Introduction

Emptiness is not nothing
But something that is there
That which indicates something is missing.¹

Nick Hullegie

Like most architecture, designed memorial spaces can be perceived as collective efforts that rely on resources provided by political and financial powers. At the same time, memorial architecture, being an act of representation, touches upon the essence of architectural creation and the question of how space mediates some of the most intricate social and cultural processes. Both the predicament and the allure of the task of designing a memorial space became clear to me in a very personal quest to commemorate through architecture the Siege of Sarajevo (1992–95).² In 1992, when American architect Lebbeus Woods was working on his book War and Architecture, the destruction of Sarajevo and its citizens by heavy artillery and sniper fire was in full swing.³ While one of the many targets was being destroyed – the city’s twin towers, ‘Momo & Uzeir’ – Woods made the pessimistic statement that the burning towers of Sarajevo were ‘markers of the end of an age of reason, if not reason itself, beyond which lies a domain of almost incomprehensible darkness’.⁴ As a compassionate observer who entered the besieged city in the midst of the ongoing carnage, he preoccupied himself with Sarajevo’s architectural wounds. Intuitively recognizing a need for order and some sense of control that was lingering

¹ Author’s translation of the words that accompany Nick Hullegie’s 2011 sculpture, Not There, which combines plexiglass and tree stump. The original text reads ‘Leegte is niet niets, maar iets dat er is wat aangeeft dat er iets mist.’
² The Siege of Sarajevo by the combined forces of the Yugoslav People’s Army and the Army of Republic of Srpska, often referred to as the longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern warfare, started on 5 April 1992 and officially lasted until 1 November 1995 when the Dayton Agreement was signed. However, it was only in March 1996 that the occupying forces left the city.
⁴ Ibid., p. 3.
2

Introduction

among its citizens, Woods focused on the city’s wounded tissue and looked at the smallest details, for example a damaged window, in an effort to preserve traces of war.

To understand destructed space, Woods aimed to make a distinction between architecture as a weapon of destruction, or part of the problem in war, and architecture as a system of protection. Along this typically Janus-faced characterization of architecture, he proposed architectural solutions for establishing the order needed for the continuation of life in peace. He termed them as ‘the scab’ and ‘the scar’, arguing that ‘the natural stages of healing might not be pretty, judged by conventional aesthetic standards, but they are beautiful in the existential sense.’

In this view, architecture can act as a symbol of the resilience of the human spirit and the will to live of those targeted for destruction.

My interest in the role of architects as creators of order in devastated environments started in the post-war atmosphere of Sarajevo, when making sense of things was a priority. After having been continuously exposed to severe urbicide for almost four years, in 1996 the city and its citizens faced the prospect of peace in a place defined by overwhelming architectural and psychological debris which now had to be confronted in its real scale and meaning. An eagerness to tell the story of survival was widely present among citizens, and it seemed to be getting stronger as life continued to be normalized and the eternal fire of the Second World War memorial in the centre of the city was lit again, exactly 50 years after ‘justice had vanquished two tyrannies, bringing forth a new paradigm of world history’.

At the same time, the ‘other’ side – the participants in the war who, actively or inactively, supported the destruction of the city – had and still have a different memory of events. As the issues surrounding possible ways of memorializing the war started to become more prominent, the complexities of the memorializing process began to unfold, demonstrating the contemporaneity of memory and the presence of counter-memory. In his contemplation on negative memory in the German collective consciousness, German historian Reinhart Koselleck touched upon three interlinked questions: who and what should be remembered, and how should it be done?

Observing through a lens of a designer whose experience was shaped

---

5 Ibid., p. 24.
by a post-conflict environment, my focus was inherently inclined to the ‘how’ conundrum, or more precisely the official (and to a lesser extent unofficial) memorials, because these are usually the most challenging and controversial assignments architects can receive. This is a daunting topic in the electric age where information is abounding and available to everyone, creating ‘memory of the multitude’ that ‘softens history, changing the parameters of the who, what and why of remembering’.  

Monument versus Memorial?

