and *Gegenwartsbewältigung* (Overcoming the Present) are published with Carl Hanser Verlag, his collections of poetry at Verlagshaus Berlin. He is co-editor of the magazine *Jalta - Positionen zur jüdischen Gegenwart* (Yalta - Positions on the Jewish Present).



Talya Feldman is a time-based media artist from Denver, Colorado. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is currently studying at the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg. She received the 2021 DAGESH Art Award for her installation *The Violence We Have Witnessed Carries a Weight on Our Hearts* at the Jewish Museum in Berlin. As a survivor of the racist and antisemitic attack in Halle



(Saale) on October 9, 2019, Feldman has received global recognition for her subsequent projects combating right-wing terror on- and offline.

Eduard Freudmann lives and works in Vienna. As an artist, he develops projects with a focus on performativity, installation, and public space. His approach is characterized by transdisciplinary work, artistic research, and critical discourse. He always strives to relate contemporary aesthetics with political analysis and, above all, to encourage a critical public.



Freudmann produces his projects individually as well as in temporary collectives. He links interventionist and documentary strategies with narrative and fictitious elements and uses different formats and media. Freudmann's projects have been presented in exhibitions, biennials, film festivals, and in public space.

Julia Friedrich is Head of Prints and Drawings at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, where she has curated numerous exhibitions of modern and contemporary art. Her exhibition *Picasso, Shared and Divided. The Artist and His Image in East and West Germany* is currently ongoing. One of her primary research interests is the practice of collecting and exhibiting during the postwar



period. In 2019, for example, she gave the keynote lecture for the documenta symposium at the German Historical Museum, which sparked a debate on traces of National Socialism in postwar Modernism. On March 1, 2022, she will become Director of Collections at the Jewish Museum Berlin.

Claas Gefroi (\*1968) is the Press and Public Relations Officer for the Hamburg Chamber of Architecture, a



member of the board at the Denkmalverein Hamburg, editor of the *Jahrbuch Architektur in Hamburg* (Yearbook of Architecture in Hamburg), and a freelance architecture journalist writing in newspapers and magazines such as *taz*, *konkret*, *Die Zeit*, *Bauwelt*, *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, and *Baumeister*.

Ayşe Güleç is an educator, author, curator, and research activist at the intersections of anti-racism, art, art education, and migration. Since 2019, Güleç has been working as curator in the Artistic Team of documenta 15 (2022). In 2021, she curated the exhibition *Offener Prozess*, shown at the Stadtmuseum Jena, Neue Sächsische Galerie (Chemnitz), Maxim Gorki Theater (Berlin), and La Vallée (Brussels). Previously, she was Head of the Art Education Department at the Museum für Moderne Kunst MMK (Frankfurt am Main). As

Head of Community Liaison at documenta 14 (2017), she established interlocal connections between artists and socio-political contexts and built up the Society of Friends of Halit. She was one of the initiators of the collective anti-racist movement that implemented the first NSU tribunal in 2017, has been active against racism for many years, and is part of the Kassel Initiative 6 April. From 1998 to 2016 Güleç worked as Head of the Education & Migration Department at the socio-cultural center Schlachthof in Kassel in the field of migration as well as local and European education, building various



networks of collaboration. For documenta 13 (2012) she was a consultant and member of "Maybe Education" and also coordinated training for art mediators. In 2007, she developed the documenta 12 Advisory Board as a special form of mediation, subsequently becoming the board's spokesperson.

Minna Henriksson is a visual artist who works with a disparate range of tools including text, drawing, and linocut. She studied art in Brighton, Helsinki, and Malmö. Her work is often collaborative, and relates to the anti-racist, leftist, and feminist struggles. In recent



years her work has often dealt with archives and histories; it is research-based and engages with political processes that appear to be neutral or natural. In 2017 Henriksson was presented with the Anni and Heinrich Sussmann Award for artistic work committed to the ideal of democracy and antifascism.

Lee Hielscher (he/him) is a Hamburg-based cultural anthropologist and digital designer. He is interested in questions about collective memory and the history of racist violence. He worked on texts, protests, and educational programs on the diverse levels of meaning of the multiplex NSU terror, the racist attacks of



Rostock-Lichtenhagen, on victim support, the Vietnamese diaspora and Gadje racism. He is active in various initiatives, including the Network of Critical Migration and Border Regime Research and in the initiative for a memorial to Nguyễn Ngọc Châu and Đỗ Anh Lân.

Leon Kahane, born in Berlin in 1985, creates conceptual video works, photographs, and installations that center on themes of migration, identity, and coming to terms with majorities and minorities in a globalized society. His interest frequently focuses on geopolitical and social changes of the recent past. Time and again he calls attention to events and institutions that express the contradictions inherent in history. They reflect histor-



ical, political, economic, and biographical aspects, which he takes up and explores in his works. In particular, the socio-cultural situatedness of current political debates and dynamics is central to his artistic approach, which is a form of cultural critique.

Martin Krenn is an artist, artistic researcher, and curator. He works as Professor of Art Mediation/Education at the Institute of Fine Art, Braunschweig University of Art, and as a lecturer for the Vienna Master of Arts in Applied Human Rights at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Krenn uses various types of media, including text, photography, and video, and most of his projects in public space take the form of social sculpture. By consistently expanding the field of art, he tries to initiate discussions about socio-political topics and thereby challenges conventional thinking. He was awarded



a PhD for his project *The Political Space in Social Art Practices* by Ulster University's Faculty of Art, Design, and the Built Environment, Belfast Campus, in 2016. Since 1995 he has exhibited in numerous international exhibitions.

Tania Mancheno is an affiliate researcher at the Research Center for Hamburg's (Post)Colonial Legacy at the University of Hamburg, where she has also taught in the field of social sciences on postcolonial theory and decolonial thought since 2009. Her research is focused on urban space and violence, colonial history, and the analysis of its local and transnational consequences from a feminist perspective from the Global South. Currently, Dr. Mancheno is a member of DAICOR and



of the German-American Working Group on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Her coming publication is an essay entitled *Beyond coloniality in world heritage: Countermapping the colonial amnesia in Parisian landscapes*. <https://uni-hamburg.academia.edu/TaniaMancheno>

Michaela Melián is an artist and musician, is professor of Time-based Media at HFBK Hamburg. In her installations, which usually refer to real places and events, Melián combines historical facts and memories into visual and acoustic collages, as in *Memory Loops* (2010), an acoustic and interactive memorial to the victims of National Socialism in Munich, for which she received, among others, the Grimme Preis and the Prix Italia. Melián's interest is not in the obvious, well-known image of events or biographies, but rather the different levels and contradictions of personal memory and official representation. She is a founding member of the band *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle (F.S.K.)* and has co-edited the artist magazine *Mode & Verzweiflung*. She publishes

records, solo records, film music and radio plays, artist-magazines and books. Her works have been shown in international exhibitions including, among others, the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus Munich, the Fundació Juan Miró Barcelona, Kunsthal Rotterdam, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Kunsthalle Mannheim, Ruhrtriennale, Lentos Museum Linz, Cubitt London and Ludlow New York. Michaela Melián has been awarded numerous prizes for her work. For example, she received Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden/Preis für Audiokunst for *Föhrenwald* (2005); Kunstpreis der Stadt München (2010), Edwin Scharff Kunstpreis der Stadt Hamburg (2018) and Preis für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum der Stadt Bremen (2018). In 2014, Melián was nominated for the category "best film music" at the German Film Awards with her film music for the feature film *Finsterworld*.



Olu Oguibe is an award-winning multimedia artist and writer whose work often straddles minimalist formalism and engagement with global social issues. His work has been exhibited in museums and galleries around the world, and he has participated in several international biennials and triennials including the Venice, Havana, and Busan biennials. He has also created permanent public works in many countries and curated or co-curated various significant international exhibitions. His writings on art, literature, and cultural theory are widely published. Oguibe has been a fellow of the Smithsonian Institution, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School, the Rockefeller Center in Bellagio, and the Open Societies Foundations, among others. His many honors include the State of Connecticut Governor's Arts Award for excellence and lifetime achievement in 2013, and the 2017 Arnold-Bode-Preis of the City of Kassel for his work in documenta 14. In 2017, he left his position as Professor of Painting at the University of Connecticut to concentrate on making art.



Daniela Ortiz was born in Peru in 1985 and lives and works in Urubamba, Cusco. Through her work, she aims to generate visual narratives in which the concepts of nationality, racialization, social class, and genre are explored in order to critically understand structures of colonial, patriarchal, and capitalist power. Her recent projects and research deal with the European migratory control system, its links to colonialism, and the legal structure created by European institutions in order to inflict violence towards racialized and migrant communities. She has also developed projects about the Peruvian upper class and its exploitative relationship with domestic workers. Recently her artistic practice has turned back into visual and manual work, involving art pieces in ceramic, collage, and in formats such as children's books in order to take distance from Eurocen-

tronic conceptual art aesthetics. Alongside her artistic practice, she is mother to a four-year-old, gives talks and workshops, carries out investigations, and participates in discussions on Europe's migratory control system and its ties to coloniality in different contexts.

Nora Sternfeld is an art educator and curator and is Professor of Art Education at the HFBK Hamburg. From 2018 to 2020 she was documenta professor at the Kunsthochschule Kassel, and from 2012 to 2018 Professor of Curating and Mediating Art at Aalto University in Helsinki. In addition, she is co-director of the /ecm – Master's Program for Exhibition Theory and Practice at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, a member of the core team of schnittpunkt. ausstellungstheorie & praxis, co-founder and part of trafo.K, Office for Art, Education, and Critical Knowledge Production (Vienna), and since 2011 part of freethought, Platform for Research, Education and Production (London). In this context she

was also one of the artistic directors of the Bergen Assembly 2016 and since 2020 has been BAK Fellow of the basis voor actuele kunst (Utrecht). She publishes on contemporary art, educational theory, exhibitions, politics of history, and anti-racism.



Anja Steidinger (\*1972) is Professor of Art Education, Teaching Profession at Elementary School (LAGS) at HFBK Hamburg. She works as an artist at the interface of art, politics, and education. She studied art education and fine arts at the HFBK Hamburg with a focus on photography, video, and installation. From 2006 to 2020 she lived in Barcelona, where she also wrote her dissertation on artistic (self-)representations of unease in the context of the Spanish economic crisis (publication Edition Metzler, Munich 2015). She is co-founder of the Spanish activist artist collective Enmedio and the media education project for children La Maleta del Cine

in Barcelona. Her working method, often based on a collaborative output, combines decolonial, anti-discriminatory perspectives with local art projects and develops new spaces for action from artistic intervention as a critical practice.



Stephan Trüby (\*1970) is Professor of Architecture and Cultural Theory and Director of the Institute for Principles of Modern Architecture and Design (IGmA) at the University of Stuttgart. He was previously Professor of Temporary Architecture at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe (2007–09), head of the post-graduate program MAS Scenography/Spatial Design at Zurich University of the Arts (2009–2014), taught architectural theory at Harvard University (2012–2014),

and was a professor at the TU Munich (2014–2018). His most important books include *Exit-Architektur. Design zwischen Krieg und Frieden* (Exit Architecture. Design between War and Peace, 2008), *The World of Madelon Vriesendorp* (2008, with Shumon Basar), *Die deutschen Beiträge zur Architekturbiennale Venedig seit 1991: Eine Oral History* (The German Contributions to the Venice Architecture Biennale since 1991: An Oral History, 2016, with Verena Hartbaum), *Absolute Architekturbeginner: Schriften 2004–2014* (Absolute Architecture Beginners: Writings 2004–2014, 2017), *Die Geschichte des Korridors* (The History of the Corridor, 2018), and *Rechte Räume. Politische Essays und Gespräche* (Right-wing Spaces. Political Essays and Conversations, 2020).



Mirjam Zadoff is Director of the Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism, having previously held the Alvin H. Rosenfeld Chair for Jewish Studies and the position of Associate Professor for History at Indiana University Bloomington. She is a member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and was visiting faculty at ETH Zurich, UC Berkeley, HU

Berlin, and Augsburg University. Her publications include: *Werner Scholem. A German Life* (2018), *Next Year in Marienbad. The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture* (2012), and forthcoming, edited together with Nicolaus Schafhausen, *Tell Me About Yesterday Tomorrow*.



Her publications include: *Werner Scholem. A German Life* (2018), *Next Year in Marienbad. The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture* (2012), and forthcoming, edited together with Nicolaus Schafhausen, *Tell Me About Yesterday Tomorrow*.

The conference is conceived by Michaela Melián (Artist, Musician and Professor of Time-based Media, HFBK Hamburg) and Nora Sternfeld (Professor of Art Education, HFBK Hamburg). Organized by Julia Stolba (PhD student, HFBK Hamburg).

The conference will be held in English. The event will be recorded and can then be viewed at <https://mediathek.hfbk.net>.

Please refer to [www.hfbk-hamburg.de](http://www.hfbk-hamburg.de) for details on the hygiene regulations that apply at the time.

↑ [Seite 21–24] Portrait photos from: Sebastian Böttcher (H. Amin); Roza Boynik (M. Henriksson); Orla Connolly (M. Zadoff); Pamela Draxler (M. Krenn); Stefan Loeber (M. Czollek); NS-Dokuzentrum / Connolly Weber Photography (M. Melián); McRyan Melchor (L. Balatbat-Helbock); Nathan Ishar Pramudiya (J. Friedrich); Uli Regenscheit (S. Trüby); Nicolas Wefers (N. Sternfeld)

# Counter-Memorials and Para-Monuments<sup>1</sup> *Nora Sternfeld*

How can politics and memory be brought together in public space? A localisation of the history of artistic counter-monuments and the search for para-monuments for the present



“I was a stranger and you took me in. Ich kam als ein Fremdling und ihr habt mich beherbergt.” A quotation from the Bible in four languages (Arabic, English, German, and Turkish) on a 16.3-meter-high obelisk stood during documenta 14 in the middle of Königsplatz in downtown Kassel. The work in question was produced for documenta and entitled *Das Fremdlinge und Flüchtlinge Monument* by artist Olu Oguibe. Both the Bible and the shape of the obelisk develop over-determined meanings. Olu Oguibe won the City of Kassel’s Arnold-Bode-Preis for this artwork. On the cultural committee that had to decide whether the obelisk would remain on Kassel’s Königplatz, Thomas Materner, Kassel municipal councillor for the AfD party, described the obelisk as “ideologically polarizing, distorted art”. He announced protests against it. The newspaper *Hessisch Niedersächsische Allgemeine* reported he had also said: “In his experience, the citizens’ anger over the obelisk was great”.<sup>2</sup> Not only the word “distorted” but also the talk of the anger of the citizens brought to mind echoes of the history of the November pogroms in Germany when the Reich Ministry of Propaganda insisted on the wording “the people’s anger” at a press conference.

What shape can artistic memory take if it has once again become possible to publicly denounce art as being “distorted” and “abhorrent”,<sup>3</sup> while at the same time everyone talks about a “never again” of which it has long since become unclear what this means? And what does this mean for a culture of remembrance that had to be fiercely fought for until into the 1980s, only for it to become reflexive in the 1990s and in the noughties to actually become a tourism factor—while at the same time being right-wing is once again stylish, possible, and powerful. So, what is a monument as a place of remembrance in a neoliberal world that is in many places becoming increasingly fascist? This essay outlines the history of artistic counter-monuments and explores the idea of para-monuments for the present.

## 1. Wrestled memories

An attempt to reconstruct the history/histories of remembrance cultures in the successor states of Nazi-Germany offers us insights into a contested terrain. For a very long time, monuments and memorials to support an admonishing memory of the Nazis’ mass crimes were by no means a matter of course in West Germany, in Austria, and in East Germany. Many decades after the liberation, in the successor states of Nazi-Germany the burden of remembering the Holocaust thus lay with the survivors and their relatives. For example, Sonja Klenk writes that “It was the survivors who directly after the end of the war erected commemorative plaques and memorials, whereby in the course of the following decades these fell into ruin and were forgotten.”<sup>4</sup> In this context, art started taking the Nazis’ crimes as subject matter for aesthetic enquiry as early as 1945. This was driven by the largely marginalized self-organization of the survivors. Taking as their motto “Never Forget”, survivor organizations dedicated themselves continuously to remembrance projects. On April 11, 1951, for example, a rally was held by the KZ-Verband on Morzinplatz in Vienna, the place where the Gestapo prison and the former Hotel Metropol had stood. In this context, a memorial stone to the victims of the Gestapo was designed

- [1] This essay is based on a lecture in the lecture series “[Counter-]Monuments. Practices of remembrance in the public space”, held by the Sculpture Projects Archive Research Group at the Institute of Art History at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster during the 2018 summer semester, and on an essay that appeared in the catalog of artist Ernst Logar in 2018. Nora Sternfeld: “Gegendenkmal und Para-Monument. Politik und Erinnerung im öffentlichen Raum/Counter-Monument and Para-Monument. Politics and Remembrance in Public Space”, in: Ernst Logar (ed.): *Ort der Unruhe/Place of Unrest*, (Klagenfurt & Celovec: Drava, 2018), pp. 40–61.
- [2] <https://www.hna.de/kultur/documenta/documenta-kunstwerk-obelisk-afd-spricht-von-entstellter-kunst-8601756.html> [Last visit: 09.11.2021].
- [3] In January 2018 Austrian politician Gottfried Waldhäusl, a member of the FPÖ and Section Chairman in Lower Austria, spoke in connection with an intervention with a statue of St. Mary of “abhorrent art”, of dirty art, and of filthy art.
- [4] Sonja Klenk, *Gedenkstättenpädagogik an den Orten nationalsozialistischen Unrechts in der Region Freiburg-Offenburg*, (Berlin, 2006), p. 8.
- [5] Katharina Morawek & Nora Sternfeld, “Visuelle Geschichtspolitik im öffentlichen Raum. Eine Reflexion über künstlerische Strategien der Erinnerung im Postnazismus,” <https://www.linksnet.de/artikel/26432> [Last visit: 09.11.2021].
- [6] James Edward Young, “Counter-Monuments. Memory against Itself in Germany Today,” in: *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 2. (Winter, 1992), pp. 267–96, here p. 269.
- [7] Harburger Mahnmahl gegen Faschismus, <https://kulturtag-harburg.netsamurai.de/harburger-mahnmahl-gegen-faschismus/> [Last visit: 09.11.2021].



and consecrated by the Opferverband (Association of Victims) without official authorization, in other words illegally. Not until the 1980s was the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der KZ-Verbände und Widerstandskämpfer Österreichs able to unveil the new memorial to the victims of violent oppression by the Nazis. “The nascent aesthetics of commemoration is usually driven by a monolithic and block-like formal idiom and figurative symbolism of suffering: The battle for remembrance is expressed in modernist monuments that take the sheer fact of survival as their subject matter, lend material form to mourning the murdered, commemorate the persecuted as individuals, and seek to express the victory of Modernity. In other words, initially it was about taking a stance as a gesture by the survivors and that stance was not infrequently bound up with struggles over the history of politics.”<sup>5</sup> Remembrance had to be fought for if it was to be won.

