

**Recent German Memorials to Jewish Victims of World War II**

**by**

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

The following thesis examines four 21<sup>st</sup>-century German memorials that commemorate the deported and murdered Jewish people of Europe during World War II: Jochen Kitzbihler's *Glaskubus* (2003) at Paradeplatz in Mannheim, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012) at the Hauptbahnhof in Kassel, Horst Hoheisel's *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* (2015), also found at the Hauptbahnhof in Kassel, and Luigi Toscano's *Gegen das Vergessen* (2015) which was initially exhibited at the Alte Feuerwache in Mannheim. I argue that the works in question are modern examples of counter-memorials that utilize forms and media technology of the 21st century that demonstrate a significant shift from the forms of commemoration implemented by the 20th-century counter-monument artist.

This thesis relies on the theories and research of a number of scholars. Background history and knowledge of German counter-memorials was provided by scholars such as James E. Young and Andreas Huyssen through their work on several 20<sup>th</sup>-century counter-memorials from the 1980s and 1990s, those being Jochen and Esther Gerzes' *Harburger Mahnmal gegen Faschismus* (1986) in Hamburg-Harburg, and Horst Hoheisel's *Aschrottbrunnen* (1987) and *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* (1993), both located in Kassel. Young and Huyssen's discussions concerning the use of traditional monumental forms to commemorate Holocaust victims and the invisibility of these traditional monuments have been taken into consideration when examining the four chosen works. To better understand the historical and cultural importance of the chosen memorials and the victims of whom they commemorate, information has been drawn from Aleida Assmann's discussion concerning the four formats of memory (cultural, individual, social, and political memory). Likewise, Suzanne Keen's work on narrative empathy in art and literature has been applied to the examination of the works in order to better understand the ways

in which the presentation of story and narrative about the victims may stimulate reflection and generate emotional reactions from viewers. These theories are necessary to determine the ways in which the chosen works could be considered provocative and reflective, and whether or not these memorials demonstrate forms and techniques of commemoration that have not been exhaustively used by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Holocaust memorial artist.

By examining the four recent German memorials in relation to the work that has previously been conducted concerning German counter-memorials of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I conclude that 21<sup>st</sup>-century German counter-memorials are becoming more personalized, more commemorative of individuals rather than a generalized group of victims. There has also been an increase in recent German memorials that utilize media technologies such as photography and audio and video recording technologies as a way of conveying information about historical events, delivering story and narrative, and promoting reflection in the viewers. Artists of Holocaust memorialization have been working with such forms and techniques in order to help viewers, especially those from younger generations, establish a better acknowledgement and understanding of these historical events, the people affected, and the magnitude of life and culture that was lost.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1980s, the question of how to properly commemorate the victims of World War II has become a highly debated topic amongst monument makers, sculptors, and creators of contemporary art in modern Germany. With the creation of every new memorial or monument, comes the criticism of whether the work appropriately honours the victims, whether this method of memorializing is effective, and whether it is aesthetically pleasing enough to not become a burden on the eyes of every day passersby. Indeed, Germany "... is in the grip of a relentless monument mania, which may not subside until every square mile has its own monument or memorial site, commemorating not some counterworld of love, but the one world of organized destruction and genocide" (Huysen, "Monumental Seduction" 182). The culture of Holocaust memorials in Germany is constantly evolving and the country's "fascination with memory" (Bonder, "On Memory" 62) has developed into a complex cultural and historical phenomenon which has come to encompass many academic disciplines. Artists employ the use of contemporary art in a number of ways to achieve certain effects, for example, "where the aim of some memorials is to educate the next generation and to inculcate in it a sense of shared experience and destiny, other memorials are conceived as expiations of guilt or as self-aggrandizement" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 2). Some works seek solely to commemorate and remember the victims of the Holocaust, whereas others seek to commemorate while simultaneously attempting to educate or even produce an empathetic emotional response from the viewers. These methods of commemoration, education, and reflection can be seen within the various mediums of contemporary art, for example commemorative monuments, modern-art exhibitions, and media art installations, which have been used as a means of honouring the victims of World War II. While it is less important and perhaps counter-productive to examine

the specific emotions that these memorials produce in their viewers, ultimately because it is impossible for two viewers to experience identical reactions, it is, however, beneficial to examine the ways in which “the monument reflects past history [and] what role the monument plays in current history” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 13).

While these memorials fall into the broad category of contemporary art, memorials themselves could be considered a specific subgenre, because “where contemporary art invites the viewers and critics to contemplate its own materiality, or its relationship to other works before and after itself, the aim of memorials is not to call attention to their own presence so much as to past events *because* they are no longer present. In this sense, Holocaust memorials attempt to point immediately beyond themselves” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 12). This use of contemporary art as a vehicle to promote reflection upon traumatic historical events demonstrates very well how this form of commemoration works to preserve the victims’ memories through the production and reception of these artistic works. This method of remembering is interesting because “these monuments demand an alternative critique that goes beyond questioning high and low art, tastefulness and vulgarity. Rather than merely identifying the movements and forms on which public memory is borne, or asking whether or not these monuments reflect past history accurately or fashionably, we turn to the many ways this art suggests itself as a basis for political and social action” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 12). Different works employ different mechanisms which strive to achieve these goals of political and social action, whether it is through education or personal and emotional reflection. The underlying mechanisms and techniques which work to successfully achieve these responses vary greatly and depend immensely on the artists, the mediums of production, and how recently the

works were produced. Some of these mechanisms which not only aim to commemorate, but also to educate and promote the reflection of the viewers, will be examined in this thesis.

This project will focus specifically on four contemporary pieces that commemorate the deportation of the Jewish people from various German cities during World War II. The works in question are: Jochen Kitzbihler's *Glaskubus* (2003), a commemorative monument that is located at Paradeplatz in Mannheim; *The Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012), a media art project created by Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller for dOCUMENTA (13), as well as Horst Hoheisel's *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* (2015) memorial project, both of which are located at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof; and Luigi Toscano's *Gegen das Vergessen* (2015), a modern art installation that was originally exhibited at the Alte Feuerwache in Mannheim. These works will be discussed on their own merits in order to determine the purpose and goals of each piece. These works will also be examined within the context of the "counter-memorial" (Young, "Holocaust Monuments" 1), which James E. Young describes as "... the most stunning and inflammatory response to Germany's memorial conundrum... : brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being [where] aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by passersby but to demand interaction; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet" (Young, "The Counter-Monument" 277).

This project argues that the works in question are modern examples of counter-memorials that utilize forms and media technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that demonstrate a significant shift from the forms of commemoration implemented by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century counter-monument artist. The research questions informing this thesis are: how does each work bridge the events of the past with the present? In what way do they attempt to educate or produce an emotional response

from the viewers? How do the contemporary works actively involve the participation of the viewers, and how does this affect the viewers' reception of these works? What other possible messages are being conveyed by the works? Do these 21<sup>st</sup>-century memorials introduce new forms and techniques of commemoration that were not used or present in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century? These research questions will help determine the possible goals of each artistic piece, so that the works may be better understood within the historical and cultural context of contemporary art that commemorates the deportation and murder of the Jewish people during World War II.

To reinforce the relevance of this project, this topic is worth examining because these works demonstrate unconventional methods of commemoration that are both original and recent. Furthermore, the chosen contemporary works, for the most part, have not yet been extensively studied and they have yet to be the subject of significant scholarly analysis. As Young points out, “in this age of mass memory production and consumption, in fact, there seems to be an inverse production between memorialization of the past and its contemplation and study” (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 273). As a result, it is necessary that these works be discussed in greater detail, so that their historical importance and cultural relevance to modern society, as well as the mechanisms used to educate the viewers, stimulate reflection, and produce an emotional response, may be uncovered and better understood. Each work respectively employs different mechanisms and techniques that promote reflection, convey information, or produce an emotional response from the viewers; therefore, it is essential to this thesis that they be examined to determine how the different mediums and methods of commemoration are successful at producing the various responses that they do. From an individual and “more specific level, these memorials also reflect the temper of the memory-artists' time, their place in aesthetic discourse, their media and materials” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 2), and these aspects will also be

considered. This project will contribute to the discussion within cultural and historical discourses of how different forms of unconventional, contemporary art can be used to commemorate victims of the past and preserve their memories, and whether or not this form of commemoration and preservation has been deemed effective by modern culture and society.

James E. Young's methods of memorial examination will be applied to this thesis project. For example, Young explains that within the context of what defines a typical Holocaust memorial, it is important to allow each individual work to "suggest its own definition, each to be grasped in its local context. At the heart of such a project rests the assumption that memory of the Holocaust is finally as plural as the hundreds of diverse buildings and designs by which every nation and people house remembrance" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* viii). He reinforces this statement by reminding his readers that "... every 'memorial text' generates a different meaning in memory" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* viii) by employing different mechanisms and techniques which, each in their own right, promote the reflection of the viewers. He also reminds his readers that the methods of reflection promoted by the various pieces depend greatly on the mediums that were used to create them, explaining that "contemporary film and video frame a survivor's recollection in the seemingly immediate images of the present moment. Memorials and museums constructed to recall the Holocaust remember events according to the hue of national ideals, the cast of political dicta" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* viii). Forms of commemoration which involve film and photography may establish a closer, more personal connection with the viewers, while more concrete and tangible monumental forms are normally erected as a symbol of a combined national or political sentiment.

Young also stresses the importance of having personally visited the Holocaust memorials which he intends to examine and discuss, stating that "insofar as I stand within the perimeter of

these memorial spaces, I become part of their performance, whether I like it or not. In describing these sites in narrative, I have unavoidably transformed plastic and graphic media into literary texts” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* xii). He explains that the descriptions of the memorials which he discusses will have an effect on how the viewers will subsequently experience these commemorative works. He contests that it is important for the viewers to remember that “without having visited these sites, they are dependent on my descriptions of them. Ultimately, this is also to recognize the integral part visitors play in the memorial text: how and what we remember in the company of a monument depends very much on who we are, why we care to remember, and how we see” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* xii). Essentially, Young believes that memorials are “dependent on visitors for whatever memory they finally produce” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* xii). According to Young, “public memory and its meanings depend not just on the forms and figures in the monument itself, but on the viewer’s response to the monument, how it is used politically and religiously in the community, who sees it under what circumstances, how its figures enter other media and are recast in new surroundings” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* xii); therefore, he concludes that by “having posited the visitor’s essential role in the memorial space, it would be hypocritical for me to write about any site I have not visited” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* xiii). Following Young’s lead, I have chosen works that I have visited.

## **Chapter 2: Theory and Methodology**

So as to better understand the development of Holocaust memorial culture in Germany since the 1980s, I will introduce several concepts and theories proposed by various scholars such as James E. Young and Andreas Huyssen who have already conducted thorough research on the topic. Before doing so, it is important to consider that although the events of World War II are receding further into the past, the number of Holocaust memorials in Germany is still increasing, and there is indeed a discrepancy between the number of memorials being created and the number of memorials that are critically studied (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 273).