While I was contemplating what a memorial for Sarajevo should be, on the other side of the Atlantic similar issues were raised in a difficult discussion about how to commemorate the events of 9/11 in New York. What was instantly clear, amid the arguments between those who fought for reconstruction and those who pleaded to leave the newly created void as a signifier, was that whatever form it took, the memorial had to carefully communicate the emotional tension and stay objective, informative and truthful. It seemed an impossible balancing act. If we understand representation of memory, both individual and collective, as ‘the function by which symbols, or simulacra, or surrogates, come to stand for some absent referent’, it is inviting to comprehend how this might manifest and what it means for memorial architecture in particular. What are the symbols, simulacra or surrogates used in contemporary memorial projects? Now that the memorial for 9/11 is built, the question of how to design a structure as a signifier of something that is missing due to violent destruction remains relevant and equally as challenging.

The distinction between monument and memorial remains ambiguous. The two notions are continuously interchangeably used both in academia and practice. The general process of creating is similar for both typologies in that they are (almost always) directly faced with strong emotions and sentiments. And like in all design projects, there are restrictions of funding and resources. However, building a memorial is further complicated by the involvement of additional tasks such as preservation and questions of education and tourism. As a rule, all these aspects are the subject of multilayered views on a particular memory or set of memories and are

---

Introduction

depthly embedded in the political and social context. As well as these defining tasks, a memorial is normally the focal architectural edifice within its built context and is therefore perceived as a representation of that particular context (even if this is not necessarily the case), often becoming a frequented visiting attraction and mental signifier for that physical location in the collective imagination.

The extensively quoted remark by Robert Musil that ‘there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument’ perhaps best describes the process of disregarding a monument’s power as an aide memoire. In his 1927 essay, Musil was of course referring to the traditional notion of a public monument, an edifice dedicated to the memory of a person or an event, usually taking the form of a sculptural work installed on a pedestal. The discussion about the invisibility of monuments implies that there is an expiry date for the monument’s performance of memory, related to the intricate set of circumstances that produced the monument in the first place. Referring to Musil’s observation, the scholar James E. Young argued that the reason for this invisibility is ‘the essential stiffness monuments share with all other images: as a likeness necessarily vitrifies its otherwise dynamic referent, a monument turns pliant memory to stone’. In this sense, monuments imply an act of termination since monuments are seldom erected for the living, but the affective nature of a monument keeps memory alive for posterity.

The affective nature of a monument is what is often neglected, a tendency also recognized by Young, who argued that ‘too often, a community’s monuments assume the polished, finished veneer of a death mask, unreflective of a current memory, unresponsive to contemporary issues.’ The supposed short-term familiarity of public monuments, Peter Carrier argued, is

---

11 According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a ‘monument’ has its origin in Middle English (denoting a burial place), deriving via French from the classical Latin monumentum, from monēre ‘to remind’ and stands for: a statue, building or other structure erected to commemorate a notable person or event; a statue or other structure placed over a grave in memory of the dead; a building, structure, or site that is of historical importance or interest; an enduring or memorable example of something. See Angus Stevenson (ed.), Oxford Dictionary of English, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
compounded by the long-term familiarity of a form of symbolic communication and cultivation of collective memory whose semantic and political function – urging us to understand and identify with, love or fear historical figures and events – harbours few surprises.  

Hence the generic form of monuments fails in the face of dramatic changes of human perceptions and means of communication. Today, however, artists like Christo and Jean-Claude and, more recently, Tatzu Nishi make us rediscover monuments with long-passed expiry-dates by changing their context and literally bringing them closer to us through the use of contemporary architectural space.

The longevity of using the symbolic monument genre for communicating social and political messages has been consistently used throughout history. The French historian Françoise Choay argued that a monument entails the concept of a defence against the traumas of existence and that the affective nature of a monument rests upon its being an ‘antidote to entropy, to the dissolving action of time on all things natural and artificial, it seeks to appease our fear of death and annihilation’.  

Hence, the power of a monument resides in its affective nature and the ability to stir up emotions in people with regards to the monument’s story. According to the Viennese art historian Aloïs Riegl, a monument in its oldest and most original sense is ‘a human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds or events (or a combination thereof) alive in the minds of future generations’.  