## 2. Counter-Monuments

While this took a lot longer in Austria and remains controversial to this day, in West Germany in the 1980s (in the wake of the US TV series *Holocaust* having been broadcast on the ARD channel in 1979) a new, almost omnipresent self-reflexive debate on the Nazi crimes ensued in art in public spaces. For example, James Edward Young wrote in 1992: “Germany’s ongoing Denkmal-Arbeit simultaneously displaces and constitutes the object of memory.”<sup>6</sup> In this context, he coined the term “counter-monument, which he found exemplified above all by the practice of Jochen and Esther Shalev Gerz, while also referencing Horst Hoheisel, and in their work saw a German memory against itself”. A key role in these projects for counter-memory was that they did not wish to pre-empt any debate or create a monumental presence in its stead. In other words, instead of substituting the debate people should be having, the idea was to ensure the wound was not allowed to heal and the debate kept going. This resulted in artistic/formal strategies ranging from presence to absence: In this context, the best-known example is the *Harburg Memorial Against Fascism, War, and Violence—for Peace*

← [Seite 25] *Memorial to the Victims of National Socialist Tyranny on Morzinplatz (Mahnmal für die Opfer der NS-Gewaltherrschaft am Morzinplatz)*, Vienna; photo: Dietmar Rabich, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

↑ Horst Hoheisel, *Aschrottbrunnen*, documenta 8, 1987, Kassel; photo: Eistreter, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0, VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn 2021

and Human Rights by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz. When erected in 1986 it consisted of a 12-meter-high stele that challenged passersby to write on it and thus participate in remembrance, and as part of this to help gradually lower the column into the ground. We can read on a panel in seven languages, and the panel remains the visible trace of the column which has since disappeared into the ground:

“We invite the citizens of Harburg and visitors to the town to add their names here to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12-meter-tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day, it will have disappeared completely and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1987, artist Horst Hoheisel created a memorial for documenta 8. It, too, refused to create closure for remembrance simply by reconstructing something or providing a classic monument, and instead sought to keep memory open and thus highlight that there can never be any closure. The result was a memorial as negative: Hoheisel’s piece references a fountain with an obelisk—a 12-meter-high, 12-step pyramid sculpture made of sandstone that stood in front of the Kassel City Hall. Nazi activists had, as part of a pogrom on April 9, 1939, destroyed what they had derided as a “Jewish fountain”. It had been donated in 1908 by Kassel burgher Sigmund Aschrott on the occasion of the new-build City Hall being inaugurated and had been designed by the same architect, Karl Roth. Hoheisel’s counter-monument consisted of “sinking the fountain as an inverted shape into the ground on the forecourt outside the City Hall. In this way, the pyramid became a funnel into which the fountain’s water cascaded loudly. The symmetrical opposite of the original fountain reached down as far as the water table and thus became a symbol of the rupture, the absence that had arisen and which could no longer be filled.”<sup>8</sup>

### 3. What has happened since

While this critical debate was increasingly occupying public space in West Germany during the 1980s, global politics was changing. After German Reunification, the remembrance projects were as good as the pre-eminent theme presented by the country. In the noughties, a certain sense of pathos of negative remembrance was transformed into a tourist attraction that definitely fostered a specific identity and completely overwrote the discourse on remembrance in East Germany—which had most certainly also been problematic and inadequate as regards tackling anti-Semitism. In the course of this, the East German notion of “anti-fascism” was actually delegitimized. Such a smoothing over of negative memories in the noughties are symbolized best by the “topography” and the “stele”. In the booming tourism metropolis of Berlin, where rents seem to go up by the month and an ever-increasing number of districts are experiencing gentrification, remembrance became an overall urban project. “The concrete of the blocks in the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* may perhaps quote the above-mentioned Modernist gesture of the survivors, but here concrete also becomes the stylistic material of a new German “pride in remembrance”, and the om-

nipresent “stele” of the noughties becomes its prime form.”<sup>9</sup> In the noughties, remembrance started to forge an identity not just for Germany, but also for Europe. Enzo Traverso thus pointed to the danger of the culture of history becoming depoliticized as a consequence. In his opinion this “does not involve forgetting the Shoah but rather an abuse of memories of it, enveloping it in balm, locking it away in museums, and neutralizing its critical potential, or, worse still, using it apologetically as the support for the current world order.”<sup>10</sup> So what should a counter-monument do if it is the counter-monuments themselves that are now fostering identity? And what to do if the “culture of remembrance” tends to assist the emergence of the New Right rather than causing an outcry at it happening?

Kassel’s Königsplatz is located a few hundred meters from the venue of the former Aschrottbrunnen fountain. It was there that from summer 2017 until fall 2018 an obelisk once again stood—the documenta art work by Olu Oguibe that was then derided as “distorted art”. It may be a conscious strategy to get people accustomed to hearing these words echo. And in the context of the documenta, that is as ironic as it is bitter<sup>11</sup>: After all, since its first edition back in 1955 the documenta has repeatedly presented itself publicly with the function of drawing on an artistic practice that was ostracized for being “degenerate”.<sup>12</sup> The fact that a fountain stood like an open wound in front of the City Hall changed nothing as regards the stance of the AfD or the way the debate on the obelisk took place in the city. The irony and scandal of the repetition of the right-wing threat to an obelisk in downtown Kassel went unnoticed.

### 4. Para-Monument

Now, Olu Oguibe’s defamed artwork is formally anything but a counter-monument. It does not try and duck the eye, dares to tower up into public space as an obelisk, to occupy Königsplatz. I suggest Olu Oguibe’s *Das Fremdlinge und Flüchtlinge Monument* be read as re-appropriation. Indeed, in relation to German “counter-monuments” I would term it a para-monument. It does not address the idea of a monument negatively but appropriates the form and discourse of the powerful monuments in order to turn these properties against them. This complicated relationship that is neither completely against the monument nor completely defined by it can best be described by the prefix “para”. After all, the Greek prefix παρά means both “from ... to, near, next ... to, toward ... along” (spatially speaking) as well as “during, along” (temporally) and metaphorically “compared to, unlike, counter to, against”. In the Greek, the emphasis here is on the deviation and not on the contrasting opposition. It is nevertheless the prefix that in Latin becomes “contra”.

What we find in Oguibe’s monument is thus the sediment of the Bible’s violence and colonialism, in the course of which hundreds of obelisks were erected in the colonized cities of this world. However, in this instance the obelisk is not meant to admonish but is rather appropriated in terms of a dimension intrinsic to it and is now aimed at the violence of Christendom and colonialism as well as against the violence of the European border regime and racist discourses in Europe. Oguibe makes use of the phallic shape of the obelisk, a shape that initially arrived in France as a result of its





↑ Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz, *Monument against Fascism (Mahnmal gegen Faschismus)*, 1986, Harburg; photo: Kulturbehörde Hamburg, VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn 2021

[8] Ibid.

[9] Katharina Morawek, Nora Sternfeld, „Visuelle Geschichtspolitik im öffentlichen Raum. Eine Reflexion über künstlerische Strategien der Erinnerung im Postnazismus“, <https://www.linksnet.de/artikel/26432> [Last visit: 09.11.2021].

[10] Enzo Traverso, *Gebrauchsanleitungen für die Vergangenheit. Geschichte, Erinnerung, Politik*, Münster, 2007, p. 71.

[11] Another historical documenta piece was vandalized in 2018: Identitarian movement members stuck their hate stickers “Kein Fußbreit den Antideutschen” and “Good Night Left Side” on the label next to Thomas Schütte’s “Die Fremden”.

[12] The anti-Semitism innate in the “Degenerate Art” exhibition was not, however, the topic when in the 1950s the documenta, in opposition to Nazism, again sought to take up from the “ostracized” art as it was called back then. Rather, it was mainly works by non-Jewish artists that were rehabilitated in Germany, for instance by art historians such as Werner Haftmann, who had himself been a Nazi Party member. This appeared like a radical new beginning, an innocent Modernism, but merely masked Nazi continuities. Today, the talk is of ‘art-washing’ as regards the first documenta in 1955 – meaning a documenta myth that ensured one did not have to speak about the crimes or one’s own involvement in Nazism and its art and knowledge output and rather was able to present oneself as the victim, to over-identify with the real victims and place oneself in the genealogy of “ostracized art”.



violent expropriation, where it then became the insignia of power in the colonial districts. Oguibe turns this around and uses the massive object as a call for action. What if it were the obelisk itself that were to declare the sentence written on it? For the colonial obelisks most certainly arrived in the cities in which they stand as strangers. And evidently many of them stand there intact to this day.

As a practice that operates both in the midst of the sediments of monumental histories of violence and over and above them, I read Oguibe's obelisk as a massive and concrete form of (re-)appropriation. The para-monument is thus not an anti-monument. Rather, it is the uncanny practice that seeks to bring to life the ghosts of the sedimented conflicts and histories of violence. The para-monument does not refuse to be monumental; however, it does refuse the refusal attributed to it, possibly by the critical art world and also by the latter's critics.

Olu Oguibe's para-monument became a venue where people assembled in downtown Kassel: Each day, its plinth was used by young people and passersby. They sat on it, read, tapped away on their smartphones, and occasionally started chatting with one another. The para-monument on Königsplatz thus had performative traits: Each day, it acted out its inscription, displayed the slogan's innate irony when it looked as though it would not be able to stay; it invited people to use it, to meet in front of it, became the trigger for a political conflict that was paradigmatic for the political situation in Germany in 2018.

And in actual fact the obelisk was not allowed to stay at Königsplatz. Precisely after two Neo-Nazi murders had taken place in Kassel—Halit Yozgat (1985-2006) and Walter Lübcke (1953-2019) were the two victims—it would have been a real symbol. Nevertheless, the municipal authorities took it down and moved it to Kassel's Treppenstrasse—a venue on the route from the Fridericianum to Kulturbahnhof—which is a central location for the documenta in Kassel and easier to market in the context of the “documenta mile”. It is, however, less heterogeneously frequented and therefore evidently simply seemed opportune. There, the obelisk returned to having a more monumental function and exudes the flair of contemporary art at a place where it is less of an irritant.

Etymologically speaking, the term monument derives from the Latin word “monere” (remain, admonish, warn, refer to). This relates, on the one hand, to the past, and, on the other, to the future. In other words, with monuments the focus is, as it were, on the meaning of remembrance. And this brings us back to the problems that we could have with the notion of the ‘monumental’. On the one hand, the meaning of remembrance is itself a bone of contention. Monuments get appropriated and given a new meaning. And, on the other, the pathos of meaning itself is problematic. Hannah Arendt already gave things a perspective when speaking of the “perfect meaninglessness”<sup>13</sup> of the Shoah and warning against assuming the Nazis' crimes had meaning or assigning them such. However, when seeking an anti-fascist “we” and a “never again” we repeatedly stumble across this

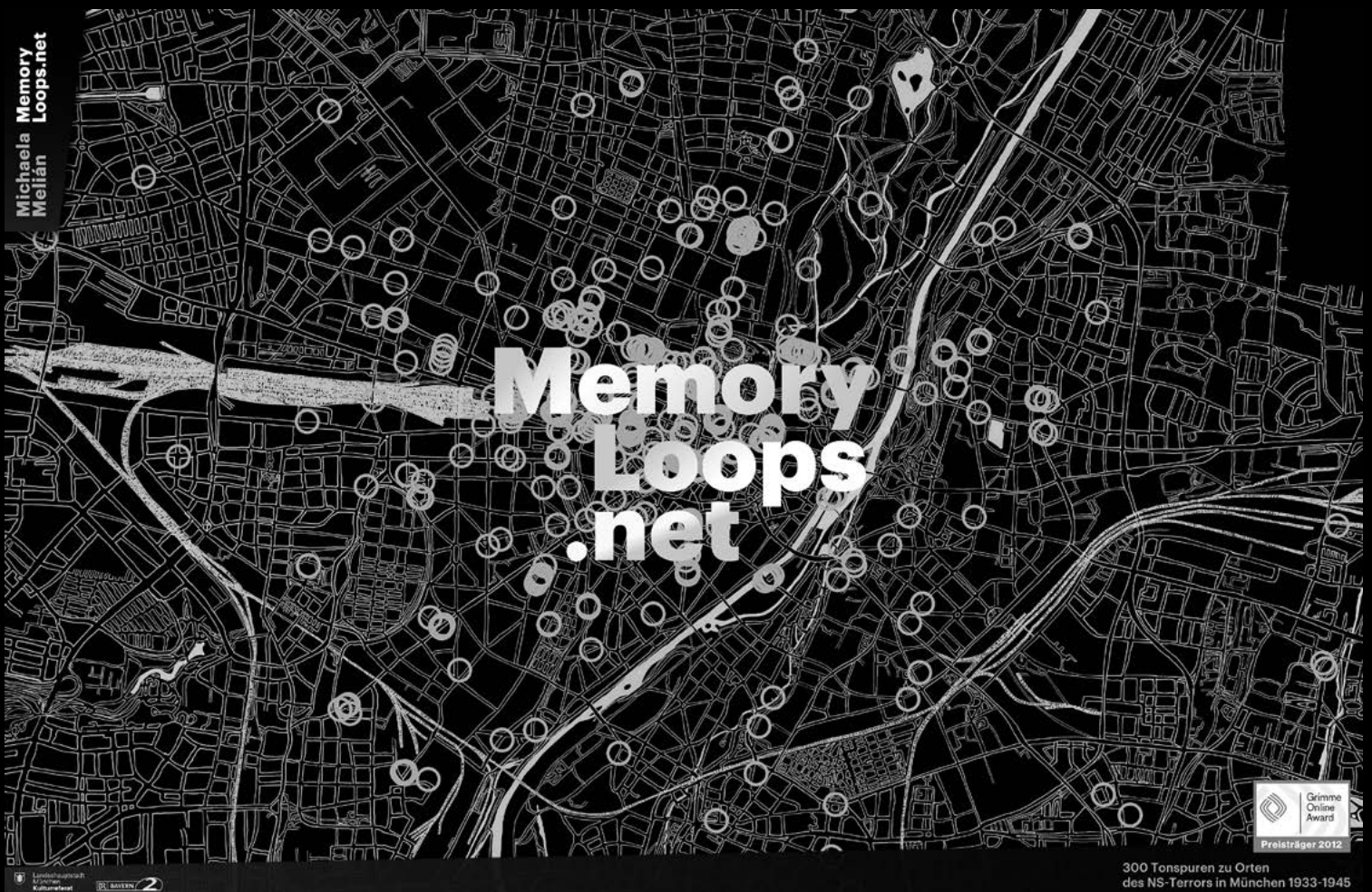
meaning. So, what would a monument be that neither instils nor assumes a meaning? Possibly one that faces up to the fact that history is something that is fought over.

↑ Peter Eisenman, *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, 2005, Berlin; photo: Flickr, Wolfgang Staudt, CC BY 2.0  
→ Website for the project *Memory Loops*; Screenshot

[13] Hannah Arendt, „Die vollendete Sinnlosigkeit“, in: *Nach Auschwitz*, (Berlin, 1989), p. 29.

# “I am suspicious of any metaphoric that seems statesmanlike” *Kerstin Stakemeier, Michaela Melián*

Since 2010, the virtual art project *Memory Loops* by *Michaela Melián* has been commemorating the history of Nazi victims in Munich, thus expanding the traditional concept of a memorial. A conversation about the background, the reception and new forms of remembrance



In 2008, Michaela Melián was invited to participate in the Munich competition for an artistic monument on the theme of “Victims of the Nazis – New Forms of Memory and Remembrance” – and her proposal was selected. On September 23, 2010, at a ceremony in Munich’s City Hall, the audio project she created for this purpose entitled *Memory Loops* was publicly handed over to the City of Munich. The monument to the Nazis’ victims consists of a total of 24 hours of audio material. Melián’s production is based on archive material and, relying on the website [memoryloops.net](http://memoryloops.net), lies like a virtual network over the city. Within the urban space proper, at 60 selected places there are signs with telephone numbers, under which you can then listen to site-specific audio recordings. Moreover, MP3 players can be borrowed from public cultural institutions: They feature six audio plays to which you can then listen. These are composed of parts of 300 German and 175 English audio tracks that are accessible in their entirety on the [memoryloops.net](http://memoryloops.net) website.

[Kerstin Stakemeier] First of all, I would like to talk about the format of *Memory Loops*. Monuments are commissions, works under contract that usually rely on a brief for a clearly defined and limited spatial and media setting. This creates a problem for the artist of how, from their own artistic position, to grasp the historical context stated in the brief without it becoming legible as some representative homage to the ‘client’, in this case the City of Munich. Whose history is represented in the *Memory Loops* or how, in your case, does representation take place over and beyond official policies of remembrance?

[Michaela Melián] Essentially as an artist I must always know that when realizing a monument, the client, in the present case the political executive, wishes to relieve itself of a burden by delegating the task of making a symbolic, political gesture to me as the artist. I am per se suspicious of course of any metaphoric or rhetoric that seeks to be statesmanlike. However, in this case the tender for the competition was the product of several symposiums and conferences; it was couched in very open terms and the brief did not envisage some monumental solution. In other words, for this work the problems innate in presenting the client did not really arise, if only because in the tender no specific site was defined where the monument had to stand. As a result, there is precisely no ‘site’ where on days of remembrance wreaths get laid and official ritual acts of commemoration can take place. With the *Memory Loops*, a kind of auditive structure has been placed over the map of the city, the entire urban fabric thus gets defined as the basis of the mo-

nument, and at the material level it evades all those possible appropriations and embraces. At the same time, in my very first proposal, which was only formulated as a text, I stated that the project must not be restricted to accessing just the history from the years 1933 to 1945. Rather, the stories should start far earlier, namely at the latest with the failure of the Münchner Räterepublik (Munich Soviet Republic) of 1919, and should lead into the present to our way of approaching remembrance. The product of this was an audio track on stumbling stones, which as we all know do not exist in Munich.

[KS] Much of the initial material you use consists of interviews, namely ones you conducted with witnesses of the time, or with former inmates, not to mention archive materials from the *Bayerischer Rundfunk* archive of broadcasts as well as the private archives of two documentary filmmakers that you were also able to use. As a result of the way you interrelate the different underlying materials and the new relationships you make between them, *Memory Loops* largely dissolves the division of labour between science, art, contemporary and regional history on which the classification of these different documents within the prevailing form of historiography relies—or rather redefines it. For you, what were the criteria for ordering what was presumably initially a fairly opaque and wide-ranging set of source materials?

[MM] The criteria I used to order things first evolved during the research work. What was, after all, difficult was the fact that the entire city was the topic. The entire production process was accompanied by the following fundamental issues: How complex should the narrative be for specific stories, what can I leave out, what must I presume? How closely should I set the field for research, as there is simply a mass of available material that we could have sifted through or listened to? We – that was a group I assembled of undergrads and doctoral students who under my direction headed for archives, listened to material, and transcribed material. We regularly discussed the findings and, in the process repeatedly refined our search parameters. The brief outlined in the City of Munich’s tender states that all groups of victims had to be considered and that weightings should not be changed to elide differences. For me, it was important also to give those a voice who had not previously even existed as groups of victims, such as the victims of euthanasia or those who had been compulsorily sterilized. Added to which, I wanted as far as possible to track down sources on so-called *bystanders*, i. e., neighbours, and that was extraordinarily difficult. There’s a huge gap in the archives in this regard, and for that reason the *Memory Loops* also highlight the gap.



- ↑ Website for the project *Memory Loops*; Screenshot
- ← Poster for the project *Memory Loops* by Michaela Melián in the city of Munich, 2010; photo: Michaela Melián

[KS] By taking on these different roles, by giving them through *Memory Loops* a new lease of life together as functions of a shared context of violence, the selection of the speakers becomes a core issue, both for our historical perception of the linkages but also in order to convey their present significance. You decided not to have the archive material conveyed by an “authentic” authority, meaning in terms of its past touch. Instead, you opted to have actors and in part also children read the parts, meaning people from today rather than witnesses from the past. As a result, the interviews and documents that you had translated lose the safe distance they have if the form used to present them in the present is that of a historicized past. They are bereft of that historicizing character. How strongly did you intervene in the processing of the original materials used, which, moreover, embraced highly different sources?

[MM] Essentially, at the beginning I thought there should be no moderating voice and no documentary approach, no level for commentary. Instead, I worked with collage and montage. Narratives by people who get possibly no voice in the official historiography were to have a real place. It was not till work started that I found out that after 1945 the former inmates of the Dachau concentration camp initially had to interview one another, as no one was interested in their story. In these post-War recordings the survivors are still young, they speak not as witnesses of the past, but against the backdrop of events that were only just in the past and were firmly aware that they now lived in a society of restoration that sought to repress the events and did not want to remember them. What was key when processing the material was that I had decided against an historical approach, meaning the specific (hi)stories were not tied to the victims' identity. Instead, we looked for narratives that exemplify the situation of those who did not survive and/or whose (hi)stories were not recorded. I of course intervened in the transcriptions of the spoken recordings, made them smoother, largely eliminated local dialect and Bavarian sentence structures, and shortened them. However, I did not give everything an uniform linguistic level, the material was to remain as heterogeneous as possible in terms of language, while I treated the files, announcements, and newspaper articles metaphorically like illustrations. They were read out without any changes by children, are not combined with music, but, as it were, now stand alone.

[KS] The way I experienced it, listeners thus become aware of the everyday nature of these stories. National historiography here in Germany usually makes an effort to trot out commentary structures that read like re-



ports on catastrophes in order to present the Nazi past as the Other of the present. On the other hand, concentrating on individual (hi) stories strengthens the sense of a fatalistic destiny or individualized tragedy. In *Memory Loops* the transition from past to present is, as it were, necessarily trivial. It resides in life, or rather precisely in the everyday world of the National Socialism and the state that was its legal successor, West Germany, and then the Federal Republic of Germany. What have you yourself heard to date by way of responses to your handling of the linkages of personal and collective history—and from whom?