German Holocaust memorial culture has developed into a complex phenomenon worthy of further research because the discussion of such a topic “raises issues and questions that are not merely architectural but also moral, ethical, and philosophical. Among them are the way history, memory, and trauma will be ‘appropriated,’ ‘re-presented,’ and ‘inhabited’” (Bonder, “On Memory” 65). The critique of the “traditional monument” (Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory”) in Germany since the 1980s arose from the understanding that a monument’s ethical responsibility is to create discussion and to pose questions about the past and future (Bonder, “On Memory” 64). Critics argued that the permanent, non-changing forms of the traditional monument were too dictatorial and reminiscent of the forms of remembrance used by the Nazis to commemorate their fascist convictions. Rather than promoting reflection in the viewers, these traditional monuments dictate what memories to commemorate and in what way they should be commemorated. The permanence of these monuments prevents them from evolving along with Germany’s society and culture, and forms of commemoration that may have been prominent in previous years may appear irrelevant, outdated, or even archaic to newer generations of viewers. These non-changing forms also offer the illusion that these monuments will always exist to



perform the memory-work for us, so we as viewers only return to them when we feel necessary. For these reasons, 21st-century artists of Holocaust memorials in Germany have become skeptical of implementing such totalitarian monumental forms to commemorate the very victims of such totalitarianism (Young, “Holocaust Monuments” 1).

To give an example of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century monument that could be considered traditional, one could examine the *Bismarck-Nationaldenkmal* located in the Tiergarten in Berlin. The monument was created in 1901 to commemorate Germany’s first chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. Although this commemorative work does not pertain to the events of the Holocaust, it is nonetheless useful to discuss with regard to the concept of the traditional monument. The *Bismarck-Nationaldenkmal* is a stone statue of Bismarck on a pedestal, surrounded by statue figures of Atlas, Siegfried, Germania, and Sibyl. The statue of Atlas holding a globe on his shoulders represents Germany’s status as a dominant world power at the end of the 19th century, and the statue of Siegfried forging a sword represents Germany’s industrial and military strength at this time. The statue of Germania conquering a panther represents Germany’s control of discordance and rebellion, and the statue of Sibyl reading the book of history is representative of knowledge (“Bismarck-Nationaldenkmal”). By creating a statue of Bismarck wearing his ceremonial Prussian outfit as Chancellor, this memorial makes it clear who is being commemorated and for what reason. ‘BISMARCK’ is engraved across the monument, so viewers who are unaware of this history are still able to infer for themselves who and what this monument is commemorating, and not much reflection is required. The monumental nature of this work, the large statue of Bismarck elevated on the pedestal, almost seems to demand respect from viewers. Just like the medium from which this work was created, the monument’s meaning also remains unchanged over time even as Germany’s national beliefs continue to evolve. Regardless of how future

generations may view these historical matters, the *Bismarck-Nationaldenkmal* will always depict Bismarck as a revered national leader, and it will always recall Germany as a 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial and military world leader. Such a commemorative work that makes use of permanent, unchanging forms of commemoration is a perfect example of a traditional, 20<sup>th</sup>-century monument that simply dictates political and national ideas of its time rather than demanding interaction and reflection from contemporary viewers.

When discussing the concept of the traditional monument, both Young and Huyssen introduce the idea of “monumental invisibility” (Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction” 184), where a monument is erected with the intention of being seen, but whose stiff permanence contrarily repels our attention because we assume that it will never change, that it will always be there to remind us of what happened (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 13). Many critics worry that the permanent forms of the traditional monument may actually obviate a community’s responsibility to remember the people and events that it commemorates, because the more we rely on monumental forms to remember people and events in history, the less obligated we feel to remember for ourselves (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 5). As Huyssen points out, “the more monuments there are, the more the past becomes invisible, the easier it is to forget: redemption, thus, through forgetting. Indeed, many critics describe Germany’s current obsession with monuments and memorials as the not so subtle attempt at *Entsorgung*, the public disposal of radio-active historical waste” (Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction” 184). When examined from this perspective, one could even argue that Germany’s obsession with Holocaust memorialization may actually be the result of the people’s or nation’s desire to suppress this memory (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 5).

In response to these traditional and invisible monumental forms, since the 1980s, creators of Holocaust memorials in Germany have been introducing new forms and techniques of commemoration that are implemented in order to prevent forgetting and to promote reflection in the viewers. Described as counter-memorials, the new forms of these memorials directly oppose traditional monumental forms by underlining the issues and limitations of such permanent, unchanging forms of monumentalism. Counter-memorials are essentially “conceived to challenge the very premise of the monument... They contemptuously reject the traditional forms and reasons for public memorial art, those spaces that either console viewers or redeem tragic events, or indulge in a facile kind of *Wiedergutmachung*, or reparation, that would purport to mend the memory of the murdered people” (Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory”). Initially created as a postmodern response to the totalitarian history of the traditional monument in Germany during the Nazi regime, the counter-memorial has come to alter the very definition of what a contemporary memorial should be comprised of (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 295). The counter-memorial supports the notion that memory must be understood as a phenomenon that is both historical and temporal, ranging from the artists’ motives for creating the work, to the dialogue that the work generates with and about the past, present, and future, and ultimately, the effect this has on the viewers (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 296).

On the other hand, although Young and Huyssen have contested adamantly against traditional monumental forms, it has been argued that even these permanent forms of commemoration have merit and are still relevant in today’s society. While these traditional monuments were created from a medium that was used by the totalitarian regime of the Nazis to commemorate their moments of victory and triumph, Bonder argues that even monuments of this nature created for the victims of World War II are nonetheless important for establishing

dialogue, promoting reflection, and demonstrating responsibility, even if they were not consciously created with such intentions in mind (Bonder, “On Memory” 69). Taking this into consideration, regardless of the medium in which a commemorative work was created, it is important to remember that contemporary art will never be able to compensate for such horrific acts of expulsion and genocide. Instead, contemporary art should be understood as “nonrepresentational mediums” (Bonder, “On Memory” 67) that can be used to promote the reflection and understanding of such traumatic events, and the ways in which we, as viewers, can apply these lessons to our own lives (Bonder, “On Memory” 65).

When discussing memorials from a cultural, historical, or political perspective, it is helpful to introduce the four formats of memory which Aleida Assmann discusses in her essay, “Four Formats of Memory: From Individual to Collective Constructions of the Past”. The first and most encompassing format of memory is cultural memory, the idea that culture and history can be symbolically portrayed through objects or things such as contemporary art, commemorative memorials, or media installations. In the context of the four chosen contemporary works to be analyzed within this thesis, each of the works functions as a sort of historical document within a bigger “cultural archive” (Assmann, “Four Formats of Memory” 31), because we as human beings tend to symbolically invest memory into things such as commemorative monuments and memorials (Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural” 111). The second format of memory to be discussed in regards to the chosen works is “individual memory” (Assmann, “Four Formats of Memory” 20) which Assmann describes as the individual memories of the people who were physically there to witness the events, emotions, and trauma firsthand. These “living memories” (Assmann, “Four Formats of Memory” 31) only exist so long as the person who witnessed the experience is alive to remember them. Once the individual is

gone, all that remains are the archived “historical documents, traces of the past that are irreversibly severed from living memories” (Assmann, “Four Formats of Memory” 31). The third format of memory is political or national memory, the phenomenon of nations and cultures commemorating triumphant and traumatic events in history. In accordance with this, Young reminds us that different nations and cultures choose to memorialize historical events differently, therefore in order to understand the ways in which a memorial commemorates a specific moment in history, it is important to look at when the memorial was made and the ways in which the nation and culture of that time chose to remember that specific historical event (Young, *The Texture of Memory* viii). The final format of memory is social or generational memory, the idea where people of different generations will differ from one another concerning accumulated experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. For this reason, it is reasonable to conclude that people of different ages and nationalities will have different reactions to the various contemporary works (Assmann, “Four Formats of Memory” 23). In relation to generational memory and the traditional monument, Huyssen warns that “while the monumental may always be big and awesome, with claims to eternity and permanence, different historical periods obviously have distinct experiences of what overwhelms, and their desire for the monumental will differ both in quality and quantity” (Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction” 191). Taking into consideration that today’s culture is arguably one that is dominated by images on screens, constantly flickering to pique our interest and attention, some artists have chosen to work with this obsession of fleeting images and videos so that they can provide today’s generations with a commemorative media art piece that offers a rich sensory experience (Huyssen, “Monument and Memory” 225).

As examined earlier, the concept of generational memory has always posed problems and challenges for creators of Holocaust memorials in Germany since the 1980s, because the

permanent and unchanging forms of traditional monument have a tendency to appear irrelevant and strange to newer generations of viewers (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 47). Today, generational memory is posing a new problem for contemporary artists and creators of Holocaust memorials, because we are experiencing a period in “time when the generation of witnesses and survivors is slowly fading, and new generations are growing up for whom the Holocaust is either mythic memory or cliché” (Huysen, “Monument and Memory” 256). According to Huysen, this is why contemporary artists must now produce works that promote emotional responses from this generation of younger viewers, because “it is our concern and responsibility to prevent forgetting, we have to be open to the powerful effects that a melodramatic soap opera might exert on younger minds of a younger generation which could find its way toward testimony, documentary, and historical treatise precisely via a fictionalized and emotionalized Holocaust made for prime time television” (Huysen, “Monument and Memory” 256). This technique which Huysen describes as “mimetic approximation” (Huysen “Monument and Memory 259) is a method of using emotional reactions to dramatized events in order to bridge the temporal gap between the viewers and the victims and to make them reflect on these historical events that actually took place (Huysen, “Monument and Memory” 259). Similarly, Young is also interested in memorials’ ability to generate emotion, quoting Marianne Doezema who wrote that “the public monument... has a responsibility apart from its qualities as a work of art. It is not only the private expression of an individual artist; it is also a work of art created for the public, and therefore can and should be evaluated in terms of its capacity to generate human reactions” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 13). Young argues, however, that such human reactions refer not only to emotional responses to contemporary art, but also the ways in which a work of art

stimulates us to reflect upon historical events, their consequences, and how present and future generations are able to learn from this (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 13).