According to Riegl, the perception that future generations will have of a monument is dependent on the existing context, norms and values or the Kunstwollen or ‘artistic will’ of that epoch and how a monument responds to these. Riegl recognized three types of monuments: intentional, unintentional and monuments possessing ‘age-value’. In preservation, the first category, intentional monuments, is

---

19 Unlike historical value which relates to historical knowledge and is therefore restricted to a few monuments, age value has broader appeal since everyone can perceive it immediately. See Choay, The Invention, pp. 111–16.
specific because these had a more or less protected status in the course of history, unlike the historic monument, a term introduced in the nineteenth century with the emergent interest in the preservation of historical heritage and the recognition of ‘style’. The intentional monument commemorating a person existed in many cultures, but it was only with the Renaissance, Riegl argues, when the notion of beauty was given a prominent place, did people begin to understand and appreciate monuments for their commemorative value, as part of their heritage and not simply a mere display of patriotic recollections.20

An intentional monument in its original sense is not only an informative structure from a specific historical period, but also an engaging edifice invested with living memory. To this category belong only ‘those works which recall a specific moment or complex of moments from the past’.21 Much later, art historian Horst Janson made a distinction between three categories of Western monuments: the funerary monument, the monument to historical ideas and events and the monument commemorating great men.22 In principle, a commemorative monument is always built with the intention to last. However, this has often proved impossible and led many monuments to end up as mere signs of the failed infrastructure of memory they initially embodied, transforming them into uncanny or unwanted reality.23 Looking closely to two national memorial sites, the Vél d’Hiv in Paris and the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, Carrier stressed that the essential significance of commemorative projects is in their ‘non-prescriptive heuristic stimuli that enable individuals to encounter and understand both the past and their relation to the past via representations of it’.24

In memory studies, the term memorial is used interchangeably with the notion of a monument, and distinctions are rarely made between the two. This is also true in the field of architecture since designers often intertwine the two notions. In the late nineteenth century, there was a significant development in the design of public monuments, what Kirk Savage dubbed ‘spatial monument’, which moved from ‘an object of reverence to a space

21 Ibid., 24.  
24 Carrier, Holocaust Monuments, p. 230.
In addition, as Sergiusz Michalski signalled in his history of public monuments, the years before the First World War were characterized by a certain zest for experiments in commemorative sculptures. A more psychologically-oriented approach was introduced: the sculptural compositions descended from their high pedestals to stand eye to eye with their audience and enclose beholders into their space, thereby inviting more engagement with the monument.

Erika Doss demonstrated how in the American context the two words are used to depict a variety of commemorative projects, ranging from traditional stone obelisks to other facilities including parks, highways, libraries and so forth. This is the heritage of the post-WWII debate about ‘living’ memorials. The word ‘memorial’ appears to be more popular, but there is also a hint that designers seem to perceive monuments as celebratory whereas memorials are commonly understood as spaces of a profoundly contemplative nature that can offer more possibilities.

Some aimed to establish parameters that turn a war monument into a memorial and hence argued for a symbolic repertoire that focuses on the acceptance of violence and recognition of sacrifice that enhances understanding of a debt by the living and thus their will to reciprocate – a memorial as

A sustenance for memory achieving significance for the past sacrifice in order that future devotion will require further commitment to confirm the social order and establishing the key social relationships that make life worth having or at least worth bearing.

This distinction in purpose and content was also recognized by philosopher and critic Arthur Danto, who explained:

---

25 Savage commented on the monument to Abraham Lincoln (1887) in Chicago by sculptor Saint Gaudens and architect Stanford White. The monument, together with other monuments built at the time, was perceived as innovative since it combined sculptural monument with architectural solutions and allowed visitors to penetrate the sculpture. See Quentin Stevens and Karen A. Franck, Memorials as Spaces of Engagement: Design, Use and Meaning (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 14.
27 Ibid., p. 41.
Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present part of life. The memorial is a special precinct extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead. With monuments we honor ourselves.30

Danto situated his argument in a discussion about the well-known Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM), designed by Maya Lin and inaugurated in Washington, DC in 1982, representing a memorial to defeat instead of victory. Danto perceived the memorial as a moral connection between the Washington Monument (1885) as a symbol of triumph and the Lincoln Memorial (1922) as a temple of submission. While this is perhaps true in this specific context, it cannot be taken as a formula since many monuments do invite retrospection, and at the same time memorials are not necessarily non-celebratory quiet precincts. After the VVM was erected, the opposing views in the bitter debates regarding the memorial’s appearance and meaning marked its first years. Consisting of two long dark granite walls inscribed with the names of the dead, cutting into the landscape, the memorial constitutes an important development in the conception of an architecture of remembrance. The memorial embodies some of the ideas that changed the perception of what a monument should look like. The VVM invites participation on several levels and manages to remain in a contemplative and emotional realm, demonstrated by its ongoing acceptance and popularity. The memorial’s unobtrusive horizontality is also contradictory to its physical setting: the National Mall in Washington, DC. Similarly to the ‘counter-monument’ (Gegen-Denkmal) generation of artists, Lin claimed that she designs memorials and anti-monuments.31