[MM] With regard to this topic, the fact is that everybody seems to feel empowered to have an opinion on it, on what such a monument should look like, what you are allowed to do and what you are not. As early as the production period, it was often arduous to handle these disputes. However, now at the present time, in the wake of the monument going live, feedback from all manner of quarters is surprisingly good. Since the website went online, over 50,000 visitors from 64 countries have landed on it, and on average spent ten minutes browsing the content. And, tellingly, it has been clicked on not just from Europe, but also from New Zealand, Canada, Russia, South Africa, and Argentina, for

example. And there seems to be great interest in the project, despite the fact that people have repeatedly claimed that “we” already know all these (hi)stories. That said, we have already encountered some criticism on the part of several historians who complained that there was no accurate historical contextualization, that a lot had been omitted or not explained, and the question kept on popping up as to why I let children do some of the reading. And, of course, there are also the voices that ask why taxpayers’ money is not being invested in “current” problems, voices that suggest we must bring remembrance and remembering to an end once and for all and that there are already enough monuments. However, I was especially delighted by a Munich-based Jew’s response; he wrote me a letter saying that he never goes to such remembrance events because he simply cannot endure commemorating the Holocaust together with Germans, but was now deeply moved by the fact that the City of Munich had realized precisely such a project.

[KS] The element of installation in your work derives essentially from the sound itself, from its origin, changes, and meaning today. It exists, like Munich itself, as a place in *Memory Loops*. As an idea, that opens the artwork out significantly in the direction of a critical historiography that is potentially omnipresent in it. As an artist you are thus yourself always taking the role of a contemporary of different periods in history, in a certain way a chronicler of history from the angle of her specifically different social, political, cultural, personal, and communalizing characteristics. To my mind this leads to two questions: First, how you see yourself as an artist in the field of “remembrance work” and second, what the factual echo to it has been. How did the city, the different district authorities handle the tender, the implementation, and the commissioning?

[MM] The jury’s decision in the summer of 2008 was highly controversial, it triggered a fierce public debate over the competition and my proposal, a fire stoked by articles in the local section of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that were intended to prevent my proposal being realized. At the time, even Mayor Christian Ude initially expressed his opposition to it publicly. One headline even read “Dial Zero for Holocaust”! In its Annual Review for 2008, once the Municipal Council had resol-

ved the realization of the project with the votes of the governing parties – namely the Social Democrats and the Greens and against the closed ranks of the CSU, which rejected it – the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote that the competition was the greatest embarrassment of the year 2008. And when, at the end of September, I then officially handed the “monument” over to the public in the form of an audio installation in Munich’s City Hall, the Mayor was a no show, as were the municipal councillors for the CSU. That is pretty sobering, the way the piece was instrumentalized for party politics. Many of those who opposed my work were also people who had for years or for decades fought for a remembrance venue in Munich that by their own standards would be appropriate. (There is the so-called “Square for the Victims of the Nazis”, which in general is felt to be inadequate and unfortunate: a patch of green, a traffic island with a black stele in which a flame constantly burns.) And that group was of course especially disappointed that the competition, and in particular my project, did not envisage a clearly visible monument in a central location. It would have preferred to see other proposals realized, such as, for example, the one that wanted to put a ramp over Königsplatz; yes, even such concepts were entered in the competition.

[KS] Many of your art works involve appropriating history and wresting it from its national or otherwise canonical definitions. Often, as with *Föhrenwald* (2005) or *Speicher* (2008), the process involves locating audio material in the spaces in question, supplementing it with visual objects and installations. So how did the very incisive concentration on sound, on language as a medium of translation of the German past and its contemporary reappropriation or new appropriation in the *Memory Loops* come about for you?

[MM] The tender itself did not specify a particular location for the monument, so there was no one place in the city to which I had to refer and which I had to tackle. For that reason, I decided to make the entire city into the venue, with the help of (hi)stories of people who had themselves experienced specific occurrences at specific places. The word, the sound, the music are all fleeting forms of narration that now lay a dense network of audio tracks like an imaginary fabric or structure over the city—which you can dial into at any time and thus participate in, and which links a period in time that is actually not that long ago with that of today. The speakers were asked to read the texts out as soberly and quietly as possible. I had the interviews in mind that I had myself conducted for the project. Because even if these people had told their (hi)story a hundred times over, there was always the moment

when I noticed: Here they have chosen a specific language, voice, and formulation for events in order to be able to narrate them in the first place, and it was always quiet and sober. At the same time, music plays a crucially important role as it functions as the personal narrating voice in combination with the voices of the speakers. I produced five pieces of music for the monument, each of them based on a different sample. These samples, the briefest of snippets of piano sounds by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Coco Schumann, Kurt Weill, and Karl Amadeus Hartmann were processed, looped, and combined with several layers of instrumental tracks recorded in an analogue mode, strings, guitars, instruments that I can myself play. The fifth piece is based on the sample of a glass harmonica that I had already used for a piece for Metzger. To go with the sample, I then recorded a twelve-tone series on glasses, filling the glasses with water and then rubbing the lips of each glass with wet fingers. These glass sounds run through many of the soundtracks. The five pieces of music were mixed as predefined basic material, with completely different players and sounds. As a result, I had several hours of music at hand for the production work.

[KS] Let me close by asking about the completion of the project. *Memory Loops* is now available online. For you, is the project thus completed or could you imagine continuing to work on it after it has been uploaded?

[MM] The project is completed. In the course of a timeframe that I set myself, I selected from the material collected and produced it as a “monument”. So, nothing more will be done to it. Furthermore, I also did not envisage a blog or any other forms of interaction. At the moment, the one or other minor adjustment is being made, slight corrections. For example, on November 1, 2010 at 60 points round town small signs were put up displaying telephone numbers. Using them, you could dial into selected audio tracks at specific places and listen to them. Moreover, in several museums you can borrow MP3 players free of charge. They allow you to listen to the long loops that were broadcast as radio plays in recent weeks by *Bayerischer Rundfunk* to accompany the project. I manufactured small objects made of concrete for the museums—as a place to store the flyers on the project. I should mention here that the advertising budget was included in the budget for artistic realization of the project and all the measures taken to familiarize the public with the project thus ended up on my desktop: I rented the billboards, ad stele and poster spaces, placed ads in the print and online media, and even produced a small film for the Infoscreens on public transport. Now it was a lot of work, but very meaningful, as I was able independently, working together

with Surface (Markus Weisbeck handled the design) and Meso (Stefan Ammon devised the website), to develop the strategies and control them carefully. I am of course now intrigued to see how things continue. The project has now been handed over to the City of Munich and it is responsible for maintaining it. In the case of a sculpture in the public space there are clearly defined maintenance tasks such as mowing the lawn, protecting things in winter, removing dirt and the like, et cetera. In the case of *Memory Loops* the exercise involves running a website, making certain the homepage doesn't disappear into the black hole of the Internet. Interestingly in this context, the higher the hit rate and the more the project is generally accepted, the higher the costs for the client. The project has not been placed on the *muenchen.de* website and server as I had expected, as the City of Munich website is a limited liability company, meaning commercial: *Bayerischer Rundfunk* has said it will make the audio files available for ten years on its server, and I paid for an additional two servers for five years from the budget. Afterwards, the City of Munich will be responsible for the project.

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Postscript: In 2020, there was a technical relaunch of the website *memoryloops.de* and the City of Munich is now solely responsible for the project. The 60 signs with the phone numbers that are located at selected places round town are now being regularly monitored by the municipal authorities and renewed where necessary. On November 7, 2021, an audio installation developed specially for the project will open at the Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism. More information at: [www.memoryloops.net](http://www.memoryloops.net)

The interview was first published on [www.textezurkunst.de](http://www.textezurkunst.de) in 2011.

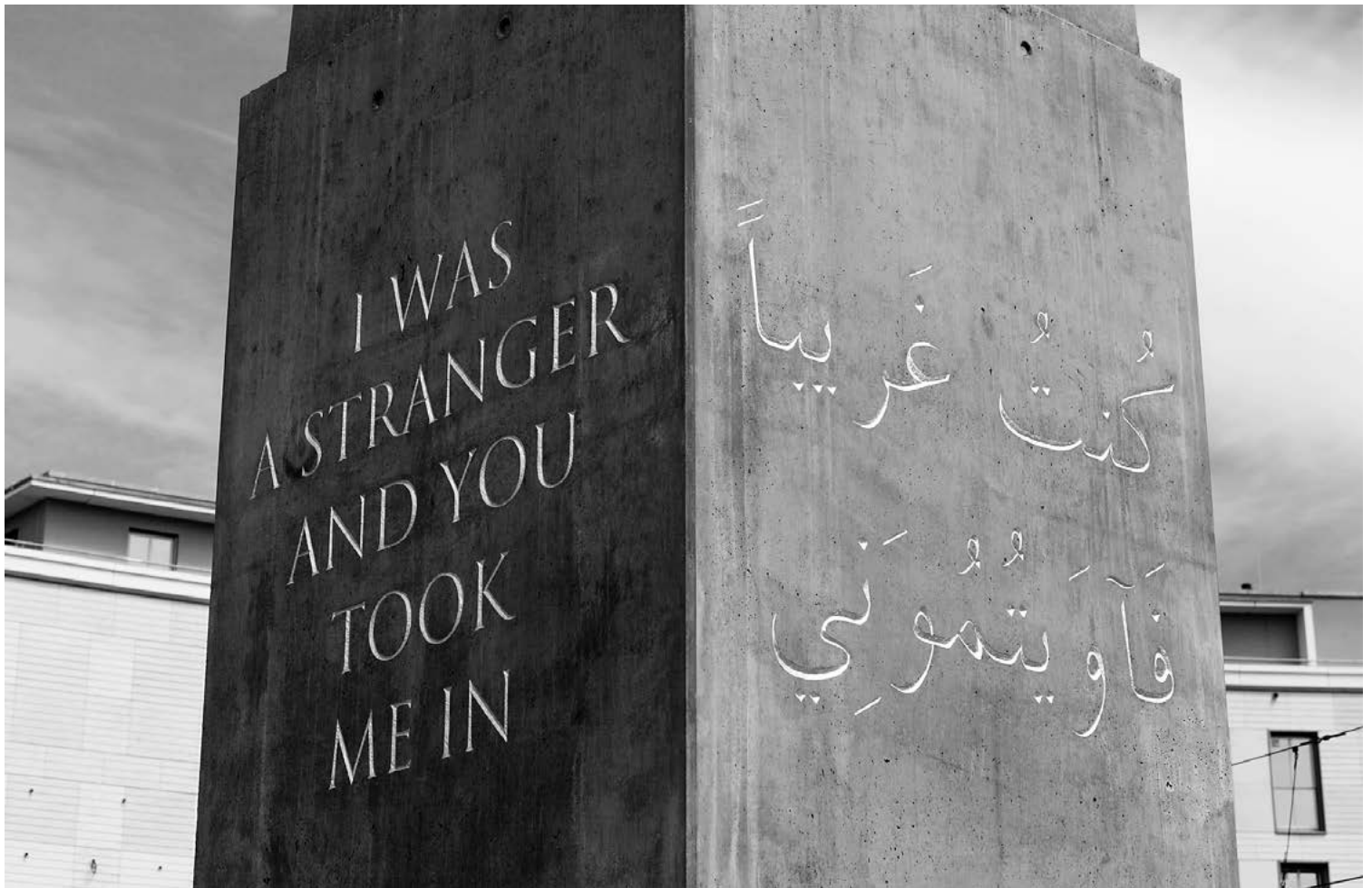
→ Olu Oguiibe, *Monument for strangers and refugees (Das Fremdlinge und Flüchtlinge Monument)*, documenta 14, Kassel, 2017; © documenta archiv / photo: Michael Nast



# How a para-monument to migration had to give up its place downtown

*Ayşe Güleç, Gila Kolb*

The way Olu Oguibe's artwork *Monument for Migrants and Refugees* (2017) was treated in Kassel can be considered a prime example of how local politics resorts to racist discourses on the use of art concepts and language in order to bring about the removal of an artwork



Conceived as a postcolonial monument in the form of a colonial object for downtown Kassel and dedicated to migrants, the obelisk visualizes racist attributes and *Othering* such as otherwise often remains concealed in the representative practice of monuments. The monument was attacked verbally (2017), taken down (2018), stored, and then transposed (2019) into a setting planned during the National Socialism. The process and the treatment point up racist discourses at various different levels: in local politics, with reference to the concept of art and to speaking about an object that refers all too painfully to European policies on refugees.

A para-monument as the actor in the city of the documenta

The documenta exhibition takes place every five years and showcases not only contemporary art but also contemporary trends in exhibition-making and institutional policies, as a result of which it influences and shapes contemporary discourses. The documenta exhibitions and individual works often function as role models in the field of art, impacting on social discourses and the understanding of art.<sup>1</sup>

The City of Kassel with just short of 200,000 inhabitants has since 1955 been the venue and often itself an object of the documenta, which Nora Sternfeld has termed a “translocal” event. Kassel’s image of itself as the “documenta city” attests clearly to the ostentatious status accorded the exhibition. It is a factor for the local economy, as during the 100-day course of the show, the city now attracts close to one million visitors. For those who live in the city, a documenta is an event that changes everyday life for at least 100 days every five years; at the national and international levels it influences artistic and political discourses.

As part of documenta 14, in June 2017 the Nigerian-US artist Olu Oguibe realized his concept for a *Monument for Migrants and Refugees* as an outdoor artwork on Königsplatz in Kassel. Königsplatz is in the center of town in a pedestrian zone. The artist developed the monument specifically for this venue, giving it the form of an obelisk, and with this “classical” shape quoted the colonial history of objects.<sup>2</sup> Inscribed on the obelisk in large golden letters in Arabic, English, German, and Turkish was a line from the Bible: “I was a stranger, and you took me in.”

The local population swiftly took on board the 16-meter-high artwork, which functioned as an eye-catching meeting and assembly point in downtown Kassel. People met up in its immediate vicinity, and this included not just visitors to documenta 14, but in fact many other users of the plaza, who sat down on the plinth or waited in its shadow. The Nordstadt district starts one tram stop after Königsplatz. Kassel’s largest district in terms of surface area and the main seat of the university has a high proportion of post-migrants among its inhabitants. And the location of the obelisk thus marked an interface or a relay point because as a meeting point it connected the two districts.

In 2018, Nora Sternfeld termed the obelisk a para-monument that refused to be reduced to its representative or critical function:

“In other words, the para-monument is not an anti-monument. Rather, it is the uncanny practice that seeks to bring to life the ghosts of the sedimented conflicts and

→ Image video *Baumeister 2019: Intro with Mayor Geselle*, Minute 2:04 – 2:20, 2019; YouTube Filmstill

- [1] Suffice to mention four examples of this: Joseph Beuys’ 1982 project for documenta 7, the 7,000 Oaks – City Afforestation instead of City Administration shifted the boundaries of what can be grasped as an artwork and shapes the face of the city of Kassel to this day. Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Bataille Monument* (2002) at Documenta 11 asked questions on participatory processes in the framework of artistic projects. *No human is illegal* was founded at documenta X as a network of anti-racist and migrant groups and those who expressed solidarity with refugees; its logo is widespread in the context of anti-racist efforts. A documentary on investigations, research and actions devised by the group The Society of Friends of Halit in the context of the public program of documenta 14 and shown as part of the exhibition not only triggered debate about whether the piece was art of political activism, but also impacted on real politics: The Hessen State Parliament’s investigation panel into the NSU rightwing extremist group and a court case both deliberated whether an “artistic” video based on a police video could be taken as evidence. The underlying information was cast into doubt; in the NSU litigation formal reasons for this were cited. [www.fr.de/rhein-main/nsu-prozess-ere68532/experte-wird-nicht-gericht-geladen-11043142.html](http://www.fr.de/rhein-main/nsu-prozess-ere68532/experte-wird-nicht-gericht-geladen-11043142.html) and <https://www.fr.de/politik/forscher-verteidigen-einschaetzung-temme-11020702.html> [Last visit: 07.04.2020].
- [2] Objects that were removed often with a gesture of power and then given a new, centrally positioned home in European cities. A prime example is the Luxor obelisk on Place de la Concorde in Paris.
- [3] Quoted from Nora Sternfeld’s lecture: “Wem gehört die documenta? Welche Welt? Welche Kunst? Und welche Ausstellungen? Großausstellungen zwischen dissidentem Anspruch, künstlerischer Freiheit, politischem Zugriff und ökonomischer Verwertung,” held on March 2, 2018 within the framework of the nGbk Lectures, Berlin.
- [4] See, for example, Portal Kunstgeschichte: *Arnold-Bode-Preis für Olu Oguibe*, June 22, 2017, [www.portalkunstgeschichte.de/meldung/arnold\\_bode\\_preis\\_fuer\\_olu\\_oguibe-7879.html](http://www.portalkunstgeschichte.de/meldung/arnold_bode_preis_fuer_olu_oguibe-7879.html) [Last visit: 10.11.2021].
- [5] *HNA*: “documenta-Kunstwerk Obelisk: Die AfD spricht von ‘entstellter Kunst’,” August 17, 2017, [www.hna.de/kultur/documenta/documenta-kunstwerk-obelisk-afd-spricht-von-entstellter-kunst-8601756.html](http://www.hna.de/kultur/documenta/documenta-kunstwerk-obelisk-afd-spricht-von-entstellter-kunst-8601756.html) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].
- [6] What can also be clearly seen is that the plaza as a “Baroque ensemble” is by no means disturbed by the presence of the obelisk. The surrounding buildings are in a wide variety of architectural styles, the shopping centre predominates, and there is a fountain installation with 36 trunk-like bronze waterspouts created by Kamel Louafi in 2005 – all of these counters the argument factually and the accusation that the obelisk limits artistic liberty for future documenta exhibitions. Other claims, such as that future events would no longer be possible there, are likewise ill-founded given the obelisk only had a footprint of some three square meters.
- [7] City of Kassel: Image video for the New Year’s Address “Baumeister 2019: Intro with Mayor Geselle,” 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJWC\\_UcXA7s&list=UUDWgjEhD6T-pAQH5pV6-nW4g&index=89](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJWC_UcXA7s&list=UUDWgjEhD6T-pAQH5pV6-nW4g&index=89) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].



stories of violence. The para-monument does not refuse to be monumental, but instead rejects the rejection that the critical art world and its critics will possibly ascribe to it.”<sup>3</sup>

While the obelisk rejects all ascriptions, it does not refuse to be used by people.

In 2017, for his work, Olu Oguibe was awarded the City of Kassel’s renowned Arnold-Bode-Preis.<sup>4</sup> The public interest in securing the obelisk for the city after the end of the documenta grew accordingly. In mid-August 2017, Thomas Materner, a member of the City Council for the right-wing nationalist AfD party, described the obelisk as “ideologically polarizing, distorted art”. Astonishingly, this did not trigger any larger discussion, although it is hard to overlook the proximity to the term “degenerate art” used during National Socialism between 1933 and 1945. Moreover, the AfD members of the City Council threatened to call for protests there “whenever there is an attack committed by refugees”<sup>5</sup>. After this occurrence in the city parliament, the democratic forces gave way and the newly elected Social Democratic mayor, Christian Geselle, felt compelled to act. At the same time, the City of Kassel Acquisition Committee met, which traditionally purchases several works from the latest documenta and adds them to the Neue Galerie’s collection. The obelisk was not on its final list.

Local coverage by the *Hessische Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA)* newspaper did its bit here. The controversy over whether the obelisk would stay on Königsplatz and its shift out of downtown culminated in defamation such as already typified responses to documenta 14 given its focus on post-colonialism and a critique of racism.

Staging the para-monument as foreign body – measuring tower gables

Both images show the obelisk on Königsplatz, its original home. As Diana Rothaug, art educator at documenta 14 pointed out, the perspective of the shot on the left

has it look higher than the neighbouring Karlskirche (towers with two green tips on the right in the image) as well as the four-story shopping centre flanking the plaza. This context was repeatedly emphasized in the local press and the public discourse. If one compares this to the artist’s sketched plan, which he published in 2018, then the stark differences in how the obelisk was represented become clear. The shift in perspective creates a certain threat because it towers up over the church, while the sketch shows the comparatively small footprint of the obelisk in the middle of Karlsplatz, slightly off-centre, destabilizing the symmetrical layout of the square.<sup>6</sup>

Nightmare and joke

In his New Year’s address on January 20, 2019, the new Mayor of Kassel mentioned the obelisk twice. In a pre-released film, Christian Geselle presented himself as a city leader who worked hard and often until late into the night, falling asleep at his desk, dreaming of a future Kassel to the sound of Smetana’s “Vltava”.<sup>7</sup> However, the dream soon becomes a nightmare when the city’s landmark, the statue of Hercules in Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe, is crushed by the obelisk falling out of the sky and taking its place. The Mayor busy staging himself in the film wakes up abruptly and says: “Thank God it was only a dream!”. The film ends with the Mayor entering the City Hall’s festive auditorium, where he holds the New Year’s address.