In response to a memorial's ability to generate emotional reactions, Suzanne Keen explains how narrative in literature and art has the potential to produce empathy for the characters and people which it portrays, something which she describes as an affective emotional response. Keen describes empathy as "a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect... provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's conditions, or even by reading. Mirroring what a person is expected to feel in that condition or context, empathy is thought to be a precursor to its semantic close relative, *sympathy*" (Keen "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 208). She argues that narrative within literature, art, and film has the potential to influence the way we feel towards others and it often has a direct impact on the emotions that will be generated regarding the people depicted within that specific work. Interestingly, empathy was originally introduced into the English language in the 20th century as a translation of the German word, *Einfühlung*, "which meant the process of 'feeling one's way into' an art object or another person" (Keen, "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 209). At this time, English novelists had come to define "the purpose of art as, in part, 'the awakening, intensifying, or maintaining of definite emotional states'" (Keen, "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 210). Although outdated and highly debated by the likes of Bertolt Brecht and others, this understanding of the relationship between contemporary art and human emotions can nonetheless be applied to the concept of a memorial's capacity to stimulate reflection and empathetic reactions (Keen, "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 210). While it is interesting to examine the forms and techniques that are implemented by contemporary artists of Holocaust memorials in order to generate emotional reactions and to pique the interest of younger generations of viewers, it is also important to consider that this

technique of promoting reflection and empathetic responses is not always successful, because sometimes there is a discrepancy between the viewers and their capacity to empathize with the narrative demonstrated within the contemporary work, possibly “impeded by inattention, indifference, or personal distress” (Keen, “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” 213). Keen explains that members of a certain group may be less reluctant to demonstrate empathetic reactions towards those who they perceive as different regarding “age, race, gender, weight, disabilities, and so forth. Human beings, like primates, tend to experience empathy most readily and accurately for those who seem like us” (Keen, “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” 214). Keen also reminds her readers that an individual’s personal experiences, perceptions, and attitudes will play a role in how deeply and accurately he or she is able to empathize with the depicted characters and people, therefore not everyone will demonstrate such reactions of empathy and understanding (Keen, “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” 214).

The various theories proposed by the different scholars of monuments, memory, art, and literature will help sharpen our understanding of the forms and techniques implemented by the artists in the contemporary works. This will also help us to determine whether or not these methods of commemoration could be considered new and divergent from those methods examined within 20<sup>th</sup>-century German counter-memorial culture. These forms of commemoration will be examined along with the mechanisms which educate the viewers, stimulate emotional responses, and preserve the memories of the victims, in order to determine the purpose of their use and why they are indeed successful at producing the responses that they do. The history of the works’ creation, as well as the purpose for creating each piece, will be examined so as to better understand the forms and mechanisms employed by the artists through the works. Since most of the works to be discussed are fairly recent, a lot of the research will be



obtained by examining sources such as newspaper articles and online blogs pertaining to the various works. When examining the works, many things will be taken into consideration: the artists, the artists' motives for creating the works, the intended purpose of the works, the organizations who funded the works, the medium in which they were created, their time of creation, the initial responses to the works, the significance of their locations, and existing literature written about the works. These considerations are necessary to determine whether or not each memorial fits into Young's definition of the counter-memorial, based on the requirements and research he provides in his literature. Furthermore, Assmann's discussion concerning the four formats of memory will be applied to the historical, cultural, and political aspects of the chosen contemporary works. As stated by Young, it is important to "enlarge the life and texture of Holocaust memorials to include: the time and place in which they were conceived, their literal construction amid historical and political realities; their finished forms in public spaces; their places in the constellation of national memory; and their ever-evolving lives in the minds of their communities and of the Jewish people over time" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 14). Continuing, he reminds that "we should ask to what ends we have remembered... For were we passively to remark only the contours of these memorials, were we to leave unexplored their genesis and remain unchanged by the recollective act, it could be said that we have not remembered at all" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 15).

In light of the proposed theories, further research questions that should be taken into consideration are: in what ways do the chosen contemporary works fit into Young's definition of the counter-monument? How do these memorials combat the idea of the invisible monument mentioned by Young and Huyssen? Concerning Assmann's theory of cultural memory, how could the notions of individual, political, and social memory relate to each of the works? What

historical conclusions are portrayed through the works, and what lessons can be drawn from this? In what way do these works tell a story, and if so, what mechanisms persuade viewers to empathize with the victims? Are the characters within the works fictional or real, and does this affect the viewers' capacity to empathize with these people? Along with the research questions proposed in the previous chapter, these questions will help to sharpen our understanding of each of the works' ability to generate dialogue and discussion about the past, present, and future. In the following chapter, various counter-monuments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that have been thoroughly discussed by Young and Huyssen will be introduced, so as to provide concrete examples of progressive and provocative commemorative memorials that have shaped the way critics and artists in Germany consider the commemoration of victims of World War II.

### Chapter 3: 20<sup>th</sup>-Century German Counter-Memorials and Monuments to Jewish Victims of World War II

In 1986, the city of Hamburg invited conceptual artists Jochen and Esther Gerz to design and erect a “*Gegen Denkmal*... a ‘Monument against Facism, War, and Violence—and for Peace and Human Rights’” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 28). The artists’ primary concerns were to build a monument that would “commemorate such worthy sentiments without ameliorating memory altogether. That is, how would their monument emplace such memory without usurping the community’s will to remember? Their second concern was how to build an antifascist monument without resorting to what they regarded as the fascist tendencies in all monuments” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 28). The result was a “twelve-meter-high, one-meter-square pillar... made of hollow aluminum, plated with a thin layer of soft, dark lead” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 30) that was located in an urban shopping district in the hamlet of Harburg. There was inscription near the base in German, French, English, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Turkish that invited the citizens to sign and deface it. As the monument was covered in graffiti, it was occasionally lowered into the ground by cables, into a hole as deep as the monument was high so that a clean section that had been higher up could be written and drawn on. In September of 1991, when it had completely vanished, the spot of its burial was covered with a headstone that now serves as a reminder to the Gerzes’ monument against fascism that once stood tall, but had now vanished from everything but memory (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 30). Unlike the traditional monument that essentially relieves its visitors of the responsibility to remember traumatic events, “the vanishing monument will have returned the burden of memory to visitors: one day, the only thing left standing here will be the memory-tourist, forced to rise and to remember for himself” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 30).

Although the city of Hamburg offered the Gerzes' a nice, sun-kissed spot in a park to display their monument, the artists rejected this location, deciding instead upon a busy, urban shopping district, because they did not want their work to "be in refuge of memory, tucked away from the hard edges of urban life, but one more eyesore among others on a blighted landscape" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 30). Not long after the monument was erected, before it even had the chance to disappear, it managed to stir up much controversy within the community because many were confused as to why this strange monument was being lowered into the ground instead of standing tall and unchanged. Others considered the black pillar to be a protruding eyesore, like "a great black knife in the back of Germany, slowly being plunged in, each thrust solemnly commemorated by the community, a self-mutilation" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 34). Others began to write offensive things on the monument, for example swastikas and "'Ausländer raus'" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 37). According to Young, it was important that both the negative and positive inscriptions be retained, because by doing this, "the countermonument acknowledges that all monuments ultimately make such emendations part of their memorial texts. That is, the monument records the response of today's visitors for the benefit of tomorrow's, thus reminding all of their shared responsibility in that the recorded responses of previous visitors at a memorial site become part of one's own memory" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 37). While many were quick to complain about the monument's ugliness, critics remained uncertain of what it was exactly that repelled people so much. Perhaps it was the fact that the monument was created to embody and capture the "grotesque sentiments" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 35) of society and reflect it back onto its people. Perhaps it was the unavoidable feeling it projected that it objectified "for the artists not only the Germans' secret desire that all these monuments just hurry up and disappear, but also the urge to strike

back at such memory, to sever it from the national body like a wounded limb” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 34). Today, having completely vanished into the ground, the Gerzes’ monument in Harburg simply serves as a reminder to those who were there to witness its temporary stance against fascism and to those who were there to contribute to its defacement. Now the viewers must call upon themselves to remember the traumatic events and the victims that the memorial commemorated, as there is no longer a monument present to perform the memory work for them.

According to Jochen Gerz, the primary task of his counter-monument was to stimulate “in the viewer a particular complex of ideas, emotions, and responses which then come to exist in the viewer independently of further contact with the piece of art” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 32). Once its task is complete and the monument has performed its social duties, it is free to disappear from the public’s view. As Young writes:

How better to remember forever a vanished people than by the perpetually unfinished, ever-vanishing monument? As if in mocking homage to national forebears who planned the Holocaust as a self-consuming set of events—that is, intended to destroy all traces of itself, all memory of its victims—the Gerzes have designed a self-consuming memorial that leaves behind only the remembered and the memory of a memorial. (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 31)

The Gerzes’ monument was meant to “rise up symbolically against fascism before disappearing” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 34), so that once it had vanished, the people would then be responsible to perform the monument’s task themselves, to take the stance against fascism and injustice. It serves as a reminder that memorials and monuments are not capable of literally taking the stance against injustice, but rather because the memorial’s job is a symbolic one, this

is a task for which the people themselves are responsible. As Young puts out, “the countermonument accomplishes what all monuments must: reflect back to the people—and thus codifies—their own memorial projections and preoccupations” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 36).

Another example of a German counter-memorial is “the negative-form monument” (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 288), for example the *Aschrottbrunnen* memorial created by the artist Horst Hoheisel at the City Hall Square in Kassel. The memorial reminds its viewers of the twelve-meter-high, neo-Gothic, pyramid-style fountain that was built by architect Karl Roth in 1908 in that very square, a project funded by a local Jewish businessman, Sigmund Aschrott. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1939, the fountain was destroyed during the night by the Nazis who had condemned it “as the ‘Jews’ Fountain” (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 288), leaving behind an empty basin as a reminder of what once stood. It was two years later that the first of Kassel’s Jews were deported from the city and several thousand more the following year, all of whom were murdered (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 288). In 1943, the empty basin in the town square was filled with soil and flowers were planted inside, what local citizens called “‘Aschrott’s Grave’” (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 288). In the 1960s, the city of Kassel erected a new fountain in the town square where the old fountain once stood, however this one was not pyramid-shaped as the original had been. By this time, most of the locals could no longer recall the fountain’s history, and when questioned about it, many assumed it had been rebuilt because the British had destroyed it during World War II (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 288). In 1984, the ‘Society for the Rescue of Historical Monuments’ invited Hoheisel to redesign the fountain at the town square, so that it would remember Aschrott and Kassel’s Jewish history. Hoheisel wanted to create this “new fountain as a mirror image of the

old one, sunk beneath the old place in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens so that such things never happen again” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 43). According to the artist, he “rebuilt the fountain sculpture as a hollow concrete form after the old plans and for a few weeks displayed it as a resurrected shape at City Hall Square before sinking it, mirror-like, twelve meters deep into the groundwater” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 45).