In collective memory studies there is a tendency to see memorial spatial expressions primarily as characterized by the ‘primacy of the visual’.32 And so art historian Daniel Sherman writes that ‘sight is the only sense powerful enough to bridge the gap between those who hold a memory rooted in bodily experience and those who, lacking such “experience,” nonetheless

31 Doss, Memorial Mania, p. 39.
seek to share the memory.\textsuperscript{33} For the purposes of this study, the visual is the axes in the definition of a monument as an architectural or sculptural composition, or a combination thereof, dedicated to a person, event or particular act. A monument is intended primarily as a visual marker and a symbolic tool for communicating social and political ideas. This depiction relates to what has been understood as a ‘traditional’ sculptural monument. Accordingly, as a representation of its political, social and cultural context a memorial has a similar goal and designation, but it differs from a monument in several aspects. Different from a monument, a memorial is an architectural construct that is defined by its employment of space as an architectural tool. A memorial’s symbolic function is not necessarily apparent and often requires visitors’ engagement to be discovered. In other words, instead of only creating a representation of what is being commemorated, a memorial is a custom-designed experiential space in reference to its topic. In this way, a memorial space is inevitably engaging visitors on several levels, not only on the level of visual perception.

When engaged with the memorial, a visitor is exposed to its designed mnemonic power, participating as audience and performer at the same time. Furthermore, a memorial addresses the facilitation of mourning instead of only representing loss. A useful definition of public memorials is the one used in the field of transitional justice by which public memorials are ‘designed to evoke a specific reaction or set of reactions, including public acknowledgment of the event or people represented; personal reflection or mourning; pride, anger, or sadness about something that has happened; or learning or curiosity about periods in the past’.\textsuperscript{34} Although this definition is concerned only with the representation of past events, a contemporary memorial is usually involved with present events or, rather, the existence of the past in the present, and in some cases memorials deal with ongoing but also anticipated future events.\textsuperscript{35}


\textsuperscript{35} One example of this is a memorial planned for a location in Carlsbad, New Mexico, which is used as a transuranic waste site by New Mexico’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. In the year 2030, the storage facility will reach its maximum capacity. This provides the rationale for the memorial as a structure that would warn future generations of the lethal toxicity of the site. See Julia Bryan-Wilson, ‘Building a marker of nuclear warning’, in Robert S. Nelson and Margaret
Introduction

Scope and Boundaries

Technically, this book is focused on architecture as a space for remembering and is therefore concerned with the memorial genre as a designing process that aims to understand and respond to social currencies. The main questions I ask are concerned with the purpose of creating a memorial in a given location, its translation into an architectural concept and its materialization. To see how memorial form originated and evolved I focus on the following key points: how architectural space supports memory and commemoration, what innovative design solutions are proposed in the face of social and political challenges, and how are these solutions implemented. To a limited extent, the investigation explores what the impact of the design is once the memorial is installed in real time and space. In-depth research on the effects that discussed memorials have on their visitors and built environment will require research of its own. Before addressing these questions, I seek to situate memorialization in a wider context to be able to observe it more critically, and attend to several points which are relevant to the process of creating a memorial.

In an approach that explores different disciplines (namely history, psychology, anthropology and sociology), the aim is to establish a relevant framework for analysing contemporary projects. This framework constitutes the base for the analysis of the case studies that we will discuss. By focusing on contemporary memorial architecture in Europe and a few examples from the United States, I aim to take a closer look into processes of designing memorials today and how these translate memories and experiences of human loss into an architectural space. Memorials were selected to complement each other and to give a diverse range of practices in commemorative topics dedicated to war and contemporary violence. With the selection of projects gathered in this book I do not want to claim to make representative statements that apply for all Europe. Instead the discussion tries to offer a larger perspective


36 I address the spatial influence on the visitor based on several points: my own experience as a visitor (I purposefully conducted visits before pursuing any in-depth exploration, in that way trying to assimilate with a common visitor); information from existing reviews left by visitors; and information gained from interviews with employees about the most utilized routes and reactions of the visitors. Any more comprehensive and data-based observations would require a further research project.