The first words of the address he actually held, according to the Municipal Press Office’s press release, were: “Ladies and Gentlemen, almost no topic caused as much discussion last year in Kassel. In the dead of night, heavy transport trucks rolled through downtown. Only a few had been let in on the secret and knew the exact moment when the measure was to take place. The subsequent media echo was immense. Newspapers and TV stations outdid one another with their coverage. In Kassel things were heading downhill. And the one or other found themselves slithering and even got a few bruises.



Yes, dear guests, the ice slide on Treppenstrasse caused a real stir last year.”

By that time, the obelisk had already been torn down (on October 3, 2018), and a new location for it, let alone a place in Kassel, were not yet being discussed. The new year started with a public, representative event during, which twice jokes were made at the obelisk’s cost: First of all, as the destruction in the Mayor’s dream that jolts him awake—“Thank God it was only a dream!” And when the obelisk lands in the film clip, it is accompanied by any number of comic-like sounds. And on landing the obelisk destroys Kassel’s landmark—strong Hercules who watches over the whole city from on high. The nightmare of two phallic symbols, the one replacing the other, would no doubt allow many a psychoanalytical interpretation, for which there is no space here.

The second joke in the New Year’s address was likewise not very subtle: While initially there was a reference to the violent demolition at daybreak and to the reporting on it, the solution to the puzzle followed immediately. The topic was not the obelisk being taken down, but the key magnet in the Christmas Market 2018 going up, an “ice slide” on Treppenstrasse that led to the one or other “slithering”. Both forms of humour bear similarities to “racist jokes”: They rely on exaggeration, going over-the-top, alienation and ambiguity, using them such that everything remains ambiguous so that the speaker can swiftly switch to the safe side saying it “wasn’t meant like that” but was only a joke not intended to harm anyone.

#### Applause from the wrong side of the field

Members of the AfD on the City Council attending a public panel discussion at the documenta forum on April 13, 2018, spoke at great length wherever possible and applauded loudly whenever anything was said against the obelisk. The term “distorted art” was repeated on that occasion. The AfD announced a “plebiscite” against the obelisk. An art historian active in Kassel and a member of the panel who criticized the

obelisk for “aesthetic reasons” was applauded by the AfD members present, something he for his part refused to accept.

Ayşe Güleç, panel member and co-author of this article, said on that occasion: “As long as politicians still talk of ‘distorted art’ we will need obelisks”<sup>8</sup>, thus pointing to the phenomenon that the goalposts of what can be said in discourses had long since been shifted and had reached a point where racist statements are introduced into mainstream civic discussions. Journalist and art critic Catrin Lorch commented on the events surrounding the obelisk being taken down as follows: “Kassel has destroyed an artwork, and Kassel’s politicians have destroyed their language.”<sup>9</sup>

After perusal of the research work by Sina Rockensüss “I was a stranger and you took me where? A Documentation on Arrival, Confinement, Remaining & the Consequences” (2017), which evaluates 90 articles from the local HNA newspaper and the related 5,839 online commentaries, it becomes clear that what were at first positive, then ironic, and finally slanderous headlines also resounded in the commentaries.

The depoliticization of the para-monument in Kassel After much public debate in the press, by the City Council and at various panel discussions as well as a final parliamentary vote on where the obelisk would end up, the approval for it to stand at its original place was not extended. On October 3, 2018, German Unification Day, the obelisk was removed “in the dead of night”<sup>10</sup> at the behest of the City of Kassel and with a police escort. To this day, the footprint of the obelisk can be seen in the Königsplatz asphalt—lines that have themselves become a para-monument. Protests ensued, along with national media coverage.<sup>11</sup> On the day of its removal, flowers were laid on the asphalt where it had been torn open on the square.

The artwork was thus removed from downtown. For a long time, it was not clear where it would go nor how its new placement would be financed, although the inhabitants of Kassel had already raised 126,000 Euros through donations.<sup>12</sup>

A search for a new home ensued, closely covered and supported by the HNA newspaper—the later erection was covered in live, close detail by an “assembly ticker”<sup>13</sup>. The new place was Florentiner Platz on Treppenstrasse, something that is problematic for various reasons. First, Treppenstrasse was designed to be used for fascist military parades between 1933–45, and those original plans also envisaged an obelisk at precisely the same location.<sup>14</sup> The obelisk’s positioning is now flush with a central line of vision rather than destined to rendering things off-kilter. While on Königsplatz the obelisk seemed to have popped out of the ground, at the new site it is framed by not fitting in with the surrounding paving. This form of framing means that the obelisk is now kept at a distance. Few people approach the artwork, let alone use it for a leisurely moment of downtime. Outside the confined, framed space for the obelisk there are several wastebins and benches, where people are expected to sit and view the work from a distance. This form of framing has further depoliticized the obelisk. The line of sight on Treppenstrasse links the railway station and Museum Fridericianum—and the obelisk disappears visually behind other downtown

← Image video *Baumeister 2019: Intro with Mayor Geselle*, Minute 2:04–2:20, 2019; YouTube Filmstill

[8] HNA: “Künstler Olu Oguibe zum Kasseler Obelisken: Standort nicht verhandelbar,” April 16, 2018, [documentaforum.de/hna-kuenstler-olu-oguibe-zum-kasseler-obelisken-standort-nicht-verhandelbar/](http://documentaforum.de/hna-kuenstler-olu-oguibe-zum-kasseler-obelisken-standort-nicht-verhandelbar/) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].

[9] Catrin Lorch: “Ausgesondert, Abgeschoben. Kassel gibt AfD Druck nach und räumt das Flüchtlingsdenkmal ab,” in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 5, 2018.

[10] *Die Welt*: “Kassel entfernt ‘Mahnmal für Geflüchtete’ in Nacht-und-Nebel-Aktion,” October 4, 2018, [www.welt.de/kultur/article181761194/Kassel-entfernt-Mahnmal-fuer-Ge-fluechtete-in-Nacht-und-Nebel-Aktion.html](http://www.welt.de/kultur/article181761194/Kassel-entfernt-Mahnmal-fuer-Ge-fluechtete-in-Nacht-und-Nebel-Aktion.html) [Last visit: 07.04.2021]. Furthermore Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung referred in March 2021 to the historical context of the term, which was used by the Nazis and during the Nuremberg Trials to designate the execution of resistance fighters. Moreover, the early hours during darkness are the time when deportations take place, taking the potential deportees by surprise and remaining as good as invisible to the public eye. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung: “The Curious Case of Olu Oguibe’s Monument for Strangers and Refugees,” in: *Frieze*, March 22, 2021, [www.frieze.com/article/olu-oguibe-monument-strangers-refugees-controversy?fbclid=IwAR2LFx5890KaWXRm5A58r2fYjztc-JBpre5ZVEWh5ObfiVOPJtQA-H85A-E](http://www.frieze.com/article/olu-oguibe-monument-strangers-refugees-controversy?fbclid=IwAR2LFx5890KaWXRm5A58r2fYjztc-JBpre5ZVEWh5ObfiVOPJtQA-H85A-E) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].

[11] See for example the articles by Catrin Lorch (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and Kolja Reichert (FAZ), *artnews*, *artforum*, *hyperallergic*, *monumentlab*, to give but a few examples, [www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/documenta-kassel-baut-fluechtlingsdenkmal-ab-1.4155959](http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/documenta-kassel-baut-fluechtlingsdenkmal-ab-1.4155959), [www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kunst/obeliskenstreit-mahnmal-politischer-verhinderung-in-kassel-15821384.html](http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kunst/obeliskenstreit-mahnmal-politischer-verhinderung-in-kassel-15821384.html), [www.artnews.com/art-news/market/olu-oguibe-obelisk-documenta-returns-kassel-12401/](http://www.artnews.com/art-news/market/olu-oguibe-obelisk-documenta-returns-kassel-12401/), [www.artforum.com/news/documenta-obelisk-at-center-of-controversy-as-city-considers-its-relocation-75673](http://www.artforum.com/news/documenta-obelisk-at-center-of-controversy-as-city-considers-its-relocation-75673), [hyperallergic.com/463306/after-dispute-with-documenta-artist-city-of-kassel-removes-monument-for-refugees/](http://hyperallergic.com/463306/after-dispute-with-documenta-artist-city-of-kassel-removes-monument-for-refugees/), [monumentlab.com/bulletin/as-strangers-and-refugees-olu-oguibes-performing-monument](http://monumentlab.com/bulletin/as-strangers-and-refugees-olu-oguibes-performing-monument) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].

[12] The artwork’s value was estimated at 600,000 Euros. An appeal was made to Kassel citizens to donate: The money was to be returned to them should the sum not be raised and thus an acquisition be impossible. However, Oguibe accepted the sum the citizens raised. *Lokalo 24*: “Spendenaktion für den Obelisk: Stadt und Künstler rufen auf,” January 23, 2018, [www.lokalo24.de/lokales/kassel/spendenaktion-obelisk-stadt-kuenstler-rufen-9549757.html](http://www.lokalo24.de/lokales/kassel/spendenaktion-obelisk-stadt-kuenstler-rufen-9549757.html) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].

[13] Sina Rockensüss: *I was a stranger and you took me where? Eine Dokumentation vom Ankommen, Wegstellen, Verbleiben & den Konsequenzen*, Kunsthochschule Kassel, self-published, July 2019 and HNA: “Aufbau des documenta-Kunstwerks: Der Obelisk ist zurück in Kassel. Aufbau-Ticker,” April 18, 2019, [www.hna.de/kassel/obelisk-treppenstrasse-documenta-kunstwerk-kassel-aufgebaut-onl-12202585.html](http://www.hna.de/kassel/obelisk-treppenstrasse-documenta-kunstwerk-kassel-aufgebaut-onl-12202585.html) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].

[14] This led to the resignation of the Chair of the Heritage Advisory Council, who protested in this way against the new site. HNA: “Nazi-Streit um Kasseler Obelisken: Chef des Denkmalbeirats schmeißt hin,” June 14, 2019, [www.hna.de/kassel/kasseler-obelisk-an-seinem-standort-wollten-auch-nazis-eine-stele-12440938.html](http://www.hna.de/kassel/kasseler-obelisk-an-seinem-standort-wollten-auch-nazis-eine-stele-12440938.html) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].

road architecture such as sunshades<sup>15</sup> and simply takes its place as a document of past documenta exhibitions in the “documenta axis” the city has planned that will run from Kulturbahnhof to Museum Fridericianum. The acquisition of the obelisk and the cost of relocating it to Florentiner Platz on Treppenstrasse in April 2019 were shouldered by the City of Kassel as well as “other donations”<sup>16</sup>. In other words, it is no longer an artwork enabled by the citizens, but by political decision-making process.

These considerations not only fly in the face of the site specificity of Olu Oguibe’s art project. The removal of a piece from its site-specific location amounts to its destruction, or, as Richard Serra commented in 1985 on the removal of his *Tilted Arc* for the Federal Plaza in New York: “to remove the work is to destroy the work”.<sup>17</sup>

To relocate the obelisk from Königsplatz is to shift its meaning. For the “strategy of appropriation” of the para-monument addresses downtown. It is there that it seeks and calls for an echo, not somewhere where the migrant population lives (Nordstadt). The obelisk has the call of the periphery (migrants, People of Colour, people of a diaspora) resound in the centre (the majority of society). The latter was represented, seen, heard, and accepted by Königsplatz. On Florentiner Platz in Treppenstrasse that call has been gagged.

The civic discussions surrounding the obelisk and where it should stand were, as we have indicated, controversial and in part characterized by a racist level of speech. Nora Sternfeld summarizes this as follows: “In Oguibe’s monument we see the sediment of the power of the Bible and colonialism, in the course of which hundreds of obelisks were erected in the colonial cities of the world. However, they do not admonish but rather they are appropriated in a dimension of their own and now face down the violence of Christendom and colonialism as well as that of the European border regulations and racist discourses in Europe. Oguibe makes use of the phallic form of the obelisk [...], inverts it and makes the huge thing cry out. What if it were the obelisk itself that cries out the sentence written on it? Then the colonial obelisks would enter the cities where they stand as strangers. And evidently they find them there to this day in undestroyed manner.”<sup>18</sup>

By its removal and relocation away from downtown, the *Monument for Migrants and Refugees* lost its ability to be a monument against violence. Instead, the para-monument was simply turned into another obelisk which, because it is a stranger in town, was not really accepted the way it is, and has therefore been adapted. If it were a person, this would be called “integration”, a process that expects of the other that s/he adapts to local specificities or be made to adapt to them.

The history of the obelisk not only refers to the fact that the restitution of many colonial objects in Germany

has not yet happened, but also highlights how an object denoted as “strange” is not only not tolerated but gets re-shaped violently until such a time as it no longer hurts.

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[16] *Waldeckische Landeszeitung, Hessen*: “Obelisk kommt in Kasseler Treppenstraße gut an – doch McDonald’s stört die Sicht,” April 24, 2019, [www.wlz-online.de/nordhessen/obelisk-kassel-mcdonalds-stoert-sicht-kunstwerk-12216126.html](http://www.wlz-online.de/nordhessen/obelisk-kassel-mcdonalds-stoert-sicht-kunstwerk-12216126.html) [Last visit: 07.04.2021].

[17] “The city has not given firm figures on the cost of assembling the work. It has simply said financing has been secured – including through donations,” *HNA*: “Aufbau des documenta-Kunstwerks: Der Obelisk ist zurück in Kassel,” April 18, 2019, [www.hna.de/kassel/obelisk-treppenstrasse-documenta-kunstwerk-kassel-aufgebaut-onl-12202585.html](http://www.hna.de/kassel/obelisk-treppenstrasse-documenta-kunstwerk-kassel-aufgebaut-onl-12202585.html) [Last visit: 07.04.2021]. The authors have not managed to find out what funding was used for the acquisition. We would gladly receive information on this.

[18] We would like to thank Carina Herring for drawing this to our attention. Richard Serra, “Letter to Donald Thalacker dated January 1, 1985,” in: Clara Weyergraf-Serra & Martha Buskirk (eds.): *The destruction of titled arc: Documents*, Cambridge 1991, p. 38.

[19] Nora Sternfeld: “Gegendenkmal und Para-Monument. Politik und Erinnerung im öffentlichen Raum,” in: Ernst Logar (ed.): *Ort der Unruhe/ Place of Unrest*, Klagenfurt & Celovec 2018, pp. 40–9, here p. 47.

→ *Zeitkapsel Lagerhaus G, Offenes Labor im Freiraum des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg*, 21. September – 3. Oktober 2021, Architektur-Modell, Querschnitt; Foto: Initiative Dessauer Ufer

# Die Stadt als Gedächtnis *Markus Fiedler*

Das Lagerhaus G auf dem Kleinen Grasbrook in Hamburg war in den 1940er-Jahren ein Außenlager des KZ Neuengamme. Die Initiative Dessauer Ufer setzt sich für seine Umwandlung in einen Erinnerungs- und Lernort ein – und damit auch für eine grundsätzlich andere Form urbaner Erinnerungskultur. Lerchenfeld sprach mit *Markus Fiedler*, einem Mitglied der Initiative





[Lerchenfeld] Wie habt ihr als Initiative zusammengefunden und aus welchen Berufs- und Arbeitsfeldern stammt ihr?

[Markus Fiedler] Die Initiative Dessauer Ufer (IDU) wird seit 2017 von Menschen mit unterschiedlichen Hintergründen getragen, darunter Künstler\*innen, Bildungsarbeiter\*innen, Architekt\*innen und Stadtteilaktivist\*innen. Unsere Zugänge zum Ort waren also unterschiedlich, aber uns eint das Ziel, das Lagerhaus G als Erinnerungsort zu etablieren. Der skandalöse Zustand des Gebäudes und das fehlende Engagement zu seinem Erhalt seitens der aktuellen Besitzer und auch der Stadt treibt unsere politische und forschende Arbeit an.

[Lf] Was macht das Lagerhaus G als Ort aus und wie ist sein Verhältnis zum Stadtraum?

[MF] Das Gebäude war das größte Frauenaußenlager des KZ Neuengamme und ist zudem das einzig komplett erhaltene der insgesamt 15 Außenlager, die es im Stadtgebiet gab. Es wurde nach Kriegsende von der Hamburger Hafen und Logistik AG (HHLA) zügig wieder als Stückgutlager in Betrieb genommen und baulich nicht verändert. Im Gebäude finden sich an verschiedenen Orten Zeugnisse aus der Zeit der Außenlagernutzung. So gibt es im Kellerbereich eine von einem vermutlich sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen angebrachte Texttafel sowie einen Holzverschlag, der möglicherweise vom Wachpersonal genutzt wurde. In anderen Bereichen des Lagerhauses wurden bei Renovierungsarbeiten verschiedene, von Gefangenen versteckte Gegenstände gefunden. Der Umstand, dass am Dessauer Ufer KZ-Häftlinge, die zum Teil aus Auschwitz dort-

hin gebracht wurden, um Zwangsarbeit zu leisten, neben italienischen Militärinternierten und Kriegsgefangenen aus verschiedenen Staaten untergebracht waren, verdeutlicht die Bedeutung und Komplexität des Ortes. Auch hafengeschichtlich ist das Gebäude ein Relikt: Es ist das letzte bauliche Zeugnis der zweiten Hafenerweiterung um 1900, als die Speicherstadt für die Händler\*innen und Stauereien zu klein wurde. Halb ans Ufer, halb ins Wasser des Saalehafens gebaut, steht es in der konstruktiven Tradition der Speicherstadt, mit seinen 24.000 Quadratmetern Fläche ist es jedoch eine deutlich leistungsfähigere Weiterentwicklung.

[Lf] Wie und wann wurde das Lagerhaus für die Stadtentwicklungspolitik interessant?

[MF] Seine Lage auf dem Kleinen Grasbrook, zwar unweit der Veddel, aber bis 2013 auch im dann aufgelösten Freihafengebiet, hat dazu beigetragen, dass das Gebäude und seine Geschichte wenig Beachtung fanden. Das änderte sich erst, als es im Zuge der Hamburger Olympiabewerbung für die Spiele 2024 mal als Sportgerätelager, mal als Journalist\*innenzentrum im Gespräch war. Seitdem die Stadt nach ihrer Niederlage beim Bürgerentscheid über Olympia beschlossen hat, dort den „Innovationsstadtteil“ Grasbrook zu bauen und das ehemalige Hafengebiet auch als Wohngebiet zu entwickeln, versuchen die Stadtplaner\*innen, einen Umgang mit dem denkmalgeschützten Gebäude zu finden. Dass es sich in Privatbesitz befindet, macht die Sache nicht einfacher. Das Lagerhaus G ist also in mehrfacher Hinsicht eine Zeitkapsel, deren Erforschung und Sanierung dringlich ist. In welcher Form das ge-





schehen kann und wie es in den entstehenden Stadtraum integriert werden soll, ist offen – auch weil zwischen den Besitzer\*innen und der Stadt Funkstille herrscht. Es gibt aus unserer Sicht jedoch keinen Ort, der besser geeignet wäre, an die Opfer der Zwangsarbeit unter dem NS-Regime zu erinnern.

[Lf] In welchem Kontext seht ihr euer Bemühen um die Schaffung eines Gedenkortes?

[MF] Unsere Grundposition ist, dass ein Erinnerungsort Lagerhaus G frei von kommerziellen Interessen sein muss. Wir fordern ein Recht auf Erinnerung ein. Wir weisen einerseits auf die historische Verantwortlichkeit der Stadt hin, sind aber andererseits realistisch genug, um zu erkennen, dass von ihr nicht viel kommen wird. Es gibt insbesondere in Hamburg zahlreiche Beispiele für einen verfehlten städtischen Umgang mit Orten nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen, derer sich durch Verkauf und Kommerzialisierung quasi entledigt wird. Sinnbildlich dafür steht der Umgang mit dem Stadthaus, das bis 1943 das Hamburger Polizeipräsidium sowie Sitz der Leitstellen der Geheimen Staatspolizei und der Kriminalpolizei war, also ein Ort des Terrors und der Organisation nationalsozialistischer Gewalt und Repression. Diesen Gebäudekomplex durfte ein Investor in eine Shopping Mall verwandeln, samt marginalisierter Erinnerungsformate auf 75 Quadratmetern in einem Buchladen. Diese Entwicklung spricht Bände. Auch die Idee des Investors, der das Dokumentationszentrum am Hannoverschen Bahnhof baut, dem Deportationsbahnhof, von dem die Hamburger und norddeutschen Jüdinnen und Juden, Sinti und Sinti nach Osteuropa verschleppt

wurden, die darüberliegenden Räume an die Firma Wintershall DEA vermieten zu wollen, die sich an der Aufrüstungspolitik des NS-Regimes beteiligte und von ‚Arisierung‘ und Zwangsarbeit profitierte, passt ins hässliche Bild.