Image 1. Photo of Hoheisel’s *Aschrottbrunnen* taken from the steps of Kassel’s Rathaus, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

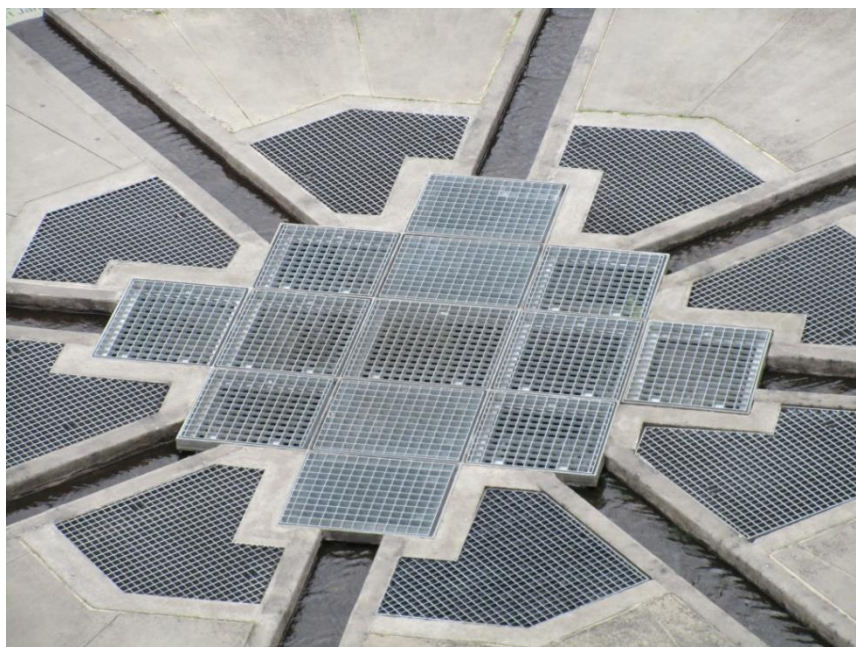


Image 2. Close-up of the inverted fountain with water draining beneath the city, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

Today, inside Kassel's City Hall, one can find a commemorative bronze tablet to Aschrott, as well as images and descriptions of the original fountain from 1908 and the reason for its absence. When approaching the negative-form space that comprises the monument, water can be heard flowing through underground passages beneath one's feet, and the noise intensifies when standing directly where the fountain was lowered into the ground. Aside from the plaques and informative descriptions, the sound of rushing water is the viewer's only clue that there is something foreboding about this location and it is this realization that promotes reflection upon the city's historical events and their consequences. When discussing this employment of visual negative-form space in combination with the sound of the fountain's water rushing beneath the memorial, it is helpful to relate this to the concept of synaesthesia, described as "the ritual process of bringing many or all the sense into play simultaneously" (Tilley 162). The sound of the rushing water is very important for the *Ashrottbrunnen* because without it, viewers who are unaware of Kassel's Jewish history would most likely not be able to infer for themselves that there was once a fountain here. The visual employment of negative-form in combination with the sound of water flowing beneath the memorial alert viewers to the fact that there is something strange about this site, that there is indeed something hidden beneath the ground. According to Hoheisel, by "coming into touch with the groundwater, the history of the Aschrott Fountain continues not over but under the city. As an emblem of the Holocaust, the history of the fountain becomes the subterranean history of the city... the groundwater of German history may well be poisoned—not by the Jews, but by the Germans themselves in their murder of the Jews" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 45). Originally destroyed with the intention of being forever forgotten, today the very absence of the *Aschrottbrunnen* from the City Hall Square is what commemorates



and preserves the city's Jewish history prior to and during the Nazi regime (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 45).



Image 3. View of the *Aschrottbrunnen* from a second floor wing of Kassel's Rathaus, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)



Image 4. Miniature-scale replica of the *Aschrottbrunnen* found on the second floor of Kassel's Rathaus, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

The final example of a well-documented 20<sup>th</sup>-century German counter-memorial is the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, another memorial project created by Kassel's Hoheisel and located at the

city's Hauptbahnhof. This memorial commemorates the Jews of Kassel who were subjected to three separate sets of deportations during the Nazi regime. Out of the three sets, more than 2500 Jewish people were deported from platforms 13 and 14 of the city's Hauptbahnhof. The first set of deportations of Jewish people from Kassel occurred on December 9th, 1941, where 1024 men, women, and children were gathered at the city's Hauptbahnhof in order to be extradited to the Riga ghetto in Latvia. Out of the 1024 people, 475 were residents from Kassel, and 549 came from other cities, towns, and villages in the surrounding area. From this first set of deportations, only 137 people survived. The second set of deportations occurred on June 1st, 1942, where over 1000 Jewish people were shipped from Kassel's train station to the Majdanek concentration camp in Lublin, Poland and to the Sobibór extermination camp, also in Poland. From the 1000 Jewish people who were shipped to these 2 camps, 87 were from Kassel. Approximately 900 people from this second set of deportations were murdered, and only one survived. The third and final set of deportations from Kassel's Hauptbahnhof occurred on September 7th, 1942, where 753 Jewish people, mostly elderly, were sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto in Terezín, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic). Some of these people were more than 80 years old, and out of the 753 who were extradited, 323 were residents of Kassel. The three sets of deportations were organized by the city's police force. Around two to three weeks before the deportations, the Gestapo issued declarations to the Jewish residents of Kassel, stating that they now owned all their property and all their belongings, except for 50 kg worth of luggage which the Jews were allowed to keep. Shortly after they were informed of the deportations, Kassel's Jews were forced to go to tax offices in the city in order to hand over the keys to their homes. A day or two before the deportations, the police took the city's Jewish residents from their homes and brought them to the Hauptbahnhof. While detained at this location, these people were

belittled, physically assaulted, and verbally abused by the Gestapo. They were then transported to the Schulkomplex an der Schillerstraße (today known as the Arnold-Bode-Schule in Kassel), where their belongings which they were permitted to bring with them were thoroughly searched. Valuables such as money, watches, and jewelry were taken from them, and they were then forced to strip naked in order to have their bodies examined. Two days later, the detained Jewish people were sent back to the city's Hauptbahnhof, from where they were deported (Richter).



Image 5. Hoheisel's *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)



Image 6. Dates and destinations for the three deportations of Kassel's Jews, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)



Image 7. Alternative view of the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

Initiating the project in 1991 and completing it in 1993, Hoheisel visited schools throughout the city and asked local students to help research the city's former Jewish residents. The students were asked to visit historical locations throughout the city and research the lives of Kassel's Jews by gathering information from old Jewish communities and by talking to residents who were once neighbours to these deported and murdered people. The stories of the lives and deaths of these people were then written onto pieces of paper and wrapped around stones, the stones representative of the Jewish tradition of placing stones on the graves of the deceased. These stones and stories were then placed into an archival bin. The number of stories quickly accumulated, and the stones were transported to the Kasseler Hauptbahnhof, where the finished project has become a permanent historical installation (Young, "Horst Hoheisel's Counter-memory"). The stories, names, and pictures of these people have also been collected into a book, *Namen und Schicksale der Juden Kassels*, and this book can be seen in the display, sitting atop the pile of stones that are wrapped in paper. The archival bin containing the stones and stories located specifically at the city's Hauptbahnhof "marks both the site of deportation and the community's education about its murdered Jews, known and emblemized primarily by their absence, the void they have left behind" (Young, "Horst Hoheisel's Counter-memory").



Image 8. Close-up of a memory stone, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)



Image 9. Close-up of memory stones wrapped in information and stories about Kassel's deported and murdered Jews, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)



Image 10. Book, *Namen und Schicksale der Juden Kassels*, sitting atop the pile of stones in the memorial's glass case, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

The *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* is present within the pre-recorded video for the 2012 *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, as the memorial had already long-become a permanent installation at the Kasseler Hauptbahnhof before Cardiff and Miller began filming for their dOKUMENTA (13) media project. This demonstrates how the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* memorial project, more than 10 years later, is still evolving and being incorporated into new memorials which utilize new methods of commemoration that did not exist just a decade earlier. According to Hoheisel, “the most important space of Holocaust memory has not been that in the ground or above it, but that space between the memorial and viewer, between viewers and their own memory” (Young, “Horst Hoheisel’s Counter-memory”). In the case of the negative-form monument and the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, Hoheisel has produced commemorative contemporary works that embody history by forcing the viewers to pose questions about their community’s past, present, and future. Viewers are forced to reflect for themselves on the artist’s intentions, and what kind of dialogue he is trying to establish through the creation of these works. Viewers must “look within themselves for memory” (Young, “Horst Hoheisel’s Counter-memory”) and are responsible for coming to their own historical, political, and philosophical conclusions with regard to the

memories of the victims and the importance of these memorials within their spaces. Unlike the traditional monument which seems to impose its implied memory onto viewers, viewers are themselves responsible for determining what memories these memorials intend to commemorate, and as a result, not every viewer will accept such responsibility. This very notion of looking inwards and discovering one's individual responsibility to reflect upon traumatic historical events affirms "that the life of memory exists primarily in historical time: in the activity that brings monuments into being, in the ongoing exchange between people and their historical markers, and finally, in the concrete actions we take in light of a memorialized past" (Young, "The Counter-Monument" 296).

#### Chapter 4: Jochen Kitzbihler's *Glaskubus* (2003)

The *Glaskubus* is a monument that was created by the German sculptor Jochen Kitzbihler in 2003 and is located at the Paradeplatz in Mannheim, Germany. This contemporary piece commemorates the lives and stories of the Jewish people who lived in the city of Mannheim prior to and during the Nazi regime. The monument consists of a transparent, glass cube that is 3 metres in height and width, where the names of 2240 of the near-7000 Jewish people who were deported from the city during World War II are engraved on this inside of the glass so that they can only be properly read when viewed from the opposite side of the cube. The viewers must look past the backwards writing that is directly in front of them in order to read the names of the deported Jewish people written on the other side of the monument.



Image 11.  
Kitzbihler's  
*Glaskubus*  
monument, July  
2016 (photo  
credit: Richard  
Barnett)



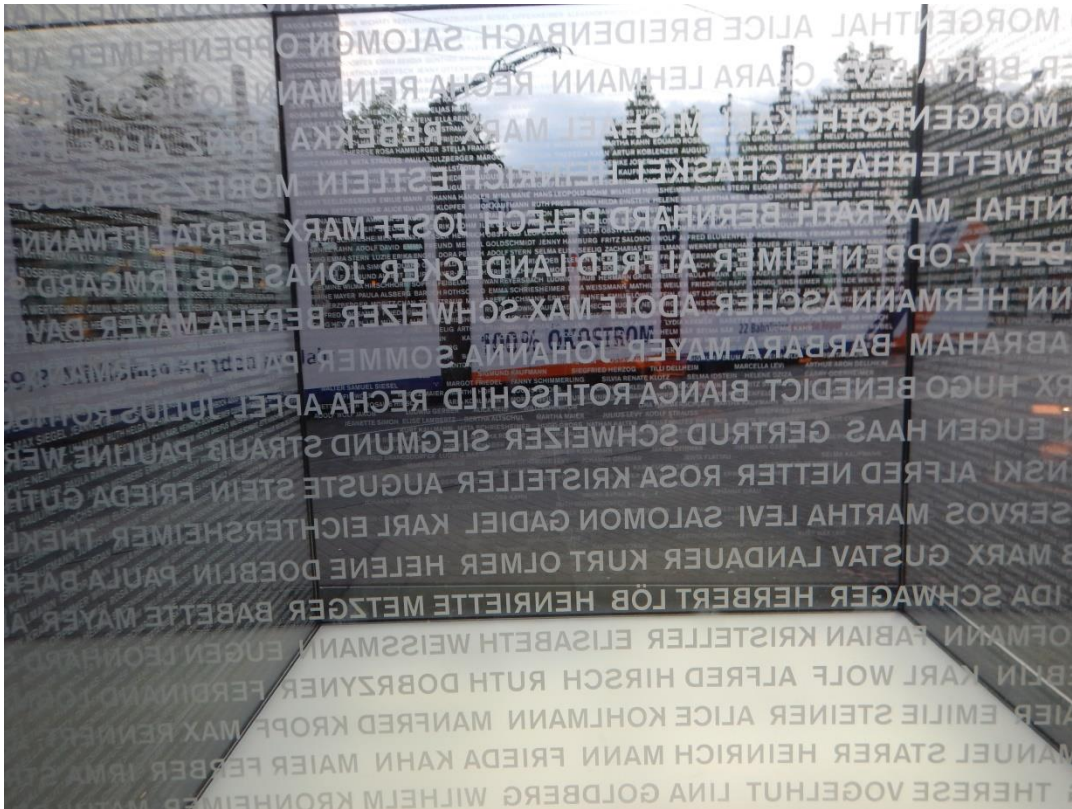


Image 12.  
Backwards  
mirror-writing  
of victims'  
names  
engraved on  
the *Glaskubus*,  
July 2016  
(photo credit:  
Richard  
Barnett)

Talk of erecting a memorial specifically to commemorate the Jewish people of Mannheim who were deported and murdered by the Nazis first began in 1990, when representatives from the city asked 40 teenagers to work in groups in order to uncover the destruction of the city's Jewish community and population during the Nazi regime. When the work was completed, an exhibition was opened on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1991 and was displayed at different schools and other locations around the city. The findings were incorporated into a book, *“Auf einmal da waren sie weg”*: jüdische Spuren in Mannheim: mit einer Gedenkliste jüdische Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft aus Mannheim by Klemens Hotz, Leonore Köhlern, and with the help of the Stadtjugendamt Mannheim, which lists the Mannheim deportees. In order to further the research needed to erect a monument that would properly commemorate the Jewish people of Mannheim in a manner that was found appropriate, some of the survivors were also interviewed, and the work was collected and made into documentary YouTube videos (Hirsch 93). The interviewed survivors explained that they did not want to

disappear into an archive of written documents and information, but rather wanted to be given a suitable location within their city where they would be commemorated, acknowledged, and remembered by all those who happen to pass by (Hirsch 94). Indeed, the collecting of the names of Mannheim's former Jewish population, along with the information concerning their everyday lives in the city and their ultimate fates perpetrated by the Nazis, proved to be a long and difficult task, one which will never actually be complete, because there will always be one more name to be added to the list of people who were banished from their homes and places of work (Hirsch 97).



Image 13. Informative plaque found at the site of the *Glaskubus* monument, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

The city council's first decision was to erect a memorial at the Mannheimer Hauptbahnhof which would symbolize and commemorate the deportations of the Jewish populace from the city. However, many were in agreement that the monument should be given a more central location within the city's centre. For this reason, Paradeplatz, arguably Mannheim's

busiest and most centralized location, was chosen as the location where the monument would be erected (Hirsch 95). Located at the very heart of the city's centre, the monument would be very obvious and ultimately unavoidable to all those walking through the city's bustling shopping district. Moreover, Paradeplatz had been the location of many Jewish shops, offices, and homes (Mannheim.de). The chosen location was revealed in the summer of 2000, some 60 years after the deportation of the Jewish populace. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2001, the local city council donated 895,000 German Marks to aid with the realization of the memorial project, 95,000 of which would be dedicated to the initial preparatory work (Hirsch 96).

In effect, the city wanted the monument to project the "Visualisierung des Grauens" (Hirsch 98) and the "Verdeutlichung des Verlusts" (Hirsch 98), or in other words, the visualisation of dread and the elucidation of loss that was experienced by the Jewish people as they were being expelled from their homes and communities, the very city that they helped develop into the thriving commercial and cultural hub that we know today. 10 artists, some well-established, others less so, were invited to present their proposals to the city; only 5 of them were recommended for the pursuit of this memorial project. After a request from the contestants to extend the deadline of the competition, 20 more proposals were accepted. After much consideration, Jochen Kitzbihler, one of the original 5 selected artists, was chosen for his proposal of the *Glaskubus* memorial project (Hirsch 98). Kitzbihler's proposal was not just chosen because of its compelling design, but also because of his consideration for the monument's location in regards its design. Rather than being placed in direct parallel with the street, his glass cube is instead rotated on an angle so that one of the corners is pointing directly to the centre of the Paradeplatz (Tourist-Mannheim.de).



Image 14. Sunken *Glaskubus* monument, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)



Image 15. Alternative view of sunken *Glaskubus* monument, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

In order to depict the overwhelming sensations of dread and loss experienced by the Jewish people of Mannheim during the Nazi regime, Kitzbihler implemented several unique techniques and mechanisms that, in combination, ultimately work to deliver these sensations. In order to ensure that the cube would attract the attention of commuters and shoppers, the artist

installed provocative, colourful lights that help to draw in the viewer's gaze, an effect that is especially amplified at night, when the illuminated cube secures its position as the true focal point of attention amongst the shops and businesses. Although the *Glaskubus* may be impressive to look at, a hint of dissonance was added to the commemorative work by sinking the cube ever-so-slightly into the ground, which makes it look almost tilted and slightly off-balance. This dissonance creates a lack of harmony between the *Glaskubus* and its urban surroundings, which, in addition to the names of the deported people that are written from the inside of the cube in order to deliver the renowned mirror-effect, are essentially the mechanisms that prompt the desired feeling of incongruity, the feelings of dread and loss that ultimately hinder this work from being interpreted as a traditional monumental piece. The thousands of names of the people that are engraved onto the cube demonstrate the entirety of such a significant loss of culture and life from the city of Mannheim (Hirsch 99). Another mechanism that creates a sense of dissonance is the employment of empty space within the centre of the transparent cube, where the emptiness symbolizes the very emptiness that is now present in the city itself. This is the loss of life and culture, the loss of such a great number of people who once belonged to the city just like anyone else, but were tracked down, deported, and finally murdered. Today, these people are only present within the city's dark history, and the only way their memory can possibly be kept alive is through the acknowledgment and commemoration from present and future generations. The illumination of the cube at night also symbolizes Mannheim's once flourishing and prosperous Jewish community that existed prior to the rise of the Nazis. The lights that shine through the cube cast shadows of the engraved names onto the ground, so that they are finally distinguishable to the viewers who must normally strain to decipher the backwards writing (Mannheim.de).



Image 16. View of the *Glaskubus* amongst Mannheim's shops, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)



Image 17. View of the *Glaskubus* amongst Mannheim's shops at night, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

This contemporary piece is significant not only for the city of Mannheim, but also for the entire region of Baden-Württemberg, because Mannheim's pre-World War II Jewish community was recognized as one of the strongest and liveliest in the entire region of Baden. The city was once home to 6972 Jews, and the city's main synagogue was comparable in size, beauty, and grandeur to that of Berlin and other major metropolitan cities in Germany. By the end of the National Socialist regime, the number of Mannheimer Jews had dwindled to a mere 120 people.

Those who were publicly involved in social and cultural projects throughout the city were all deported, and all evidence of Judaism and Jewish culture had been destroyed (Hirsch 10). More than 2000 of the Mannheim's near-7000 Jews were murdered in concentration camps during the Third Reich (Mannheim.de). One of the most frightening realizations is that among the perpetrators who were personally and directly responsible for the extermination of these people was one of their very own neighbours, Rudolf Höß, a notorious commandant of Auschwitz who had actually lived in Mannheim during his childhood (Hirsch 11). Kitzbihler is also from the area, having grown up in the neighbouring city of Ludwigshafen (Hirsch 99).

The *Glaskubus* memorial of Mannheim proves to be a very good example of a contemporary art piece that employs mechanisms and techniques that force viewers to reflect on the work for themselves, instead of simply being told what to think and feel. As previously mentioned, the fact that the cube is sunk into the ground, rather than being elevated above the street and the viewers who happen to pass by, generates a sense of incongruity that can generate feelings of confusion, dread, and loss, reflective of the emotions experienced firsthand by the Jews of Mannheim as they were being deported from their city. The writing engraved on the inside of cube that appears backwards forces the viewers to slow down, pause, examine the work, and reflect on the message that is being conveyed by the piece. The *Glaskubus*' busy location also negates the idea of the traditional monument, where one would normally find such monumental forms in pristine, clean parks, elevated on a pedestal, just out of reach of the viewers who pass by and pay attention only when they feel it is convenient or necessary. Located at the Paradeplatz, students have no choice but to be subjected to the *Glaskubus* as they pass by on the Straßenbahn while on their way to school, business people have no option but to walk by the monument while on their way to work, shoppers are unable to avoid the work as they

manoeuvre in and out of the many stores that line the street. Viewers are able to stop and examine the monument close up, they are able to run their hands across it - they are able to feel the contemporary work for themselves, both physically and emotionally. The many names lined across the inside of the glass are reminiscent of Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* from 1982 that is located in Washington, D.C. Lin's work also employs the use of names engraved across a long wall that stretches 75.21 metres, where viewers can approach the memorial and examine the names of the U.S. armed soldiers who fought in the Vietnam War. Being one of the first commemorative memorials from the 20<sup>th</sup> century to employ the use of many names, one can argue that the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* has provided influence and inspiration for later works such as Kitzbihler's. In the case of the *Glaskubus*, the names engraved on the monument represent the individual stories of the people who were deported from their homes, and viewers can take these names home and learn about these peoples' stories if they so wish. Viewers who might happen to recognize a name or two upon first glance will suddenly be reminded of these people's stories, perhaps because they are connected through familiar ties, or maybe because they had already learned about this particular person's story while conducting research for school or other cultural projects. By making itself nearly unavoidable to anyone who may happen to pass by, and through the use of provocative lighting that draws the viewers' attention away from the tall buildings and rushing people, the idea of the invisible monument is negated. The *Glaskubus* may indeed be transparent, but it is certainly anything but invisible. While many viewers may argue that the glass medium and bright lights make for an aesthetically pleasing contemporary work, which Young explains is often the very opposite of what the counter-monument generally works to achieve, this contemporary piece none the less proves to be a successful example of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century counter-monument.



Kitzbihler's decision to include the individual names of over 2000 victims onto the *Glaskubus* forces us to reflect upon the grim fact that all these people were murdered at the hands of the Nazis. The inclusion of these names is a technique which uses contemporary art as a means of documenting these individual people, so that their names and stories will be remembered. This is especially important now more than ever, because we are entering a period in time where the witnesses of these events are slowly disappearing, therefore it is necessary that these memories and experiences be preserved so that present and future generations can continue to learn from these historical events. The need to preserve such memories relates very well to Assmann's theory of cultural memory, specifically with regard to the concept of individual memory, where the living memories of individuals can only exist so long as the individuals are alive. This is why the preservation of these names is so important, because these people are no longer here but deserve to be remembered so that their names and stories do not become forgotten, so that future generations can learn about these historical events and these individuals who endured so much suffering. Concerning social memory, otherwise known as generational memory, different generations will experience the art work differently, for example older generations may be affected on a very personal level, because the names of the people engraved on the cube may have belonged to relatives or neighbours. Younger generations will be forced to perform memory-work that is more strenuous, because it requires them to dig even deeper past their own existence, back to a period in time that they may only recognize as history, having heard the stories from teachers or having read about them in history books. No matter what generation a person may stem from, this sort of memory-work is never easy, and it will always require intensive work and dedication. Lastly, concerning political memory which Assmann describes as a sort of national memory, this work is representative of contemporary memorial

culture in Germany that deals with the events of World War II, where the main focus is to bring to light and acknowledge the trauma of the victims in order to prevent the consequences of these events from becoming stories lost in history and to prevent these events from becoming irrelevant to future generations.