[Lf] Auf eurer Facebook-Seite übt ihr eine grundsätzliche Kritik an dem vor den Stadthöfen geplanten Mahnmal, für das zwei Künstlerinnen einen an Blutlachen erinnernden Eingriff in das Pflaster des Gehweges konzipiert haben. Ihr kritisiert, dass das Gedenken ausgelagert und nicht in das Gebäude integriert wird. Warum ist das für euch so ein wichtiger Punkt?

[MF] Das Stadthaus hat sich die längste Zeit seiner Existenz im Besitz der Stadt Hamburg befunden. Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg diente es unter anderem als Sitz der Baubehörde. Beim Verkauf des Gebäudes verpflichtete sich der Investor vertraglich, auf eigene Kosten auf 750 Quadratmetern einen Gedenkort einzurichten. Selbst wenn wir die Frage außer Acht lassen, was eigentlich einen Privatinvestor qualifiziert, einen angemessenen Erinnerungsort für die im Gebäude verhörten und gefolterten Menschen zu schaffen, haben diese Verbrechen in diesem Gebäude stattgefunden, und auch die Organisation des Terrors durch den Polizeiapparat ist aus diesem Gebäude heraus begangenen worden. Es ist daher nicht nur maximal unwürdig, aus ihm eine luxuriöse Shopping Mall zu machen, sondern auch zu versuchen, das Gedenken vor die Tür zu verlagern oder es in einer Ecke eines dort ansässigen Buchladens unterzubringen. Sollen die Angehörigen von Opfern auf der Straße

stehen oder sich etwa in einem Verkaufsraum der Erinnerung stellen müssen?

[Lf] Wie kann nun das Lagerhaus G zu einem Erinnerungs- und Lernort werden? Welche möglichen Konzepte habt ihr entwickelt?

[MF] Für das Lagerhaus G stellen wir einen Gegenentwurf in den Raum: Wir plädieren für eine Nutzung, die soziale, kulturelle und bildungspolitische Aspekte in den Vordergrund rückt, getragen von einer genossenschaftlichen Organisationsform. Zum einen mangelt es erheblich an solchen Räumen in den angrenzenden Stadtteilen, zum anderen könnte so sichergestellt werden, dass die Nutzung des Ortes nicht im Widerspruch mit seiner Funktion als Erinnerungsort gerät. Wir glauben außerdem, dass die Entwicklung eines solchen Erinnerungs- und Lernortes verlangt, dass Konzeption, Sanierung und Erforschung eng verzahnt werden. Die Kosten für so einen Prozess sind absehbar hoch und natürlich muss sich ein derartiges Projekt auch wirtschaftlich tragen. Daher sind auch Formen solidarischen Wirtschaftens durch Kollektive, Handwerksbetriebe, Ateliers, Probebühnen, Bibliotheken denkbare Bausteine für die Zukunft des Hauses. Im Gebäude muss außerdem viel Raum gelassen werden für die Begegnung mit seiner Geschichte. Die Nutzung als Außenlager hat sich durch das ganze Gebäude gezogen, daher sollte die Erinnerung daran sprichwörtlich auf allen Ebenen ermöglicht und nicht auf einen kleinen Bereich beschränkt bleiben. Wir bieten kein fertiges Konzept, wir machen Vorschläge und formulieren Forderungen. Es gibt keinen Erinnerungsort, der nicht in irgendeiner Weise erkämpft werden musste. Wir sind bereits dabei. Wir rufen Interessierte auf, sich daran zu beteiligen, denn um diesen monumentalen Stolperstein,

den das Lagerhaus G darstellt, zu einem angemessenen Erinnerungsort und zu einem Ort der Begegnung, des kulturellen Austauschs zu machen, braucht es viele Engagierte – und viel Geduld.

[Lf] Ende September bis Anfang Oktober 2021 war die Initiative Dessauer Ufer für zwei Wochen mit der *Zeitkapsel Lagerhaus G* im Freiraum des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe zu Gast – in dieser Zeit kamen 750 Besucher\*innen. Im November wart ihr dann mit der Zeitkapsel in der Galerie xpon-art im Münzviertel. Welche Erfahrungen habt ihr gemacht, was hat sich aus den Gesprächen ergeben?

[MF] Zunächst hat sich bestätigt, wie wichtig es ist, über das Lagerhaus G zu berichten, weil es aufgrund seiner Lage den meisten immer noch unbekannt ist. Durch diese beiden Installationen als eine Art Stadtlabor waren wir gezwungen, die Ergebnisse unserer bisherigen Arbeit, unsere Forschungserkenntnisse und auch unsere politischen Forderungen neu zu manifestieren. Wir haben partizipative Formate entwickelt, um den Diskurs über den Umgang mit dem Haus anzuschieben, Audio- und Filmstationen installiert, Hausmodelle bauen lassen, unsere wissenschaftliche Arbeit präsentiert, Zukunftsszenarien entworfen – kurzum, alles, was wir uns bisher erarbeitet hatten, konnte nun zu diesem Anlass zu etwas Konkretem kondensiert werden. Dieser Vorgang hatte etwas sehr positiv Selbstermächtigendes, wir sind als Initiative daran gewachsen. Die Reaktionen der Besucher\*innen haben uns gezeigt, dass wir nicht mehr am Anfang stehen. Und schließlich waren beide Anlässe sehr gute Gelegenheiten, wertvolle neue Kontakte zu knüpfen und auch die Vernetzung mit anderen Initiativen voranzutreiben.





[Lf] Welche Möglichkeiten nutzt ihr darüber hinaus, um an die Öffentlichkeit zu treten?

[MF] Wir veranstalten in unregelmäßigen Abständen Führungen vor Ort, oft auch zu bestimmten Anlässen und Jahrestagen wie der Erstbelegung des Lagerhauses oder des verheerenden Bombentreffers im Oktober 1944, bei dem über 150 Menschen starben. Diese Termine und auch alle anderen Aktivitäten veröffentlichen wir auf unserer Website, auf der man sich auch für unseren Newsletter anmelden kann. Führungen durch das

Interview: Julia Mummenhoff

Informationen unter: <https://initiativedessauer-ufer.noblogs.org/>; @InitiativeDessauerUfer; Kontakt: [initiative-dessauer-ufer@riseup.net](mailto:initiative-dessauer-ufer@riseup.net)

← [Seite 44/45] Das Lagerhaus G auf dem Kleinen Grasbrook in Hamburg; Foto: Markus Dorfmueller, Johanna Klier, [www.dorfmuellerklier.de](http://www.dorfmuellerklier.de)

← *Zeitkapsel Lagerhaus G, Offenes Labor im Freiraum des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg*, 21. September – 3. Oktober 2021, Partizipatives Modell des Lagerhauses; Foto: Initiative Dessauer Ufer

↑ *Zeitkapsel Lagerhaus G, Offenes Labor im Freiraum des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg*, 21. September – 3. Oktober 2021, Veranschaulichender Zeitstrahl zur künftigen Entwicklung; Foto: Initiative Dessauer Ufer

Gebäude sind im Moment aufgrund eines Konflikts mit der Eigentümergesellschaft nicht möglich. Außerdem sind wir präsent auf Veranstaltungen, die sich mit Erinnerungskultur oder anderen Orten nationalsozialistischer Verfolgung befassen, wir verfassen Texte und Artikel, halten Vorträge oder organisieren Demos.

[Lf] Die im Lagerhaus G Internierten wurden im gesamten Stadtraum zur Zwangsarbeit eingesetzt. Dadurch ergeben sich Verbindungen zu anderen Erinnerungsorten in der Stadt. Seid ihr mit anderen Initiativen und Gruppen vernetzt?

[MF] Ja, denn all diese Orte verbindet das Kontinuum nationalsozialistischer Terror- und Vernichtungspolitik. Die (ordnungs-)politischen Entscheidungen, die zum Beispiel in der Gestapo-Leitstelle im Stadthaus getroffen wurden, manifestieren sich letztlich in den Deportationen, die vom Hannoverschen Bahnhof ausgingen ebenso wie im komplexen System der Zwangsarbeit, für das das Lagerhaus G steht. Wir finden den Kontakt zu Initiativen, die zu anderen Orten arbeiten, essenziell – nicht nur, um nicht von städtischen Institutionen gegeneinander ausgespielt zu werden, sondern um gemeinsam stärker auftreten zu können und vor allem auch die inhaltlichen Verbindungen der Orte deutlich zu machen. Zwar hat jeder Ort seine eigene Geschichte und Situation, doch die Widerstände, auf die die Gruppen in ihrem Bemühen um angemessene Aufarbeitung und Erinnerung stoßen, ähneln sich doch sehr frappierend.

[Lf] Eure Idee ist es, Erinnerungskultur und Stadtplanung zusammenzudenken. Wie kann das gelingen? Bislang ist es doch so, dass Stadtentwicklung meist mit Gentrifizierung und damit auch mit Vergessen einhergeht ...

[MF] Es ist nicht nur eine Idee, sondern eine ganz zentrale Forderung. Stadtplanung kann sich nicht darin erschöpfen, alles neu zu gestalten und historisch relevante Orte entweder zu überformen oder unter dem Diktat der Wirtschaftlichkeit neu zu formatieren. Eine erinnerungszugewandte Stadtplanung nimmt die Herausforderung an und baut auf dem Gedächtnis des Ortes auf. Die Stadt ist ja schon da, es hat dort bereits etwas stattgefunden, Schönes, Schreckliches, und dies alles ist nun einmal in Bauwerke eingeschrieben, die die Zeit überdauern haben. Es geht nicht darum, die Stadt in ein Museum zu verwandeln, sondern ganz im Gegenteil darum, aus der Vergangenheit zu lernen und sie in die neuen Stadträume zu integrieren. Stadtplanung leistet sich immer noch allzu oft die Auslöschung geschichtsträchtiger Strukturen oder ergeht sich in Verzerrungen des Vorgefundenen. Die Stadt ist aber auch ein Gedächtnis, zumal ein Gebautes. Wir fordern das Recht auf Erinnerung ein.

“It would have made  
the whole difference”  
*Julia Mummenhoff*

Wie erinnert ein Gebäude? *Friedrich Adler*, Professor an der Vorgänger-Institution der HFBK Hamburg, wurde 1933 entlassen, 1942 deportiert und ermordet. Die Suche nach Spuren von ihm im Gebäude der Hochschule führt zu den schwierigen Anfängen der Erinnerungsarbeit





Als Friedrich Adler 1907 als Lehrer an die Staatliche Kunstgewerbeschule zu Hamburg, der Vorgängerin der HFBK Hamburg, berufen wurde, war er ein renommierter Kunstgewerbler und Gestalter. Lehrerfahrungen hatte er seit 1903 an den Lehr- und Versuchsateliers für angewandte und freie Kunst (Debschitz-Schule) bei Hermann Obrist und Wilhelm von Debschitz in München gesammelt. Seine Lehre in Hamburg umfasste zeichnerische und plastische Naturstudien sowie Entwürfe und Modelle für Arbeiten in Keramik, Metall und Textil, formal war sie laut einem Schulbericht von 1908/09 in der Abteilung für Bildhauerei angesiedelt. Adlers Überzeugung, dass das Arbeiten nach der Natur die Grundlage der künstlerischen Lehre und der gestalterischen Tätigkeit sei, trug wesentlich zu der in diesen Jahren unter Direktor Richard Meyer angestrebten Neuorientierung und Erweiterung der Kunstgewerbeschule bei. Bereits nach zwei Jahren wurde Adler zum Oberlehrer befördert, doch die Ernennung zum Professor erfolgte erst 1927. Nur fünf Jahre später, im April 1933, wurde er im Rahmen der ersten Gleichschaltungswelle der Nationalsozialisten, die sich dabei auf das von ihnen lancierte Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums beriefen, aus antisemitischen Motiven entlassen und neun Jahre später, am 11. Juli 1942, deportiert und ermordet.

In und vor dem Gebäude am Lerchenfeld 2 wird an drei Stellen an ihn erinnert. In den 1980er-Jahren wurde für ihn eine Gedenkplatte mit ausführlichem Text an der Außenmauer des Gebäudes installiert. Zudem gibt es seit 2009 vor dem Hauptportal einen Stolperstein für Friedrich Adler. In diesem Text soll aber die erste Gedenktafel näher betrachtet werden, die bereits in den 1950er-Jahren angebracht wurde. Wann genau und auf wessen Initiative das erfolgte, ist nicht bekannt. In Ge-

↑ ← Gedenktafel für Friedrich Adler und Hugo Meier-Thur im Gebäude Lerchenfeld 2, 1950er-Jahre; Foto: Tim Albrecht

staltung und Platzierung wirkt sie symptomatisch für den Unwillen und die Unfähigkeit zur Auseinandersetzung mit der damals jüngsten Vergangenheit. Sie befindet sich an einem eigentlich prominenten Ort in der ersten Etage in der Nähe des heutigen Büros der Hochschulleitung, das auch ursprünglich Direktorenzimmer war, ist aber leicht zu übersehen, da sie beinahe hinter dem üblicherweise geöffneten Türflügel des angrenzenden Flurs verschwindet. „Zum Gedenken an“, gefolgt von den Namen und Lebensdaten der beiden von den Nationalsozialisten umgebrachten Professoren Friedrich Adler und Hugo Meyer-Thur, lautet die schwer lesbare Inschrift. Die eingemeißelten Worte und Zahlen füllen die knapp bemessene Platte ganz aus, so als habe man keinen Platz für den Grund des Gedenkens lassen wollen. Rätselhaft bleibt, warum im Falle Friedrich Adlers, dessen Todestag bis heute nicht bekannt ist, stattdessen der 8. Mai 1945, also das Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges angegeben wurde.

Aus einer Ergänzungsakte zur Personalakte Friedrich Adlers, die sich im Archiv der HFBK Hamburg befindet, geht hervor, dass – angestoßen durch ehemalige Schüler\*innen und Angehörige – am 29. April 1958 vor der Tafel die erste offizielle Gedenkveranstaltung für Friedrich Adler stattgefunden hat, der an diesem Tag 80 Jahre alt geworden wäre. Die Vorbereitungen vonseiten der Hochschule verlaufen befremdlich kurzfristig: In einem Schreiben vom 24. April bittet der damalige Direktor Hans-Werner von Oppen seinen Kollegen Otto Stelzer, Professor für Kunstgeschichte, zu diesem Anlass eine Rede zu Leben und Werk Friedrich Adlers zu halten, da er selbst an diesem Tag nicht in Hamburg sein könne. Mit einem Brief vom 25. April informiert von Oppen die jüdische Gemeinde schließlich vier Tage vor der Veranstaltung, lädt sie zur Teilnahme ein und bringt zum Ausdruck, dass er es begrüßen würde, „wenn auch einer ihrer Herren Gedenkworte für Prof. Adler sprechen würde“. Erst am 28. April werden die Lehrenden aufgefordert, sich anderntags um 12 Uhr zu einer „kurzen Gedenkfeier“ im „ehemaligen Direktoren-

zimmer“ einzufinden. Rückblickend ist nichts über diesen Tag in Erfahrung zu bringen, denn die lokale Presse kündigt die Veranstaltung zwar an, berichtet aber nicht darüber.<sup>1</sup>

Aufschlussreich ist ein in der Ergänzungsakte enthaltener Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Adlers Witwe, Frieda Erika Adler, mit dem Nachfolger von Oppen als HFBK-Direktor, Herbert Freiherr von Buttlar, der rund sieben Jahre nach diesem Ereignis, also 1965, einsetzt. In einem handschriftlichen Brief macht sie im Hinblick auf den sich wieder jährenden Geburtstag Adlers auf die unwürdige Situation der Gedenktafel aufmerksam, die weder Platz noch Vorrichtung für die von ehemaligen Studierenden und Angehörigen geplante Niederlegung eines Kranzes und Blumen bietet. Auf von Buttlars Schreiben, er werde sich umgehend um das Problem kümmern<sup>2</sup> und hoffe, sie anlässlich der Gedenkfeier treffen zu können, erklärt sie ihm, dass sie nicht in der Lage sei, das Gebäude Lerchenfeld 2, je wieder zu betreten und bittet ihn „das weder bitter noch persönlich zu nehmen“. In klaren Worten benennt sie das eigentliche Problem der Gedenktafel: „Wenn dennoch vielleicht ein etwas bitterer Unterton mitschwingen sollte, so deshalb, weil die Behörde seinerzeit nicht einmal die Zivilcourage aufgebracht hat, oder es nicht für wert zu halten schien, den auf der Tafel angebrachten Namen der beiden Umgebrachten auch nur ein winziges Wörtchen hinzuzufügen: „deportiert“ (it would have made the whole difference).“ Frieda Erika Adler, geborene Fabisch, genannt FEF, ehemalige Studentin und zweite Ehefrau Adlers, schrieb diesen Brief aus einem Hamburger Krankenhaus, wo sie sich einer schweren Operation unterziehen musste. Aus Zypern, wo sie seit ihrer Emigration mit den beiden gemeinsamen Kindern lebte, kehrte sie bis zu ihrem Tod im Januar 1968 zu weiteren Operationen mehrmals zurück.

Während eines solchen Hamburg-Aufenthalts haben die HFBK-Professoren Kai Sudeck und Dietrich Helms (beide im Fachbereich Freie Kunst) 1966 Frieda Erika Adler im Krankenhaus besucht. In der Folge dieses Treffens



lässt sie Sudeck und Helms handschriftliche Notizen zur künstlerischen Lehre und zum Werk Friedrich Adlers sowie Namen von Personen, die darüber Auskunft geben könnten, per Post zukommen. Sudeck und Helms verarbeiten diese Notizen zusammen mit den eigenen, zu einem mit der Maschine geschriebenen Dokument. Die Sorge Frieda Erika Adlers, das vielschichtige und vielseitige Werk ihres Mannes, das Innenarchitektur, Druckgrafik, Grabmäler, Möbel und neben Einzelprodukten auch Entwürfe für die industrielle Produktion oder für Handwerksbetriebe umfasst, daher auch an vielen unterschiedlichen Orten aufgespürt werden muss, könne in Vergessenheit geraten, ist berechtigt – zumal es keinen persönlichen Nachlass Friedrich Adlers gibt.<sup>3</sup> An der Phase, die sie als die zweite Schaffensphase im Werk Adlers bezeichnet, hatte sie selbst einen entscheidenden Anteil. Als sie 1919 Studentin Adlers wurde, hatte sie die Java-Batik mit nach Hamburg gebracht. Beide experimentierten mit Batik-Verfahren und ihrem möglichen Einsatz in der industriellen Textilproduktion. 1925 gründeten sie zusammen mit ihrem Vater Max Fabisch die ATHEA-GmbH (Adler Textildruckgesellschaft, Hamburg). Frieda Erika Adler betont darüber hinaus die Bedeutung der Künstlerfeste für Hamburg, deren treibende Kraft Adler war und später auch sie mit ihm. Er habe dadurch geholfen, die später namhaftesten Künstler, wie etwa Gustav Gründgens, „ins Rampenlicht zu rücken“ sowie „den bildenden Künstlern ungeahnte Dekorationsmöglichkeiten zu schaffen“. Die Korrespondenz zwischen ihr, Sudeck und Helms liefert einen wertvollen Hinweis zu den Spuren seines Werks im Hauptgebäude der Hochschule. Denn anders als im Falle der Professoren Carl Otto Czeschka und Richard Luksch, beide genau wie Adler seit 1907 an der Kunstgewerbeschule lehrend und beide wie Adler Vertreter des Jugendstils, deren Werke im Gebäude bis heute deutlich sichtbar sind, wurden die künstlerischen Anteile Adlers sehr viel unklarer überliefert. Im Jahresbericht der Kunstgewerbeschule 1912/13, der als Sonderband zum Umzug in den Neubau von Fritz Schumacher am Lerchenfeld 2 erschien, heißt es: „Adler steuerte einige ornamentale Arbeiten zum Schmuck des Vorraumes, zur Bekrönung des ovalen Pavillons und zum Schmuck seiner Hofseite mit Blumenbecken bei.“<sup>4</sup> Abgesehen davon, dass diese Angaben sehr vage bleiben, wurde der erwähnte ovale Pavillon, zusammen mit großen Teilen des Gebäudes 1943 bei einem Bombenangriff zerstört. Frieda Erika Adler weist in ihren Notizen auf etwas hin, das in dieser Aufzählung nicht erwähnt wird, nämlich, dass das „schwarze Brett mit Uhr gegenüber der Pförtnerloge“<sup>5</sup> von Adler entworfen wurde. Gemeint ist die als Triptychon angelegte Glasvitrine im Haupteingang. Frieda Erika Adlers Vermutung, sie sei erhalten geblieben, ist richtig. Und sie wird bis heute genutzt – als Ort für Mitteilungen, Ausstellungsplakate und für studentische Ausstellungsprojekte. Diesen lebendigen Ort auch als Ort der Erinnerung an Friedrich Adler zu begreifen, wäre eine angemessene heutige Form des Andenkens über Gedenktafeln hinaus – wozu hiermit ein erster Schritt getan ist.