Image 18.  
*Glaskubus* at night,  
July 2016 (photo  
credit: Richard  
Barnett)

When examining Holocaust memorialization, Young argues that it is important to discuss the ways that a memorial may cause viewers to acknowledge and reflect upon the loss and absence of Jewish life and culture now present in Germany, often described as the void left behind (Young, “Germany’s Holocaust Memorial” 73). According to Young, it is just as important that Holocaust memorials concentrate on what was irreplaceably lost as much as the horror and destruction that was endured, stipulating that “an appropriate memorial design would acknowledge the void left behind and not concentrate on the memory of terror and destruction alone” (Young, “Germany’s Holocaust Memorial” 73). The *Glaskubus* acknowledges this void now present in the city of Mannheim by publicly displaying the names of over 2000 Jewish

people who once resided there so that viewers can become informed, not only of the tragic deportation and systematic murder of these people, but also of the victims' names and their individual stories. By presenting the names on the sides of the glass cube, along with the physical emptiness present within the cube itself that is symbolic for this very loss of life and culture, Kitzbihler has managed to embody the void that was left behind "into a physical presence" (Mahlum 285). Remaining consistent with German Holocaust counter-memorial culture, the *Glaskubus* offers a method of commemoration "where the void was made palpable yet remained unredeemed" (Young, "Germany's Holocaust Memorial" 73). Mannheim's cube functions as much more than just "a tired metaphor for the depth, loss and darkness inherent in the German consciousness after the Holocaust" (Harris 50) because the presentation of the names allows the possibility for viewers to inform themselves about these deported and murdered people, they have the opportunity to take these names home and learn from them. Not only is the work commemorative, symbolic, and reflective, but for this reason, it also serves a pedagogical function.



Image 19. Close-up of the victims' names at night, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

It is also interesting to discuss Kitzbihler's work in relation to other monuments that take on a similar form, for example Vadim Zakharov's *Adorno-Denkmal* that was also erected in 2003 and is located at the Ardornoplatz in Bockenheim, Frankfurt am Main. The *Adorno-Denkmal* displays a replica of Adorno's writing desk and chair in a glass cube, a form that bears resemblance to that of the *Glaskubus*. By displaying these pieces of furniture along with objects such as the metronome, musical score, and copy of *Dialekt der Aufklärung* which reference Adorno's life as a musician and composer, the glass cube functions as a traditional monumental display where physical objects have been encased in glass as a means of commemorating Adorno and embodying this memory of him (Smart, Hockey, and James 72). Unlike the *Adorno-Denkmal*, upon first inspection of the *Glaskubus*, it would not appear obvious to most viewers that something is being encased, because they can see that there is nothing encased inside. However, it is exactly this nothing, this emptiness that is being encased, a symbolic representation of the void of Jewish life and culture that was left behind by the events of the Holocaust. During the same year, we see the erection of two memorials encased in glass cubes where both hold symbolic relevance for the person and people they commemorate: while the *Adorno-Denkmal* encases physical objects that are representative of Adorno in order to commemorate his achievements as a philosopher, musician and composer, the *Glaskubus*, on the other hand, literally encases nothing, a physical and symbolic emptiness that is present both within the cube and the city of Mannheim. While the Adorno monument encases physical objects to depict symbolism and promote reflection in the viewers, the *Glaskubus* monument takes a less obvious approach where viewers must ask themselves if something is being encased here, perhaps symbolically if not literally, and if so, what. In doing so, viewers are also forced to ask

themselves what historical conclusions they should be reflecting upon when viewing the cube and reading the engraved names of the victims.

The *Glaskubus* monument stands for much more than just the Jewish people who were deported from the city of Mannheim during the Nazi regime; it is also a memory symbol of the expulsion and extermination of all European Jews who faced such a fate during World War II. The names engraved on the cube are representative of the individuals, the life stories that must not be forgotten and lost in history. The contemporary art piece reminds us that it is not only important to remember the loss and destruction caused by the Holocaust, but it is also just as important to recall the names of the victims so that these people can be remembered and commemorated, so that their stories and memories can live on to educate and remind future generations of the occurrences that happened in this very city, at this very location where life carries on, but not for the people who were deported and ultimately murdered (Hirsch 10). The contemporary piece works to commemorate the lives and destinies of thousands of Jewish people who will always be a significant part of Mannheim's history, a group of people who will always hold significant cultural and historical importance, a dark past that will always remain intertwined with everyday life in the city (Hirsch 97). By engraving the names on the cube, Kitzbihler is bringing attention to the dispute that xenophobia still remains a threat to our fragile society and that this is an issue that must not be, under any circumstances, ignored (Hirsch 11). The *Glaskubus* was erected as a reminder to present and future generations of the countless number of human beings who were shut out, belittled, tracked down, deported, and finally murdered during the rise and fall of the Nazi regime, all because of their beliefs and their supposed racial heritage (Hirsch 17). Out of the 7000 Jewish people who were deported from Mannheim during the Nazi regime, only much less than half of them are known and remembered

today, which demonstrates the importance of preserving the names and stories that can still be recalled. In fact, one could argue that the *Glaskubus* may have been inspiration for similar memorial projects such as the *Denkmal für die verschleppten Juden und Sinti von Darmstadt* (2004), where Darmstadt's Jewish, Sinti, and Roma population were also engraved onto the sides of a glass cube ("Darmstadt, Kirschenalle/Bismarckstraße").

Taking into account the similarities between the *Glaskubus* and the *Denkmal für die verschleppten Juden und Sinti von Darmstadt*, it may be interesting to discuss the glass medium of these two monuments. Although the *Glaskubus* is made from very thick and durable-looking glass, it is important to note that glass is typically known for being very fragile. Perhaps the employment of this sort of medium could be representative of the fragility of society, where it is necessary to demonstrate respect toward one another and to oppose social injustices. Although the *Glaskubus* has not suffered any vandalism, the *Denkmal für die verschleppten Juden und Sinti von Darmstadt* has been damaged on more than one occasion. During the night of July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Darmstadt's monument to the city's deported Jews, Sinti, and Roma was damaged. It remained damaged until the end of 2012, when it was taken away and restored. In March of 2013, the repaired monument was returned to its original location. The restoration process cost the residents, contributing institutions, and city of Darmstadt 41,000 Euro. Two months later, in May of 2013, the monument was once again severely shattered ("Mahnmal für deportierte Juden, Sinti und Roma"). Even though this sort of destruction has not yet happened to Mannheim's monument to its deported Jews, it is still possible that such vandalism might occur. While a glass medium may make for an aesthetically visual pleasing piece, it certainly has its downsides when considering durability and the permanence of the work. On the other hand though, as Young has already pointed out, the point of such memorials is "not to remain fixed but to change; not to be

everlasting but to disappear... not to remain pristine but to invite [their] own violation and desecration” (Young, “The Counter-Monument” 277). The question to ask, though, is how many times can the *Denkmal für die verschleppten Juden und Sinti von Darmstadt*, or even the *Glaskubus* be damaged before the city and residents decide they no longer want to contribute to its restoration? Although this question will not be further examined in this thesis, such an inquiry of ethical and political importance is likely to yield interesting results and certainly merits further discussion.

The *Glaskubus* serves as a reminder to the citizens of Mannheim that they must continue to work towards a humane and peaceful future for their city and for their country. The cube also serves to remind viewers that, even more than 70 years after the occurrence of these traumatic events, it is still just as important as ever to take the stance against xenophobia, racism, and antisemitism, a reminder that we must not condemn groups of people because of their ethnicities, beliefs, or practices. As stated in Article 1 of German Grundgesetz (Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany): “Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar” (Hirsch 105), the dignity of human beings is untouchable. It seems that the goal of such a work is not to correct the past or to attain redemption for the mistakes of previous generations, but rather, to implement contemporary art as a means of promoting pedagogical and historical discourses and stimulating discussion. By establishing dialogue about the past, present, and future, one could argue that these memorials seek to establish a new beginning through awareness, one that is constructed upon the foundations of peace and understanding (Hirsch 106).

## **Chapter 5: Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012)**

Two works in this study both commemorate the same specific group of Jewish people and are both located at the same location, the first of which is the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, a media art project created by Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller in 2012 for DOCUMENTA (13). Unlike most contemporary art works, walking is the medium in which the viewer actively participates in bringing this piece to life. Given an iPod playing a pre-recorded video of Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, the viewers (or in this case, the walkers) uncover some of the different layers of temporality hidden within the history of Kassel's old train station. The pre-recorded view on the iPod fictionalizes the artistic work by displaying actors and by portraying dramatized scenes of realism and absurdity, in order to add relief to the otherwise serious theme of the piece. Cardiff shows us the history of Kassel's old train station during World War II, and we are led to the very train platform from where the Jews and other prisoners were deported from the city. Along the way, Cardiff also shares some personal anecdotes, for example, fears and memories that are triggered by the sights of the platforms and trains. However, rather than being told the history of the Hauptbahnhof directly, the walkers instead utilize the acts of walking and observing to uncover the train station's history. During the walk, the walkers are progressively subjected to the train station's history as they encounter places and objects of historical and cultural importance, and also by witnessing the reimagined scenes that depict "the train station as one of the important sites of the genocidal state that developed around World War II, when Jews were transported by freight trains to extermination camps" (Ross 216).

Before discussing the video walk any further, it is important to point out that from the artists of the four works examined in this thesis, Cardiff is the most internationally renowned. Famous for her audio and video walks, Cardiff has been working with this specific medium for



many years now, and in order to understand how the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* functions and how it came to be, it is helpful to refer to Cardiff's previous works which paved the way for this style and form of contemporary media art. Cardiff has been working with audio and video walks since 1991 when she created her first walking installation that utilizes media technology, *Forest Walk* which she made at the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada. This work has been described as "the prototype for all the walks that followed" ("Janet Cardiff's Audio Walks"), and Cardiff has produced several other walking pieces since then. In her 1996 work, *Louisiana Walk #14* created for the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek, Denmark, Cardiff decided to layer several voices over top of one another to generate feelings of anxiety and apprehension in the walkers to see how this affected their perceptions of time and space. This method of manipulating sound to alter the way walkers perceive the works and the world around them has become the format which Cardiff has been using for her walks ever since ("Janet Cardiff's Audio Walks"). In 1997, she was asked to create an audio walk for the Münster Skulptur Projekt, a traditional sculpture festival that takes place in Münster, Germany. While working on this project, Cardiff discovered a similarity between her walks and the physicality of sculptures, explaining that "one navigates the empty space around the sculpture according to its lines and contours, which have been formed by the privileged technique of the artist. In sculpture, one is moved by visual instructions, whereas with the walk one is moved by aural instruction" ("Janet Cardiff's Audio Walks"). She explains that the audio recording is essential to the walks, because the pre-recorded noises have to mimic those present in the real space which the walkers are moving through in order to establish an intermingling of these two worlds (the real and the recorded). Her voice which gives directions, delivers thoughts, and explains narrative elements gives the walkers a feeling of intimacy that instills in them curiosity about the space they are

moving through, and this is what pushes them to finish the walk (“INTRODUCTION TO THE AUDIO WALKS”). All of Cardiff’s walks are recorded with binaural audio technology that can layer “sound effects, music, and voices... to the main walking track to create a 3D sphere of sound. Binaural audio is a technique that uses miniature microphones placed in the ears of a person. The result is an incredibly lifelike 3D reproduction of sound. Played back on a headset, it is almost as if the recorded events were taking place life” (“INTRODUCTION TO THE AUDIO WALKS”).