← Von Friedrich Adler entworfene Vitrine im Eingangsbereich des Lerchenfeld 2 (bei der Uhr handelt es sich nicht mehr um das Original) mit Plakaten zu einem studentischen Ausstellungsprojekt im Frühjahr 2020; Foto: Tim Albrecht

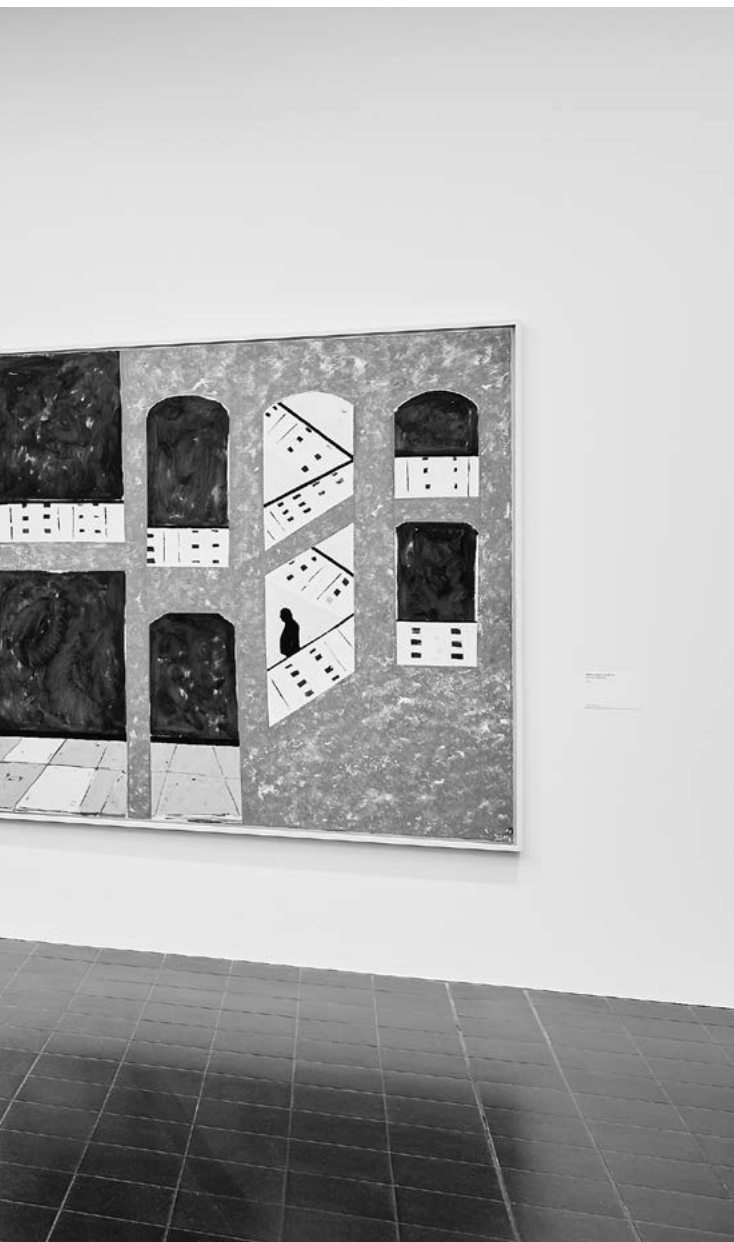
- [1] Die Welt schreibt am 26. April 1958: „Die Kunsthochschule veranstaltet am Dienstag um 12 Uhr eine Gedenkfeier anlässlich des 80. Geburtstages ihres früheren Dozenten Prof. Friedrich Adler. Die Feier wird mit einer Kranzniederlegung an der Gedenktafel in der Hochschule verbunden. Friedrich Adler, Schüler von Obrist und Debschütz, unterrichtete an privaten Kunstschulen, bevor er an der damaligen Kunstgewerbeschule in Hamburg das Lehramt für ornamentale Kunst übernahm. Friedrich Adler war Bildhauer und Stukkateur. 1933 wurde er entlassen und 1941 in ein Konzentrationslager verschleppt. Seither fehlt von Adler, der als Künstler, Pädagoge und Mensch ein hohes Ansehen genoss, jede Spur. Angehörige Adlers leben in Israel und den USA.“ (Auch hier wird das Jahr der Deportation falsch angegeben, Anm. d. Red.)
- [2] In einer Nachricht vom 5. November 1965 bittet von Buttler den Leiter der Metallwerkstatt, Wolfgang Tümpel, um einen Vorschlag dazu. Ob daraus eine Lösung hervorging, lässt sich nicht mit Bestimmtheit sagen. Auf der Höhe einer möglichen Kranz-Halterung befindet sich heute eine überspachtelte Stelle.
- [3] Die Befürchtungen haben sich zum Glück nicht bewahrheitet: Nachdem das Werk Friedrich Adlers in den 1980er Jahren in Gruppenausstellungen zu sehen war, begann 1990 das Forschungs- und Ausstellungsprojekt *Spurensuche* mit der systematischen Aufarbeitung. Im Rahmen dieser Kooperation von vier Museen, darunter dem Hamburger Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe mit dem FORUM für europäische Kunst und Kultur folgten 18 WissenschaftlerInnen den Spuren von Adlers Leben und Werk. So gelang die Rekonstruktion, wenn auch mit Lücken. Es entstand die Ausstellung *Spurensuche: Friedrich Adler zwischen Jugendstil und Art Déco*, die 1994 bis 1995 in sechs deutschen Museen gezeigt wurde sowie der umfassende gleichnamige Katalog. Viel verdankt dieses Projekt überlebenden Familienmitgliedern, Nachfahren und ehemaligen Studierenden Adlers sowie dem Laupheimer Heimatforscher Ernst Schäll, der von Adlers Geburtsstadt Laupheim aus weltweit Kontakte knüpfte und in akribischer Kleinarbeit Werke und Fakten sammelte.
- [4] Rüdiger Joppien und Almut Klingbeil führen die weniger deutliche Beteiligung Friedrich Adlers darauf zurück, dass dieser in den Jahren 1912/13 mit externen Projekten ausgelastet war. Dazu gehörten seine Entwurfstätigkeit für die Industrie, die Durchführung der Nürnberger Meisterkurse und die Planung für die Synagoge der Kölner Werkbundausstellung 1914. In: *Spurensuche: Friedrich Adler zwischen Jugendstil und Art Déco*, Stuttgart 1994, S.416.
- [5] „Am wichtigsten sind natürlich die Arbeiten aus Vatis Hamburger Zeit. Um in der Schule anzufangen: Das schwarze Brett mit Uhr, gegenüber der Pförtnerloge war von Vati u. ist, glaube ich noch da. –“

# Büttner geht von Bord *Jane Ursula Harris, Kate Brown, Larissa Kikol, Sarah Edith James*

Begleitend zu seiner *Last Lecture Show* in der Hamburger Kunsthalle erschien in Kooperation mit der HFBK Hamburg ein umfangreicher Katalog, in dem sich eine junge Generation von Autorinnen mit dem Werk von Werner Büttner auseinandersetzt. *Lerchenfeld* zitiert aus ausgewählten Beiträgen







Jane Ursula Harris: „Von Haus aus apokryphisch: Werner Büttner und das Theater des freien Willens“  
„[...] Der 1954 geborene Werner Büttner gehört der zweiten Generation von Künstler\*innen an, die den Neuen Wilden zugerechnet werden und deren ausgesprochen subjektive Malerei eine besonders ironische Weltsicht zum Ausdruck brachte. Ihren expressionistischen Oberflächen, die das Prinzip der ‚Subversion durch Affirmation‘ verkörperten, wohnte eine desillusionierte, aufmüpfige Haltung inne, die über jegliche Vorspiegelung von Tradition oder Technik erhaben war. Die Anti-Ästhetik der ‚schlechten Malerei‘ Büttners sowie seiner Kollegen Martin Kippenberger und Albert Oehlen verwehrt sich bewusst jeder Kategorisierung und wurde oft auf schlichte parodistische Kritik reduziert. Büttners Erläuterungen zum Einfluss Goyas auf sein Werk führen eine solche Sichtweise jedoch ad absurdum indem sie seine Wertschätzung für moralische Integrität vermitteln: ‚Unter den Malern ist er fraglos der Erste, der vor den Gesetzen seiner Zeit nicht einknickt und sein Gewissen zum Gesetz macht.‘ Man könnte es als das Zusammenspiel einer sardonischen Widerspenstigkeit mit einem romantischem Nihilismus betrachten, es bleibt jedoch etwas von dem Ichschmerz und Weltschmerz in Büttners Werk spürbar, das nicht von dessen beißenden Humor zu trennen ist. Wie seiner Bewunderung für Francisco de Goya, Martin Heidegger, François Rabelais und René Magritte wohnt auch seinem unerschütterlichen Glauben an den Wert der philosophischen Befragung eine unleugbare, wenn auch paradoxe Stärke inne. Sogar in den 1980er Jahren, umgeben von stilistischem Pluralismus und einem Kosmos von Zitaten, den er und seine appropriationistischen Kolleg\*innen geprägt haben, ist eine glühende Verachtung für reinen Konzeptualismus spürbar. [...] Mit seiner von jeher unverwechselbaren, mal nachdenklichen, mal sardonischen oder auch gleichnishaften Herangehensweise an Politik und Kunstgeschichte beschwört der in Ostdeutschland geborene die existenziellen Nöte des Normalsterblichen herauf, indem er das Tragikomische und Banale bemüht. [...]“

Kate Brown: „Schmutzige Witze: Über den Humor von Werner Büttner“

„[...] Der deutsche Maler scheint eine heftige Abneigung gegen allzu starke Vereinfachung zu hegen, ganz zu schweigen von den Regeln, die vorgeben, was ein *gutes* Gemälde ausmacht. In seinen Bildern ist beides stets fein austariert enthalten. Mit dynamischen Pinselstrichen, die ebenso präzise wie draufgängerisch und dabei so nonchalant und treffend sind wie die Pointen eines guten Witzes, nimmt Büttner die Höhen und Tiefen der Welt in den Schwitzkasten, als handele es sich um eine Prügelei unter Rauflustigen. Es ist ein prägnanter Malduktus, der im Laufe der jahrzehntelangen künstlerischen Praxis Büttners, das heißt von den 1970er Jahren bis heute, noch anspruchsvoller geworden ist. Büttner vollzieht seine malerischen Entscheidungen mit einer an Hemingway erinnernden Prägnanz – es findet eine starke Verknappung statt und es wird sich nicht im Schönen ergangen, auch wenn dionysische Genüsse durchaus zum Thema gemacht werden. Die Sujets dieser hinter sinnigen Lehrstücke heben sich von einem ruhigeren Umfeld ab, Buntglasfenstern nicht unähnlich, aber mit einer Palette von gedämpften Farben: länd-



lich anmutende Farbtöne, Blau ohne Weißanteile und beunruhigendes Grün. Der Künstler hat seine Methode zu einer einzigartigen Bildsprache verfeinert, bei der die Sujets seiner fast schon ikonoklastischen Gemälde ikonischen Charakter entwickeln. [...]“

Larissa Kikol: „In meinen Gedanken rauchten wir zusammen“

„[...] Werner Büttners Geschichte ist weitestgehend deckend geschrieben. In den 1980ern malte er mit abdeckenden Farben. Dickes Weiß, Schwarz, Brauntöne. Die Farben waren matschig, cremig, haptisch greifbar. In der Gegenwart ist das anders. Das Gewebe trägt sich ab. Fadenscheinig heißt dünn, faul und fragwürdig. Überall sind da diese Risse, die sich aus der Nähe als Lücken herausstellen. Faulenzerische Übermalung. Farbschichten existieren zwar, aber auch diese sind leichter, gröber, hingepinselt. Robert Fleck schrieb in *Die Ablösung vom 20. Jahrhundert. Malerei der Gegenwart* über ein Erkennungsmerkmal des 21. Jahrhunderts: das ‚Floaten‘. Der aktuelle Georg Baselitz, Peter Doig und Cecily Brown seien Beispiele für das nasse, fließende Malen und die schwimmenden Kompositionen, die die Materialschwere der vorherigen Jahrzehnte abwerfen. Klar ist, dass Werner Büttner nicht floatet. Aber eine Schwere hat auch er abgelegt. Die Formen sind klarer geworden, grob, aber deutlicher. Im Kontrast dazu steht die Struktur, das lässig Durchgepinselte, das Gewetzte, der mitteldicke Strich, der sich nicht korrigiert, der nicht versucht zu illusionieren und der sich keine Mühe gibt. Das braucht er nicht, denn er kommt überall damit durch. Die Leinwand runterpinseln, von oben bis unten, locker, zügig, von der freien Fläche bis zur Sache. Alibiflächen,

eben so viel Farbe, damit eine Fläche entsteht, aber oft auch nicht mehr. Der Fläche wird nichts geschenkt. Der Sache übrigens auch nicht. Mit seinem Strich hebt sich Büttner von den Floater\*innen ab, sowie von den Hyperrealist\*innen, von den neuen Comic-Surrealist\*innen, von fast allen seiner zeitgenössischen Kolleg\*innen, die es schafften, dass ihre Malerei im 21. Jahrhundert nicht oldschool erscheint. Büttner gehört zu ihnen, aber mit einem anderen Ansatz. Eben dem Fadenscheinigen, das noch einmal mehr unterstreicht, dass die Gesten sich keine Mühe geben müssen, das heißt, dass der Strich sich nicht anstrengt. Angestrenzte Striche sind deswegen angestrengt, weil sie ihre Grenzen kennen. Man sieht es immer sofort. Zwar sind die Striche von Baselitz, Doig und Brown ebenfalls nicht angestrengt, doch ist dieser Charakterzug bei Büttner Strategie. Sein malerisch-flapsiger Strich hat keine Grenzen. Auch seine Hand stößt an keine. Alles ist möglich – in einem durch. Und dabei bleibt jede Bildpartie unseriös und faulenzlerisch. [...]“

Sarah Edith James: „Von der Ära der Götter bis zu den guten alten Zeiten des Kalten Krieges und darüber hinaus: A Rock Caught Between two Hard Places“

„[...] Wenn sich Büttner immer wieder der Mythologie bedient, dann weniger auf die Art und Weise der Künstler\*innen der ehemaligen DDR, sondern eher, um die allgemein anerkannten Grenzen der Symbole zu überschreiten, um eine Art extreme ‚Ekelhafte Symbolik‘ (2016) – so auch der Titel einer seiner Arbeiten – zu erzeugen. In seinen Gemälden tauchen nicht nur Gestalten der klassischen Mythologie von Leda und dem

Werner Büttner – Last Lecture Show  
Hamburger Kunsthalle  
15. Oktober 2020 – 16. Januar 2021  
Ausstellungskatalog herausgegeben von  
Alexander Klar und Martin Köttering. Mit  
Beiträgen u.a. von Kate Brown, Jane Ursula  
Harris, Larissa Kikol, Melanie Ohnemus, Barry  
Schwabsky, Bettina Uppenkamp. Gestaltung:  
Prof. Ingo Offermanns, Materialverlag der HFBK  
Hamburg

← Werner Büttner, *Last Lecture Show*, 2021,  
Ausstellungsansicht, Hamburger Kunsthalle;  
Foto: Tim Albrecht

↓ Die ehemaligen HFBK-Studenten Jonathan  
Meese und Daniel Richter besuchen die  
Ausstellung ihres früheren Professors; Foto:  
Hanna Lenz

[1] Zitiert aus: *Es begann also mit einem One-Night-  
Stand. Werner Büttner im Interview mit Hans  
Ulrich Obrist*, hg. von Wigger Bierma für die  
Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg,  
Hamburg 2018, S. 13.

[2] Vgl. Robert Fleck: *Die Ablösung vom 20.  
Jahrhundert. Malerei der Gegenwart*, Wien 2013.

Schwan bis hin zu Arachne und Pan auf, sondern auch die Themen moderner Mythen – Verschwörungstheorien, hormonelle Fluchten (*Hormonhektik in Maigrün*, 2020), Klonexperimente. Büttner distanziert sich bei seiner postmodernen Aneignung der Mythologie sowohl von der traditionellen Lesart als auch von der politischen Verwendung mythologischer Motive in der DDR. Gleichzeitig lässt der gestelzte und bewusst melodramatische Einsatz autobiografischer Elemente die heroisierende und moralisierende Überhöhung von in der damaligen BRD prominenten Protagonisten wie Joseph Beuys absurd wirken. Wenn Büttners durchgehende Einbringung der eigenen Biografie – er zögert nicht, uns zu erzählen, dass er sich der Collage nur zugewandt habe, weil er zufällig auf die Zeitschriftensammlung seiner Ex-Frau gestoßen sei, und dass er Oehlen und Kippenberger durch einen One-Night-Stand mit der Mitbewohnerin des Ersteren begegnet sei – die Vorstellung vom Künstler als heterosexuelles, weißes männliches Genie in sich zusammenfallen lässt, dann untergräbt dies auch das Bild vom Künstler als utopischem Mittler des sozialen Wandels. [...]“



# Behaupten, besitzen, beanspruchen

## *Ronja Lotz*

Die Gruppenausstellung *Proof of Stake – Technologische Behauptungen* im Kunstverein Hamburg beschäftigt sich mit kultureller Arbeit und Besitzverhältnissen im digitalen Zeitalter. Wer nur nach der neusten Kryptokunst Ausschau hält, ist hier jedoch falsch



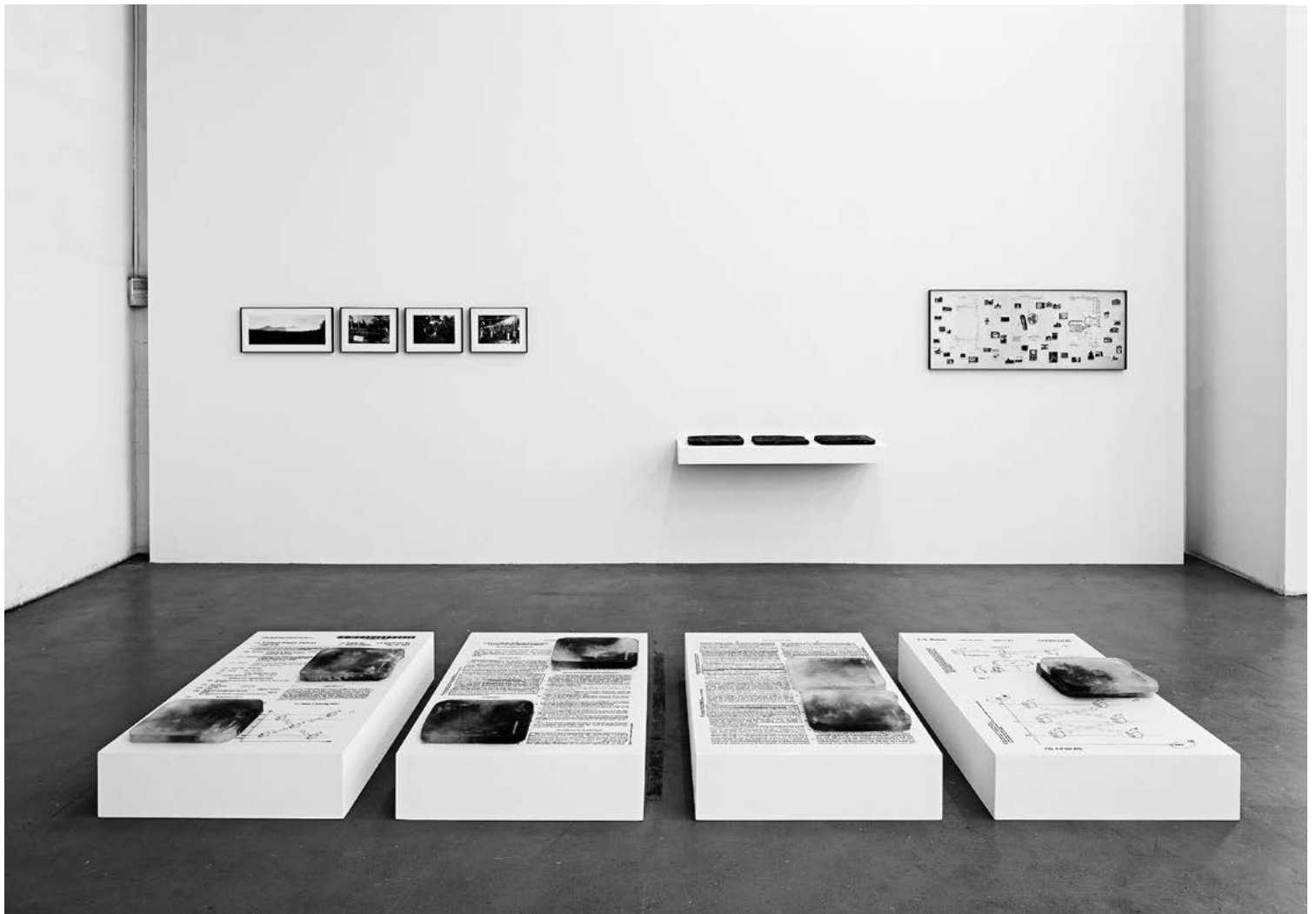


Simon Denny, Professor für Zeitbezogene Medien an der HFBK Hamburg, und Bettina Steinbrügge, Leiterin des Kunstvereins in Hamburg und HFBK-Professorin für Kunsttheorie und kuratorische Praxis, haben die Ausstellung, die in Kooperation mit dem Centre for Digital Cultures der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg und dem Museum am Rothenbaum. Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK) entstand, kuratiert. Im Vorfeld widmeten sich Studierende der HFBK Hamburg und der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg in verschiedenen Seminaren mit der kritischen Reflexion alltäglicher Technologien. Die Ergebnisse dieser Untersuchungen finden sich neben der Ausstellung auch in dem Reader *Media Organize: A Companion to Technological Objects* wieder, mehrere digitale Kunstprojekte werden im November 2021 auf einer eigens eingerichteten Website präsentiert. Die Ausstellung sei durch das Proof-of-Stake-Konsensverfahren einer Blockchain inspiriert, versammle aber auch Arbeiten aus der Prä-Internet-Zeit, so Simon Denny im Gespräch. Arbeiten, die sich in ihrem Kern schon in den 1990er Jahren mit Themen wie Kapitalismuskritik, Kolonialismus, Macht und Besitz auseinandersetzen und die jüngst unter weiterentwickelten Gesichtspunkten wieder neu verhandelt werden müssen.