Through the creation of her walks which focus on historical, social, cultural, and spatial awareness of specific locations, Cardiff has been described as “an investigator of the environment she is working with” (Batista and Lesky, 516). For Cardiff, “the way in which people listen to their soundscape not only depends on their specific social, cultural, and political background, but also on their individual hearing experiences” (Batista and Lesky, 515). In her walks, Cardiff plays the role of the narrator who is not present in the real space or in the pre-recorded video but who can be heard talking on the audio tracks. Her voice leads walkers through the space, giving “form and meaning” (Batista and Lesky, 516) to the objects and events that are encountered during their walk. Together, she and the walkers create art by moving through the space and interacting with the environment; however, the walkers are only partially responsible for bringing these works to life, as Cardiff has already established the foundation, the prewritten script which the walkers follow. As mentioned, the audio tracks play a major role in bringing the artistic works to life, because sound has the ability to influence the atmosphere of a space, the way a space is perceived, the way it feels. Similarly, sound can have an influence on scenery, urban spaces, and public locations, and this, in turn, can alter the manner in which one perceives and interacts with the people and objects encountered while moving through that space

(Batista and Lesky, 518). By using sound to influence the walker's perception of his or her surroundings, by positing observations and comments, and by employing additional elements such as the presentation of narrative, Cardiff encourages walkers to pose questions about the spaces they are moving through, as well as their own perceptions of these spaces (Batista and Lesky 521).

The *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* begins when the walkers are handed their iPods displaying the pre-recorded video of the Hauptbahnhof that was created by the artists, Cardiff and Miller. In the pre-recorded video, the artists have hired actors to stage dramatized scenes that tell separate stories which are not related to the train station's history of Jewish deportations (for example the dancing ballerina being followed by the barking dog, the scene with commuters walking through the train station with their bags of luggage, or the scene where Cardiff has a conversation with a 'security guard' and he asks her to rewind the video). Along with these separate stories, there are also dramatized scenes which pertain to the train station's history of Jewish deportation, and these scenes help the walkers to better understand the historical and cultural importance of this location for the city of Kassel. During the video, we only hear Cardiff talking, but it is unclear who is recording and when, because at one point we see Cardiff walking down the train platform in her white coat, so we assume Miller is filming, but at another point in the walk, the walkers are led past a mirror and Cardiff can be seen holding the camera while filming. As previously mentioned, Cardiff also shares personal anecdotes; little stories that cause the walkers to reflect on how these events are relevant to their own lives and histories. Cardiff leads the walkers to certain locations throughout the Hauptbahnhof that are of historical and cultural importance, but instead of telling us about this history, she shows us. Thanks to the binaural audio which delivers sound three-dimensionally as if it were being heard live, as the

walkers move throughout the Hauptbahnhof, they will have trouble distinguishing the sounds that they hear in real life from the pre-recorded sounds which they hear through their headphones. During the walk, Cardiff also points out certain things which she finds interesting, for example a strange looking bike rack, or the incorporation of the Hauptbahnhof's old, stone architecture into a newer-built wing. The dramatized scenes, as well as the very real history which the walkers uncover during their walk, invite walkers to reflect on this history, and it also opens up the possibility that the walkers may be emotionally affected by scenes and stories they are subjected to throughout their walk. In doing this, walkers have the opportunity to reflect on the different moments in history when Kassel's Hauptbahnhof became a site of historical and cultural importance (the historical moment when Kassel's Jews were being deported, and the moment when the Hauptbahnhof became a historical and cultural site of commemoration and remembering).



Image 20.  
View of  
Kassel's  
Hauptbahnhof,  
July 2016  
(photo credit:  
Richard  
Barnett)

When examining the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, it is helpful to refer to the different important moments in time that pertain to the Hauptbahnhof as a site of historical and cultural importance as different layers of temporality. The first and most obvious temporal layer is the present moment when the walkers are walking through the train station, iPod in hand. Another temporality to consider is the moment in time depicted within pre-recorded video, that moment in 2012 when the artists and actors met at the train station to film their work. Going even further back into the Hauptbahnhof's past, a third temporal layer to discuss is the significant and historically important moment in time when Kassel's train station was used as a site of deportation during World War II. The video walk allows walkers to revisit these different moments in time that pertain to Kassel's train station, not in a literal sense, but rather indirectly and vicariously through the artistic work.

Throughout the walk, many references and clues are made in regards to the hidden history of deportation and extermination that surrounds Kassel's old train station, a history that is seemingly invisible and easy to ignore, but after having completed the video walk, becomes hauntingly unavoidable. Within the video, the walkers encounter actors who recreate the scenes of trauma, and at the beginning of the walk, the walkers are led to a bronze cart filled with stones wrapped in paper, otherwise known as the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* memorial project created by Horst Hoheisel in 1993. By encountering this memorial during their walk, the walkers are introduced to a few of the names and faces of the Jewish people who were deported from this very train station, and the historical facts surrounding the deportation and murder of the Jewish people during World War II that one would normally read about in history books become frighteningly real, frighteningly tangible. The artists in the videos then guide the walkers through

the back doors of the train station, onto the main train platform that leads down to the final set of tracks, Platforms 13 and 14, the very platforms from where Jews and others were deported in three waves. As the walkers approach Platform 13, the audio track of the video walk intensifies. The sound of people walking, running, and rushing becomes unsettlingly louder, and the sounds of bags and wheels dragging across the stone floor becomes engulfing. One can hear the sounds of trains pulling up to the platform and leaving, and the walkers are forced to remind themselves that these sounds are not real, that these scenes of confusion and dread are not actually occurring right now, but instead are reconstructed memories that cause the walkers to reflect on history and how these events are affecting them in the present moment.



Image 21. A walker examining the pre-recorded video while walking from Platform 13 during the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

The *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* was very well received by the public and the city of Kassel when it was initially released for the 13th dOCUMENTA in 2012. Janet Cardiff was already a prominent figure in the modern art world, renowned for her creation of audio and video walks. For this reason, the city of Kassel invited her and her husband to collaborate on a project

that would focus on bringing to light the history of Kassel's old train station regarding the events of World War II. Out of all the projects and exhibitions that were presented during the 2012 dOCUMENTA, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* received the most visitors, the most attention, and was, without a doubt, the most popular work from that year's exhibition of contemporary art. People waited in line for 2 to 3 hours in order to perform the walk, and interviews from the 2012 dOCUMENTA show that people really enjoyed the work, stating that it was an informative and fun project that afforded walkers to take a peek into another world or reality ("Video Walk in Kassel"). After every dOCUMENTA, the city of Kassel makes the decision to purchase some of the favourite works so that they can be permanently displayed around the city. The *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* was one of seven art works that the city ended up buying that year. In October of 2013, the city began offering the walk the first Sunday of the every month (Heise-Thonicke). Today, anyone can perform the video walk by calling ahead and booking an appointment on one of the appropriate days.

In order to understand the techniques that work to commemorate and promote reflection from the walkers, it is essential to discuss the different temporalities of time which have been, and are continuously being embedded into the history of Kassel's Hauptbahnhof. The first and easiest layer of temporality to grasp is the present moment, when the walkers are walking through the old train station, headphones over their ears and iPod in hand. The second temporal layer is the pre-recorded video of the Hauptbahnhof that the walkers are watching on the screens of their iPods as they explore the different areas of the historic train station. Another temporal layer to consider is the historical moment in time when the Hauptbahnhof was used as the site of deportation during the Nazi regime, when the Jewish people of Kassel were being deported to the various concentration camps around Europe. As the walkers are led throughout the train station

by the artists in the video, the different temporalities begin to unfold and overlap with one another. One could argue that the use of portable screens actually transports the walkers to another place in time, and the feeling of immersion created by the advanced audio and visual technologies achieves this without the walkers even realizing it. For this reason, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* has been described as a multidimensional commemorative art work, because the use of modern technology was implemented as a technique that takes the walkers back to another period in time, so to speak. Rather than reading about history as one normally would, the walkers are able to use the contemporary art work as a means of experiencing history in the form of a narrative that helps to understand and empathize with the victims. Cardiff and Miller explain on their web site that within the video walk, “An alternate world opens up where reality and fiction meld in a disturbing and uncanny way” (“Alter Bahnhof Video Walk | 2012”). The walkers watch the events happen on the screens of their iPods, but they feel like they are also present at that point in time because they are also currently located at the exact same location as in the video. The walkers follow the screen and try to frame the events as if they were the ones recording them (“Alter Bahnhof Video Walk | 2012”). Even though the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* allows the walkers to, in a way, experience this traumatic moment in history for themselves, it is important to remember that the trauma of the past can never be truly replicated, nor would any artist actually wish to recreate these feelings (Huysen, “Monument and Memory” 259).

By observing the train station in the present moment, while simultaneously observing the pre-recorded video on the screen, the walkers are constantly alternating between the real world and the fictional world displayed on the iPod, as well as the real and dramatized events that are portrayed within the video. The pre-recorded video presents the different events and layers of



temporality in a non-linear fashion, for example at the beginning of the video, an actor is briefly seen talking about the aftermaths of the bombings, and a few minutes later the walkers are led to the platform from where Kassel's Jewish population was deported three years prior to the city's destruction. The simultaneous presentation of several temporalities allows for a mixing of the tangible environment that the walkers are presently walking through, with the archived historical events that they observe on the screens of their iPods. The contemporary piece allows the walkers to experience the events on the screen as if they were actually there, but thanks to the pre-recorded video, only those performing the walk will gain access to this hidden temporality. The narrator in the video remains neutral to the dramatized scenes, as well as the very real historical events depicted on the screen, so the walkers are expected to reflect and feel the art work for themselves, without being influenced too greatly. For this reason, the walkers need not only rely on the information which they gather throughout the walk, but they are also free to rely on their own experiences and knowledge to help them understand the historical and dramatized depictions. The narrator also communicates to the walkers in a very calm, relaxing tone, and the directions seem more like suggestions that open up the realm for curiosity and discovery. This makes the walk very intimate, almost as if the walkers are listening to their own conscience. They readily obey the orders of the narrator because they are made to feel comfortable and because they are progressively subjected to historical information that ultimately feeds their curiosity. The intimacy of the video walk helps to bridge the gap between the self (the viewers) and the other (the historical victims, in this case the deported Jewish people of Kassel), making it easier for the walkers to identify with the victims, because they are at the same location where these historical events occurred and they are attempting to understand the trauma by reflecting on the events that occurred here (Trépanier).