An der Tür zum Ausstellungsraum zu *Proof of Stake – Technologische Behauptungen* hängt eine dicke Kette aus 150 Vorhängeschlössern und versperrt den Eingang. Yuri Pattison führt mit seiner Arbeit *Lockchain (1-out-of-n locks)* anschaulich ins Blockchain-Universum ein. Wen das in dieser Arbeit enthaltene Wortspiel im Unklaren lässt, dem hilft ein eigens erstelltes Glossar weiter, das Begriffe wie Ethereum, Hardware Wallet oder eben Kryptographischer Schlüssel erklärt. Mit solch einem

↑ Im Vordergrund: Timur Si-Qin, *Die Deutschen und die „Indianer“*, 2021, Ausstellungsansicht, Courtesy Timur Si-Qin & Soci te, Berlin, im Hintergrund: Paul Kolling, *One Present and Four Missing (Westbound 190621 (1.968 – 3936))*, 2021; Foto: Fred Dott

← Yuri Pattison, *Lockchain (1-out-of-n locks)*, 2021, Ausstellungsansicht, Courtesy Yuri Pattison; Foto: Fred Dott



Referenz-Schlüssel – erhältlich am Ticketschalter – lässt sich ein einzelnes Schloss der Kette öffnen und gewährt Einlass. In der digitalen Welt basieren indes komplette Blockchainsysteme auf diesen asymmetrischen Verschlüsselungen und sorgen für geklärte Eigentumsverhältnisse. Yuri Pattinsons Arbeit lieferte somit bereits den ersten Hinweis auf das eigentliche Thema der Ausstellung.

Wer behauptet? Wer besitzt?

Wer nun also die Kette hinter sich lässt und den Ausstellungsraum betritt, den/die erwarten, ähnlich wie die Blöcke einer Blockchain, Kuben in unterschiedlichen Formen: Verkaufsautomaten, Vitrinen, Quadrate am Boden, Bildschirme. Gleich zu Beginn befindet sich das dokumentarisch anmutende, mehrteilige Werk *Malleable Regress (Formbare Regression)* der niederländische Künstlerin Femke Herregraven. Auf Karten und Fotografien zeigt sie, an welchen Küsten kürzlich Latexblöcke mit der Aufschrift *Tjipetir* angeschwemmt wurden. Ursprünglich wurden sie auf einer indonesischen Kautschukplantage im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert mit Hilfe von Sklavenarbeiter\*innen angefertigt. Diese Latexblöcke dienten zur Isolierung von britischen Telegrafenkabeln unter Wasser und hingen maßgeblich mit der Ausbreitung des British Empire zusammen. Über die gleichen Kabel läuft heutzutage der Hochfrequenz-Finanzhandel ab. Herregraven fertigt blau-grünliche Repliken dieser *Tjipetir*-Blöcke an und platziert sie auf weiße, quadratische, am Boden liegende Platten, auf die Patente gedruckt sind. Auf diesen bunten *Tjipetir*-Blöcken befinden sich die Koordinaten von Servern, die

als Knotenpunkte vom Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) ermittelt wurden und die so miteinander verbunden sind, dass sie die Geschwindigkeit des globalen Handels beschleunigen. Herregraven rückt durch längst vergessene historische Bezüge eine omniprésente Wahrheit ins Licht: Auch heute noch bedeutet der Besitz globaler Kommunikationsnetze Wettbewerbsvorteile, während rohstoffreiche Länder, genauso wie die Natur, ausgebeutet werden.

Zwischen Fremdscham, Fake und kultureller Appropriation

Kolonialhistorische Aspekte, vor allem bezogen auf Nordamerika, werden darüber hinaus in gleich mehreren Werken der Ausstellung hervorgehoben, darunter bei Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, James Luna, Timur Si-Qin und Krista Belle Stewart. Stewart ist Künstlerin und Mitglied der indigenen Syilx Nation; sie zeigt *The Gift*. Ein mit Perlen besetztes Hirschlederhemd, ein Gürtel und ein Armreif werden andächtig in einem Schaukasten ausgestellt. Es sind Geschenke, die ihr auf einem deutschen „Indianer\*innen“-LARP (Live Action Role Play) gemacht wurden, bei dem sich Menschen in tagelangen Rollenspielen anmaßen und das Leben der „Ureinwohner\*innen“ Nordamerikas nachempfinden. Die Künstlerin verwebt in *The Gift* gleich mehrere Ebenen. Zum einen wäre da das bizarr anmutende Gebaren der LARP-Spieler\*innen, dass man über einen Video-Link, ansehen kann. Im besten Falle könnte man diesen Fankult als Verehrung und Sympathie gegenüber einer fremden Kultur auffassen, im schlimmsten Falle als kulturelle Appropriation, *mansplaining* und



*red-* beziehungsweise *black facing*. Trotz dieser Problematik hat sich Stewart über Jahre hinweg mit einigen selbsternannten „Indianer\*innen“ angefreundet. Zum anderen wäre da der weiße, westliche geprägte Blick durch Schaukästen. Wer stellt was aus, welche Herrschaftsstrukturen und hegemonialen Narrative werden dadurch sichtbar? Diesen Fragen nimmt sich auch Timur Si-Qin in der extra für diese Ausstellung entstandenen Arbeit *Die Deutschen und die „Indianer“* an, bei der der in Berlin lebende Künstler unter anderem ausrangierte Vitrinen aus der Sammlung indigener amerikanischer Objekte im MARKK zeigt. Die leeren Glaskästen stehen in ihrer ursprünglichen Anordnung im Ausstellungsraum des Kunstvereins. Bar ihres einstigen Inhalts, deuten nur noch Reste von Ausstellungstexten auf ihre vermittelnde Funktion und die kulturellen Zuschreibungen hin. Ein digitales Rendering, so groß wie eine Werbetafel am Ende des Ausstellungsraums, zeigt zudem eine nordamerikanische Prärielandschaft. Dieses Abbild – ebenfalls von Si-Qin – korrespondiert mit den leeren Schaukästen und macht unmissverständlich klar, dass diese romantische Vorstellung, geformt durch Karl May-Romane und Western-Filme, nur eins sein kann: künstlich. In der Ausstellung funktionieren die entleerten Vitrinen auch als transparente Bausteine von Beziehungsketten, die ihre Weiterführung in dem Werk *Crimes Against Reality* des Geheimbunds New Red Order (NRO) finden. Dieser private Bund arbeitet mit einem Netzwerk von Informant\*innen und lotet gemeinsam indigene Zukunftsentwürfe aus. In der Videoarbeit von NRO verwandeln sich Reiterstatuen, Monumente weißer, nordamerikanischer Hegemonie,

← Femke Herregraven, *Malleable Regress (Formbare Regression)*, 2016, Ausstellungsansicht; Foto: Fred Dott

↑ Im Vordergrund: Krista Belle Stewart, *The Gift*, 2019, Courtesy Krista Belle Stewart, im Hintergrund: Timur Si-Qin, *Oyate Simulation*, 2021, Courtesy Société, Berlin; Foto: Fred Dott

in digitales enthäutetes Fleisch, das bald in sich zusammensackt. Die neuen Gebilde symbolisieren nun nicht mehr Herrschaft oder Triumph, sondern lenken den Fokus auf die eigentlich brutalen Hintergründe dieser Denkmäler.

Wie globale Herrschaftsansprüche durch moderne Technik nicht nur aufrechterhalten, sondern auch entlarvt werden können, zeigt die Arbeit von Paul Kolling (HFBK-Absolvent bei Simon Denny 2020). Im Kunstverein ist er mit einer Adaption seiner Master-Arbeit *One Present and Four Missing (Westbound 190621 (1.968–3936))* vertreten. Ein Leuchtkasten zeigt ein durchgängiges auf mehreren Streifen 35-mm-Film gedrucktes Satellitenbild der Seidenstraße. Die Basis für die Arbeit lieferte ein GPS, das Kolling an einen Zug befestigte und so von Hamburg bis ins chinesische Zhenzhou schickte. Neben dem Leuchtkasten befinden sich fünf kleine Satellitenaufnahmen, die mit roten Kreuzen versehen, vermutliche Arbeitslager der von der Staatsmacht verfolgten Uiguren zeigen und somit einen möglichen Grund für die Zurückhaltung Chinas bei der Benennung von spezifischen Wegstrecken der Seidenstraße liefern.

Neben einzelnen Arbeiten aus der Prä-Internet-Zeit, wie etwa die 1992 erschaffene *High Tech Peace Pipe* von James Luna, die Zuschreibungsprozesse von Kultur und Technik verhandelt, gibt es auch solche, die nicht nur im symbolischen Sinne auf die Blockchain-Technologie verweisen – und sogar im Proof of Stake Konsensverfahren entstanden sind. In *Object Stake Exchange* präsentiert Simon Denny mehrere Gegenstände, die Technologie- und Organisationstheoretiker\*innen wie Timon Beyes, Robin Holt und Claus Pias als technologische Objekte bezeichnen (darunter Post-Its, ein im Kanban-System beschriftetes Board oder eine Spraydose), in Form einer sinnbildlichen Blockchain nebeneinander an einer Wand und zusätzlich in Form von NFTs (Non Fungible Token). Über einen QR-Code auf den Objekten gelangt man auf die Tezos-Blockchain-Plattform Hic et Nunc und kann sich dort die NFT-Versionen der Objekte ansehen. Diese von Denny geschaffenen NFTs wurden den Wissenschaftler\*innen als Teilvergütung ihrer Arbeit geschenkt. Der neuseeländische Künstler entzieht sich dadurch der neuen kryptografischen Wertschöpfungskette, denn allein durch den Akt des Schenkens entrückt er die NFTs zumindest vermeintlich den Einflüssen des digitalen Kunstmarkts. Ideell entsteht eine Verbindung zum unmittelbar benachbarten Werk *Arena #1 (Blue and Red)* von Mike Kelley. Es handelt sich dabei um zwei auf dem Boden ausgebreitete Wolldecken sowie Gestricktes; alles ist durch eine Absperrung eingegrenzt. Die Arena-Serie entstand 1990, nachdem Kelley sich mit der Kommerzialisierung der Kunst in den 1980er-Jahren auseinandersetzte. Er fragte sich damals, ob Objekte, die verschenkt werden, frei von den Auswirkungen des Kapitalismus seien.

Alle Arbeiten in der Ausstellung – egal ob es um spezielle PC-Programme, Big Data oder Künstliche Intelligenz geht – drehen sich um die Aushandlungsprozesse neuer Besitztümer. Die Ausstellung ruft ins Gedächtnis, dass diese technologischen Prozesse stets konkrete Rückkopplungen haben, seien es soziale, ökonomische oder kulturelle. An einigen Stellen mag sich dies nicht immer auf den ersten Blick erschließen, allerdings gelingt es Steinbrügge und Denny, Arbeiten neu zu

kontextualisieren, die auf den ersten Blick nichts mit dem Blockchain-Mechanismus zu tun haben. Und so muss man den Ausstellungstitel eventuell etwas mehr in Richtung der ursprünglichen englischen Wortbedeutung *stake* rücken, was so viel bedeutet wie Pfahl oder Pflöck. Ein Stück Holz, das Grundbesitz, nicht unähnlich dem eines Grundsteins, markiert. Eigentumsverhältnisse werden im Kryptowährungsbereich zwar auch mit dem titelgebenden Konsensmechanismus Proof of Stake festgeschrieben, der im Vergleich zu dem Proof of Work-Prozess weniger Energie verbraucht, wobei er trotzdem bestehende Macht- und Besitzverhältnisse fortführt. Proof of Stake verabschiedet sich somit eben-

so von einstigen Träumereien eines egalitären, dezentralen Finanzsystems, in dem alle Beteiligten gleiche Chancen haben. Kommt einem

vertraut vor, dieses Versprechen einer neuen Welt, oder?

*Proof of Stake – Technologische Behauptungen* u. a. mit Arbeiten von Simon Denny, Paul Kolling, Prateek Vijan  
4. September – 14. November 2021  
Kunstverein Hamburg  
[www.kunstverein.de](http://www.kunstverein.de)

*Media Organize: A Companion to Technological Objects*, Publikation mit Beiträgen u. a. von Gustav Holst Kurtzweil, Talya Feldmann, Christiany Erler, Merle Dammhayn, Heiko Lietz, Rahel grote Lambers, Kuno Seltmann, Insa Wagner, Kunstverein Hamburg, Betreut von Prof. Simon Denny, Prof. Bettina Steinbrügge

→ Ulyana Kalenik, *This Poster Could Be The Reason For My Detention*, street action, 2020; Filmstill



# Artists Take Action

## *Seda Yıldız*

This semester the HFBK Hamburg is hosting two artists from Belarus who use their practice as a tool of survival and resistance. Lerchenfeld author *Seda Yıldız* spoke with Art School Alliance guest lecturer *Nadiya Sayapina* and student *Ulyana Kalenik*



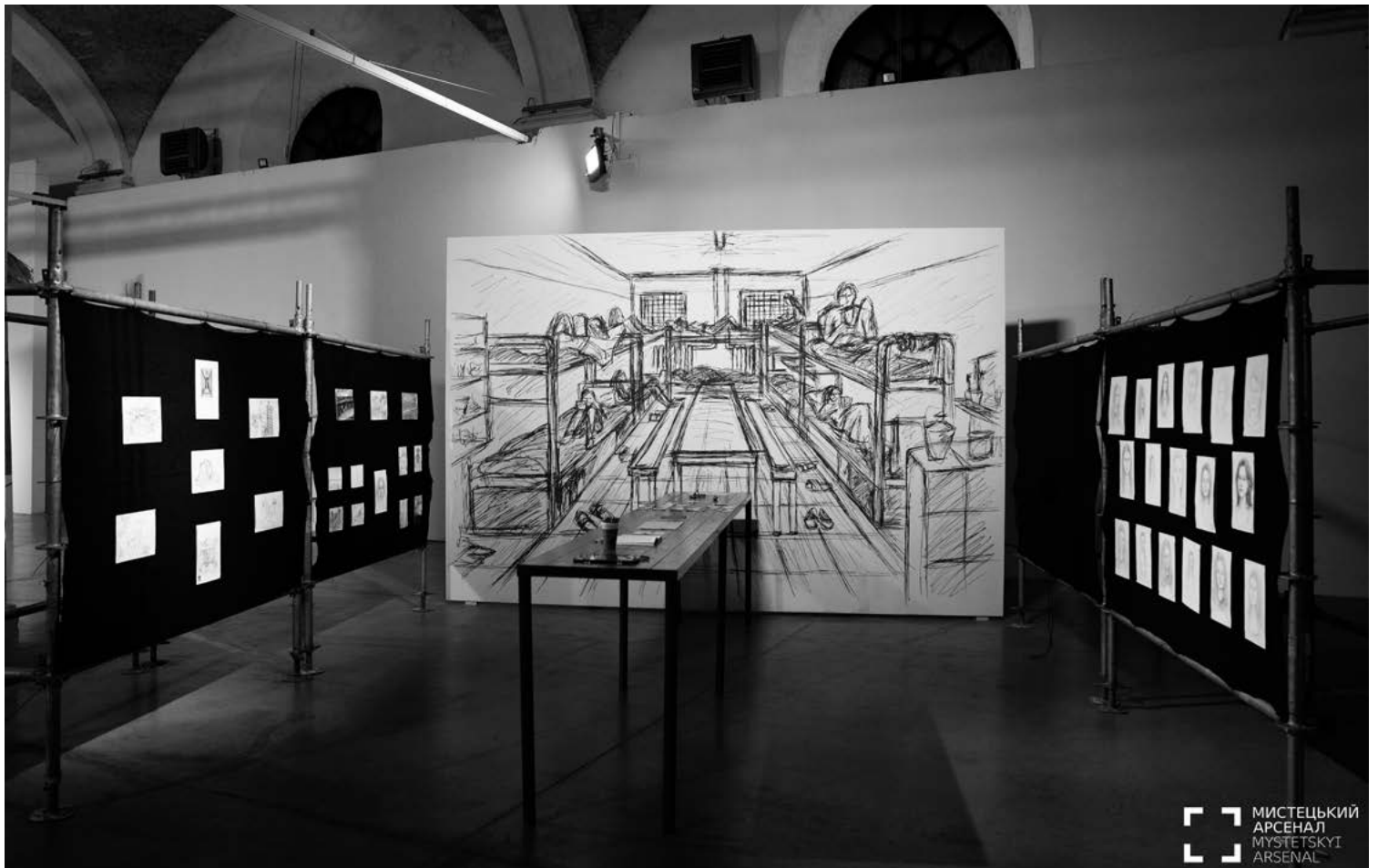
Belarusian society is undergoing a broad social transformation. When faced so immediately with such real problems, art's relation to reality is reawakened. Though it may be the case that in this battle art seems secondary or unimportant, it is also almost an organic response, a stimulus for artists to become active and leave the position of passive and powerless observers. How could artistic practice respond to this extremely complex relationship within a repressive political regime? Should artists as conscious citizens “decide what position to take in this social conflict and adapt their artistic language to this decision”?<sup>1</sup> This semester the HFBK Hamburg is hosting guest lecturer Nadiya Sayapina and the ASA student Ulyana Kalenik, two artists from Belarus who use their practice as a tool of survival and resistance in this battle.

Nadiya Sayapina has been using different media—performance, multimedia installations, painting, text, and art therapy—to explore mediation as an opportunity to reveal the voices of others who are less visible. Sayapina left the capital Minsk after this summer, when the political upheaval reached its peak. In August, together with dozens of artists and cultural workers, she joined an artistic action entitled “The Art of the Regime” against the brutal force and violence the police has been using against protesters. The demonstration was silent, and participants carried photos of the victims and injured individuals. One month later, Sayapina was taken to a detention center in Minsk directly from her home, along with her personal electronic devices, for being “a suspicious organizer of the demonstration.” “In early August, the government cut the Internet. That’s why we made this action, and similarly a lot of actions were realized by different groups of people in those days. The police later found out all the information from the first days of the protests on social media,” the artist explains. She was taken into custody after appearing in a photo that was shared on Facebook. After two weeks of detention, she decided to leave Belarus for Ukraine due to safety concerns.

How have these social and political upheavals and traumatic experiences impacted her artistic practice? She points to the undeniable reality that the intense situation in Belarus becomes visible in her work. Yet the artist avoids labeling herself as a political artist or an activist: “It is a big question what we call political. Is it only the activism happening on the streets, or is art in public spaces political even though it does not address politics? My work is not an outcome of my interest in politics. Instead, I’m interested in talking about emotions,” she explains. Nadia Sayapina’s practice is inspired by everyday life, and particularly how individuals respond to their immediate surroundings. It is no wonder that her personal detention story became the starting point for her recent multimedia installation *Dollhouse* (2020–2021). However, this work is not bitter, and instead it focuses on moments of togetherness and solidarity among the women in the detention center. “We washed each other’s hair, shared our personal stories and dreams, told fortunes, kept diaries, drew portraits of each other, and sang together,”<sup>2</sup> says Sayapina, describing how this interpersonal relationship provided the inspiration for *Dollhouse*. “I was not aiming to document how awful that place was, or the circumstances we were in. The feeling of sisterhood was



- ↑ Nadiya Sayapina, *Letter to mom*, from the exhibition *Echoes – Voices from Belarus*, Karlskaserne Ludwigsburg, 2021; photo: from the artist's personal archive
- Nadiya Sayapina, *Dollhouse*, from the exhibition *Every day*, Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv, 2021; photo: Olexandr Popenko



strongly present, and I wanted to show how people deal with such difficulties,” she says, explaining the main motivation.

ASA student Ulyana Nevzorova, whose practice focuses on issues of censorship, gender, and human rights violations, also points to the organic link between her immediate surroundings and artistic practice. The artist has been active in the streets of Belarus since 2020, and her recent works address the government’s approach to people who have been fighting peacefully for their political freedom. “Current events in Belarus are impossible to ignore, and I would describe the scene as very absurd and oppressive. Art in this context has a healing potential. It is a kind of sublimation to cope with the traumatic situation,” she explains. Yet the artist says that she is forced to work anonymously or under a pseudonym for fear of reprisals. Her recent action is a silent yet bold gesture that raises questions about this reality. The artist stands still in the Minsk metro holding a poster that says “This poster could be the reason for my detention,” which provoked the audience and received gestures of solidarity, blame, and even insults from the passengers. The video documentation was later circulated on the Internet and received support from individuals, who posted videos of themselves standing on the bus with a poster that reads “You won’t be detained, because one for all and all for one.”

Forced migration, lack of self-expression, censorship, stories of oppression—how can artists address these sensitive topics through their practice and find an appropriate form? Over the years, Nadiya Sayapina developed a possible strategy to work with personal interviews and social surveys, which she conducts with a specific group of people. This material then becomes a starting point for her participatory or community-based

projects. To her, it is a process of mediation, retranslation, and reinterpretation. When asked about the legitimacy of representation, she explains: “It is important to speak of a problem from an insider position. I find it problematic to call something participation when one speaks from an outsider perspective. It could easily be a manipulation, or speculation on these matters, only to transform personal stories into an artwork. I’m trying to develop empathy and create a connection with communities that have similar experiences to me, searching for common ways to share them with a wider group to give such stories further visibility.”

An example of this is the ongoing project *Letter to Mother*, which she has been working on since 2020, and which addresses the theme of forced migration through the personal stories of people who left Belarus. During her residence at Mystetskyi Arsenal in Kiev, supported by the Goethe-Institute in Ukraine, the artist interviewed thirty immigrants from Belarus who are currently located in Kiev, asking each the same questions, such as if they adapted to their new home or not, how they like it, what they miss, and if they would like to return Belarus, which majority answers with a yes. During the interviews, she draws the eyes of the participants, since their voice will be used anonymously due to safety concerns. The artist then works on transforming this material into drawings, performance, video, installations, or participatory art while focusing on the emotional side of displacement. “I find it interesting that often in these interviews a strong feeling of guilt is present—both for those who leave their country because it is a matter of life or death, and for others who left because it was psychologically too intense to handle. I try to transform these strongly present feelings in the exhibition space,” says Sayapina, explaining how she

works with material from interviews. She also tries to avoid presenting them as they are, in spoken or written form, and instead creates a form of dialogue with the viewer. As a part of the exhibition that took place in Kiev, the artist conducted a workshop in which she invited locals to create their own letters or drawings as a kind of response, with the aim of building empathy between Ukrainians and Belarusian migrants. During the exhibition, visitors were also invited to share their responses, thoughts, and emotions in the form of letters or drawings, which were then displayed in a growing collection on the gallery wall.

Despite the heavy weight of ethical responsibility in working with personal material, and speaking of the grey area of participation, Sayapina remarks: "If it is not participation, the visitor will always be the outsider. I find it more difficult to show something without getting closer to the viewer. I could only exhibit the interviews. One can read them and leave, but through this workshop participants have an opportunity to come into direct contact with the material and share their feelings openly with the public too. And this insider perspective helps you not to be in a vertical hierarchy."<sup>3</sup> The methodology of working with interviews and public surveys is also the basis of the seminar Nadiya Sayapina is offering this semester at the HFBK. In "Interviews and polls as practice and basis for community-based and socially engaged art," students from different departments will examine this strategy from a theoretical and practical perspective. In addition to addressing ethical questions such as how to work with such sensitive material and how to approach it (journalistically, or with some degree of artistic autonomy?), participants will work on concept development starting from images or data collection, explore modes of interpretation and give form

to these materials. At the end of the semester, the group will share their collective or personal projects during the HFBK Hamburg's annual exhibition in February 2022.

Seda Yıldız studied with Prof. Astrid Mania, Prof. Valentina Karga and Prof. Jesko Fezer at the HFBK Hamburg. She is an independent curator and arts writer based in Hamburg. Her socially engaged practice is inspired by thinking across disciplines including art, music, design, literature, cinema and activism.  
[www.yildizseda.com](http://www.yildizseda.com)

↓ Nadiya Sayapina and Ulyana Kalenik at ASA-Karolinenstraße, 2021; photo: Tim Albrecht



# Reading List



Lydia Lierke, Massimo Perinelli (Hrsg.): *Erinnern Stören. Der Mauerfall aus migrantischer und jüdischer Perspektive* Verbrecher Verlag, 2020  
Auch 30 Jahre nach der Vereinigung der beiden deutschen Staaten gibt es noch blinde Flecken in der Geschichtsschreibung rund um die politischen Ereignisse von 1989/90. Diese Lücke will die vorliegende Publikation schließen, indem sie Menschen zu Wort kommen lässt, die in der kollektiven Erzählung bisher ignoriert beziehungsweise marginalisiert werden. So schildern hier GastarbeiterInnen aus West-Deutschland, vietnamesische VertragsarbeiterInnen aus Ost-Deutschland, Jüdinnen und Juden aus beiden Teilen Deutschlands ihre persönliche Sicht auf den Mauerfall sowie die Folgen, die die Ereignisse für ihr Leben und ihre Lebenssituation bedeuteten. Und das ist alles andere als eine Erfolgsgeschichte, wie sie so gern von PolitikerInnen in staatstragenden Reden zu Jahrestagen erzählt wird. Die AutorInnen erfuhren Hass und Gewalt, erlebten Ausgrenzung und Angst. Aber sie gaben und geben nicht auf, leisten Widerstand, solidarisieren sich und erheben ihre Stimme. Von daher ist dieses Buch ein eindrückliches Dokument des (post)migrantischen Empowerments. (Ba)



Steffen Klävers  
*Decolonizing Auschwitz? Komparativ-postkoloniale Ansätze in der Holocaustforschung*  
Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2021  
Die Frage, ob sich der Holocaust mit anderen historischen Ereignissen vergleichen (oder gar gleichsetzen) lässt, wurde in der Vergangenheit schon oft diskutiert (siehe den Historikerstreit

zwischen Ernst Nolte und Jürgen Habermas Ende der 1980er-Jahre). Neue wissenschaftliche Ansätze versuchen nun, den Holocaust aus einer postkolonialtheoretischen Perspektive zu analysieren und zu interpretieren und fragen, ob „die bisherige Wissensproduktion über den Holocaust möglicherweise hegemonial und eurozentrisch ist, ob bestimmte Stimmen im westlichen Diskurs über den Holocaust unterdrückt werden und ob sich der Holocaust postkolonial aufarbeiten lässt und was das bedeuten würde.“ Das Verdienst des vorliegenden Buches besteht darin, die aktuellen Forschungsansätze in Form eines *close readings* so objektiv wie möglich darzustellen und einer wissenschaftlichen Einordnung und Bewertung zu unterziehen. Klävers betreibt eine Form Metaanalyse, in dem er sowohl die Forschungen als auch die wissenschaftlichen Diskurse und Reaktionen anderer ForscherInnen darstellt. Die LeserInnen bekommen hier in komprimierter Form einen Überblick über die bestehenden Ansätze der Holocaustforschung, die die aktuellen Debatten und Diskurse bestimmen. Konkret untersucht er die Forschungen des Hamburger Wissenschaftlers Jürgen Zimmerer (u.a. sein Buch *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust*) und Michael Rothbergs Theorie multidirektionaler Erinnerung (ebenfalls in dieser Reading List vorgestellt). Das Buch ist eine sehr sorgfältig recherchierte, wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung, was bei dem Thema notwendig und wichtig ist und die LeserInnen am Ende mit aufschlussreichen Erkenntnissen belohnt. Fazit von Klävers: „Die Behauptung, die Shoa unterscheide sich qualitativ und strukturell nicht, sondern nur quantitativ und graduell von kolonialen Genoziden ist unzutreffend und relativiert den unbedingten wahnhaften Willen der Nationalsozialistinnen, die ersehnte ausschließlich arische Welt von allem Jüdischen zu befreien. Es finden sich keine Entsprechungen in kolonialassistischer Ideologie – ohne dabei die Grausamkeit, Brutalität und Gnadenlosigkeit der von Europäern verübten Kolonialverbrechen, Massenmorden, Genoziden zu unterschlagen.“ (Ba)



Tanja Schult & Julia Lange (Hrsg.)  
*Was denkt das Denkmal?*  
Böhlau Verlag, 2021  
Wer hat sich nicht schon einmal gefragt, was diese unzähligen Denkmäler, die um uns herumstehen und uns anstarren, eigentlich so denken. Bei all dem Streit, den es um viele von ihnen aktuell gibt, wird es doch Zeit, sie einmal selber zu Wort kommen zu lassen. Die AutorInnen des Sammelbands nehmen nun also diese unbekannte Perspektive ein und schreiben aus der Sicht eines Denkmals, wie es ihm „im Wandel der Zeiten erging, hin- und hergerissen zwischen ursprünglichen Intentionen, Umdeutungen und Instrumentalisierungen“. Das führt zu interessanten Selbst- oder Zwiegesprächen, wie das zwischen dem Reiterdenkmal Peters des Großen auf

dem Senatsplatz in Sankt Petersburg und seinem Pferd oder das Selbstgespräch aus dem Kopf der Freiheitsstatue in New York. Auch die erzählte Geschichte der Neuen Wache in Berlin ist reich an Informationen und Anekdoten und macht die historischen Widersprüche im Umgang mit gewollten oder ungeliebten Denkmälern deutlich. Leider sind nicht alle Beiträge so stimmig und unterhaltsam wie der von Nora Sternfeld. Bei ihr führen die vom Wiener Hitler-Porträtisten Josef Bock geschaffene Büste des Nazi-Schriftstellers Josef Weinheber, der Granitsockel, das Betonfundament und die 2009 ergänzte Zusatztafel ein sowohl humoriges als auch erbittertes Streitgespräch, an dessen Ende sich das benachbarte Friedrich-Schiller-Denkmal vom Sockel begibt und um Ruhe bittet: „An diesem Ort wäre ein bisschen mehr Anmut und Würde angebracht! Sein Wunsch wird aber sicherlich nicht erhört.“ Zum Glück. Ideen für weitere Artikel gäbe es genügend: Was denken sich wohl der Herkules in Kassel, die Bremer Stadtmusikanten oder das Bismarck-Denkmal in Hamburg? (Ba)



Max Czollek  
*Gegenwartsbewältigung*  
Hanser Verlag, 2020  
Als ein „polemisches Kochbuch“ bezeichnet Max Czollek selbst sein zweites Buch. Dabei geht es dem Berliner Essayist weniger um die Zubereitung von Schweinebraten oder Baklava, als vielmehr um die deutsche Gesellschaft, die schon längst eine andere geworden ist und deren politische Erklärungsmuster nicht mehr angemessen sind. Czollek erteilt den zwei staatstragenden Ideen „Integration“ und „deutsche Leitkultur“ eine klare Absage. Nicht sie, sondern Desintegration, radikale Vielfalt und komplexe Intersektionalität seien eine angemessene Form der Gegenwartsbewältigung. Natürlich gelingt das nicht ohne eine an manchen Stellen überspitzte Offenlegung von Denkweisen der Mehrheitsgesellschaft, deren logische Schlussfolgerung am rechten Rand nur die AfD sein kann. Wie muss sich also unsere Gesellschaft wandeln, damit alle Menschen gleichermaßen Solidarität erfahren und keine Zuflucht in leeren Heimat-Fantastereien einer rassistischen Partei suchen? Provokant schlägt Czollek hierfür die jüdisch-muslimische Leitkultur vor, eine Leitkultur der Allianzen und nicht der Ausgrenzung. Er fasst es so: „Gegenwartsbewältigung heißt, dass man uns mit den Füßen zuerst aus den Shishabars und Synagogen, Spätis und Darkrooms wird tragen müssen. Wir räumen nicht das Feld, auch wenn nichts wieder gut wird. Nicht mit der Heimat, nicht mit der Leitkultur, nicht im Kapitalismus. Aber wenn wir verlieren, dann verlieren wir zusammen.“ Und mit „wir“, meint Czollek natürlich die gesamte deutsche Gesellschaft. (RI)



Aleida Assmann  
*Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur*  
 C.H. Beck Verlag, 2013  
 Von der Gegenwartsbewältigung zur Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Die Kulturwissenschaftlerin Aleida Assmann ist maßgeblich durch ihre kulturanthropologische Forschung zu Vergessen, Gedächtnis und Erinnerung bekannt. In ihrem Buch widmet sie sich stringent und fundiert der Herkunft, der Bedeutung und den Debatten um die deutsche Erinnerungskultur, was ebenso den Umgang mit der NS-Diktatur wie die DDR-Vergangenheit mit einfasst - und öffnet zudem den Blick auf transnationale Perspektiven. Dieses „neue Unbehagen“ löst - so ihre These - ein doppelter Generationenwechsel aus: Denn, je mehr Zeitzeuginnen sterben und je älter die 68-Generation wird, die bis dato mehrheitlich für die deutsche Erinnerungskultur verantwortlich waren, desto mehr wird die Erinnerung an Verbrechen und Schuld der Deutschen auf die Probe gestellt. Hinzu kommen Neuerungen, wie die Digitalisierung, das Erstarken des Nationalismus in Europa und das wachsende Selbstverständnis, dass Deutschland eine Einwanderungsgesellschaft ist, die es nötig machen den Umgang mit der Erinnerung erneut auszuhandeln. Sie macht klar - frei nach dem Credo „Vorbei ist nicht vorüber“ - , dass es auch weiterhin notwendig sein wird, Erinnerung als Medium der individuellen und kollektiven Selbstbestätigung wahrzunehmen, um die Würde entrechteter Gruppen wiederherzustellen und soziales Vertrauen zu stärken. (R1)



Michael Rothberg  
*Multidirektionale Erinnerung – Holocaust-Gedenken im Zeitalter der Dekolonialisierung*

Metropol Verlag, 2021  
 International ist das vor zwölf Jahren erschienene Original bereits ein Klassiker der Erinnerungsforschung. Vor dem Hintergrund der zunächst vor allem in den USA erbittert geführten Debatte um (vermeintlich) konkurrierende Erinnerungskulturen, etwa des Holocaust-Gedenkens und die Aufarbeitung der Kolonialgeschichte und Sklaverei, setzt der Literaturwissenschaftler und Holocaustforscher Michael Rothberg die Einsicht entgegen, dass es in einer Gesellschaft unterschiedliche Erinnerungen an kollektive Gewaltereignisse gibt, die sich in ihrer Bedeutung nicht gegenseitig ausspielen müssten. Statt eines moralischen Nullsummenspiels, bei dem das Gedenken an ein Verbrechen ein anderes Verbrechen in der Öffentlichkeit minimiert oder relativiert, plädiert er für eine solidarische Erinnerungskultur, bei der Diskurse sich gegenseitig stärken. Als Beleg dafür, dass es einen solchen produktiven Austausch durchaus schon gegeben hat, führt Rothberg Texte aus den 1950er- und 1960er-Jahren als Fallstudien heran, insbesondere Hannah Arendts Untersuchungen zu totalitärer Herrschaft, die auch den Imperialismus ursächlich einbezieht, oder einen Text des afroamerikanischen Soziologen und Bürgerrechtlers W.E.B. Dubois, der 1949 nach seinem Besuch in den Ruinen des Warschauer Ghettos entstand, in dem Dubois Parallelen zum Rassismus in den USA zieht, ohne die Singularität des Holocaust in Frage zu stellen. Letzteres wird dagegen Michael Rothberg von Teilen der deutschen Kritik vorgeworfen. Zur späten Übersetzung der Originalausgabe hat die Debatte um die Antisemitismus-Vorwürfe und die Ausladung des kamerunischen Philosophen Achille Mbembe als Eröffnungsdiskussion der Ruhrtriennale 2020 beigetragen, in der sich Rothberg - in Verteidigung von Mbembe - zu Wort meldete. Die Unbeholffenheit, mit der die Diskussion geführt wurde, die durch die coronabedingte Absage der Ruhrtriennale zwar nicht gelöst, aber beendet wurde, zeigt, wie notwendig die Auseinandersetzung mit multidirektionalen Perspektiven gerade in Deutschland ist. (Jm)



Hannah Zimmermann, Martina Klaus (Hg.): *Vom Lernen und Verlernen. Methodenhandbuch zur rassistismuskritischen Aufarbeitung des NSU-Komplex*, 2021, <https://offener-prozess.de/methodenhandbuch/>  
 Zehn Jahre ist die Selbstenttarnung des NSU her, genauso lange konnte das rechtsradikales Terror-Netzwerk unerkannt Morde verüben und bis heute erleben die Angehörigen der Opfer, wie Fakten verheimlicht werden. Auch reißen die Angriffe auf die Migrationsgesellschaft keinesfalls ab. Vor diesem Hintergrund erschien 2021 diese in jeder Hinsicht vorbildliche Publikation. Sie steht zum kostenfreien Download bereit ist so für die Öffentlichkeit uneingeschränkt zugänglich. Mit ausführlichen Biografien und Porträt-Illustrationen der Ermordeten leistet es Erinnerungsarbeit und vermittelt darüber hinaus die Perspektive der Familien der Opfer. Das Buch enthält Methodenbeschreibungen und Übungen, die eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem NSU-Komplex in schulischen und außerschulischen Bildungskontexten anstoßen sollen. Im Sinne von Gayatri Chakravorty Spivaks Konzept des „Verlernens“ ist damit auch das Hinterfragen von Privilegien, gesellschaftlichen Positionen und Machtverhältnissen verbunden. Ergänzend dazu

kann unter [www.offener-prozess.net](http://www.offener-prozess.net) die multimediale, interaktive Ausstellung *Offener Prozess* besucht werden, aus der die Publikation hervorgegangen ist. Hier gibt es auch ganz alltägliche Hilfe, wie die von einer Sprecherin vorgetragene richtige Aussprache der Namen. Say their names! (Jm)

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The magazine serves both as a conference programme and furthermore presents in-depth articles and contributions by: Markus Fiedler, Ayşe Güleç, Gila Kolb, Kerstin Stake-meier, Seda Yıldız et al.

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