Within the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, walking and observing are two very important mechanisms that allow the walkers to dig deeper into the Hauptbahnhof's hidden history. By observing the train station in its present moment and comparing it with the archived video document displayed on the iPod, a mixing of the two temporalities becomes apparent when the walkers begin to notice the ways in which the train station has not changed since the video on the iPod was first recorded. For example, one may observe that a certain garbage receptacle has not moved from its spot where it was recorded to have been four years ago, or perhaps a strikingly similar work vehicle can be seen parked at the very same spot as one seen on the screen. At first glance, the Hauptbahnhof will more than likely appear to have not changed much in the four years since the video was first recorded, however, as the walkers wander throughout the train station while uncovering its hidden history, the differences become greater and less subtle. When observing the pre-recorded events on the iPod, it is important to remember that the people on the screen are mostly actors and the scenes are, for the most part, premeditated. The video does the job of leading the walkers throughout the Hauptbahnhof, while simultaneously revealing pieces of information that are triggered by certain areas and objects encountered throughout the walk. Within the walk, there is so much information in the environment for the walkers to register and process that it is very easy to fall behind while trying to piece everything together. In addition, the walkers are constantly distracted from thinking about the present moment, for example when Cardiff begins to reveal personal anecdotes while talking about the history of the train station (when she shares the story about her missing red coat, or her night alone in the hotel room watching old German movies on television), when the video suddenly cuts away to an alternate setting (the quick, unrelated cut-away scene to the lush forest), and when the video is altered or completely shut off (when the camera 'runs out of batteries', or when the security guard takes the

camera from Cardiff and rewinds the video). Even though the video, in combination with the audio track, effortlessly transports the walkers to another place, effectively distracting them from the present moment, in a sense, the video also paradoxically works to keep the walkers grounded in the present moment because they are constantly aligning and comparing the images on the iPod with what is seen in real life.



Image 22.  
Second-storey  
view of Kassel's  
Hauptbahnhof,  
July 2016 (photo  
credit: Richard  
Barnett)

The artists' use of modern media technologies is the reason why the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* is such an intensively immersive experience. The pre-recorded video on the iPod is an essential component of the walk, because it functions as a “handheld screen” (Ross 219) and “an information-bearing structure” (Ross 221) that can be moved and manipulated in order to provide an “augmented view” (Ross 220) of the old train station by making available information that is not normally present in the environment. The iPod is more than just a screen playing a video, it also functions as a window into another period in time, a camera that allows the walkers

to see the events as if they were happening live, “a portable cinema” (Ross 220) that displays a series of fictional, pre-recorded events, and lastly, a cultural archive that informs of the traumatic memories that haunt this historic location (Ross 220). Instead of simply offering a view into an alternate world of fiction and reimagined events, the pre-recorded video instead allows the walkers “to deepen their knowledge of and sensitivity to the space in which they move” (Ross 220) by delivering historical facts that are presented in a convincing and realistic manner. The images on the screen help to extend the viewer’s perception of the space that they are moving in, as well as their historical and cultural understanding for the space itself. The video allows the walkers to extend beyond their own personal experiences, and they can use the pre-recorded video as a means of gathering additional information that is necessary to attain a concise historical as well as personal understanding of the environment that they are moving in. In addition to the use of modern video technologies, Cardiff and Miller also made use of binaural audio, where the sounds from an environment are recorded using two microphones that deliver it three-dimensionally so that the listener feels like he or she is actually there, listening to the pre-recorded events as if they were live. This use of binaural sound technology is arguably what makes the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* such a powerfully immersive experience, because the confusion between reality and fiction allows for nearly a complete “blurring, and sometimes an amalgamation (but not complete fusion)” (Ross 222) of events. As Miller himself states in an interview from 2012, “you are never completely sure about what’s fiction and what’s reality” (Miller). The binaural audio technology that is responsible for this blurring of realities is what makes the climatic experience at Platform 13 so convincingly immersive, because the overwhelming sounds of the rushing people and trains move realistically from ear to ear, just as they would if the walkers were experiencing them live. This personal connection works “to

create a fluctuating and evanescent yet half-imaginary/half-real single space” (Ross 222) where the walkers are given the opportunity to reflect on the trauma, feelings, and emotions that the victims experienced at this very same location.



Image 23.  
Platform 13 at  
Kassel's  
Hauptbahnhof,  
July 2016  
(photo credit:  
Richard  
Barnett)

When discussing the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, Christine Ross mentions “the historicization of [a] space” (Ross 217) where the walkers move throughout the train station in order to uncover the history that is no longer visible or perhaps already forgotten. Ross argues that this process of historicization is partially due to Cardiff’s narrative within the audio and video portion of the walk, when she reveals information about the train station that would not normally be obvious at first glance, for example historical and architectural details. However, she argues that the process of historicization is a result of the walkers’ feeling and understanding of the Hauptbahnhof as a site of cultural and historical importance for the city of Kassel regarding the deportations of the Jewish people during World War II (Ross 216). Moving along throughout

the Hauptbahnhof with the iPod while listening to the audio track creates a sort of “historical awareness” (Ross 217) that is a result of “this intermingling” (Ross 217) between the present moment and the historical moment when the Jewish people of Kassel were boarding the trains at Platform 13. It is exactly this concept of moving throughout and being progressively subjected to the historical and cultural importance of a space that “brings forward the possibility of being moved: it enables conditions, and opens up one’s availability to affectivity around Platform 13” (Ross 224). In relation to the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, the process of historicization is more gradual rather than immediate, because this process truly begins to occur when the walker is consciously affected by the history and events which took place at this specific location. It is a matter of moving throughout one’s surroundings in order to be cognitively affected or emotionally moved, moved by the history of one’s surroundings, as well as the sensory experiences that are perceived while moving throughout this location.

For anyone who has personally visited Kassel’s Hauptbahnhof to perform the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, it will be clear that the contemporary work is centrally focused around affectivity and the provocation of emotional responses. Ross describes affectivity as the conditioning of “emotions, feelings, action, cognition, and will” (Ross 224), a process that “has the power to influence consciousness by amplifying the subject’s awareness of an individual’s biological state as well as her or his environment” (Ross 224). Since the experiences encompassing the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* are not universal, meaning every individual will perceive the work differently, some walkers will connect with the work on a more emotional level than others. For this reason, it would not be worthwhile to argue whether or not this kind of contemporary work has the power to evoke such emotional responses. Rather, it is more productive to discuss how this work succeeds at producing such responses, and the means by

which it is capable of doing so. As previously mentioned, the artists' employment of the binaural audio technology plays an enormous role in immersing the walkers within the tangible environment that is in front of them, the fictive environment that is presented on the iPod, and the historical environment inhabited by the Jewish victims of Kassel during World War II. This employment of modern technologies is not only important for the production of emotional responses from the walkers, but it is also key to the historicization of the space, because the "immersive and blurring effects intensify the enactment and extendedness of the participant's perception of space that progressively unfold through the video walk. Immersion creates an audible space whereby to move in space transforms itself into being moved by space" (Ross 223). In terms of being moved by a space, it is difficult to discuss this resulting affectivity, because everyone reacts differently to art. For this reason, it is useful to describe affectivity as a "force" (Ross 224) or "intensity" (Ross 224) that causes the viewers to reflect upon and to be emotionally moved by the work. Affectivity is the process that occurs prior to the viewers' realization that they have become more historically and consciously aware of the environment through which they are moving. Although it is true that this resulting affectivity is not guaranteed in every walker, it is important to remember that it is this process of historicization that encourages reflection and the production of emotional responses from the viewers.

Historicization of the train station through movement "allows the participant to experience the presence of the past without collapsing the two temporal categories in an undifferentiated whole. History is felt (not represented) as a commonality" (Ross 225). The walkers are not meant to feel like the victim, "but to feel what the victim might have felt and to be transformed by that feeling, even at the level of one's identity" (Ross 217).

The artists' implementation of narrative within the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* is also a process that enables the walkers to identify with the historical victims, because they are walking at the exact same location as the victims and are trying to understand what it must have felt like for these people as they were being deported from their homes and places of work. The use of narrative is also a technique that could be responsible for the production of an emotional response from the video walk, because "emotional contagion comes into play in our reactions to narrative, for we are story-sharing creatures" (Keen 209). During the walk, the walkers learn about the importance of the Hauptbahnhof as a site of deportation and genocide during World War II, and the reality of the events is amplified by the introduction of the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* memorial project that is encountered near the beginning of the walk, when the walkers learn about the three sets of deportations that occurred at this very location. Here, the walkers are introduced to some of the names of the people who were deported, and they are able to catch a glimpse of some of the faces of these people in Hoheisel's book of Kassel's Jews that is laying on top of the stones in the display. Once the walkers reach Platform 13, they are then subjected to a second memorial piece, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, a newer commemorative project that has recently been established as an individual art work and that has also been incorporated into the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* after the 13<sup>th</sup> dOCUMENTA. This time, the walkers see the place from where the Jewish people were deported, and engraved on the tracks they see the names of some of the people who once inhabited the city of Kassel, but are no longer present to have their stories heard. These two memorial pieces in combination with the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* tell the story of deportation and murder, the stories of individuals who would not want to be forgotten, but would rather that their memories be kept alive, so that such an occurrence could be prevented from ever happening again. Seeing the faces of the individuals in Hoheisel's book of



Kasseler Jews and seeing the names of these people engraved on the train tracks, a group of people who were murdered and nearly completely forgotten, it is easy to comprehend how such a traumatic historical event now made personal, now made tangible, could have the power to invoke such strong emotional responses.



Image 24. During the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, a walker examines some names and faces of Kassel's Jews from *Namen und Schicksale der Juden Kassels*, a book displayed in the *Denkstein-Sammlung* memorial, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

It is worthwhile to consider what kind of emotional responses might be produced by such a realistically portrayed narrative that holds such strong historical and cultural importance. With regard to the process of affectivity within the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, it is interesting to look at “*empathy*, a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, [that] can be provoked by witnessing another’s emotional state, by hearing about another’s condition, or even by reading” (Keen 208). When discussing an art work’s ability to generate, maintain, and intensify human emotion, Keen underlines the consideration of “*empathy as a central feature of our collaborative responsiveness*” (Keen 210). This concept relates very well to the process of cognitive and emotional affectivity that occurs regarding the climatic events surrounding Platform 13, when

the forces of affectivity propel the contemporary walkers closer to the historical Jewish victims. Just like the process of historicization, the production of an empathetic emotional response also occurs gradually and affectively during the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*. According to Keen, “in empathy, sometimes described as an emotion in its own right, we feel what we believe to be the emotions of others. Empathy is thus agreed to be both affective and cognitive by most psychologists” (Keen 208). This empathetic emotional response may occur when the walkers are listening to the artists’ narrative which depicts the deportation of the Jews from Kassel’s train station, because they are being subjected to and forced to reflect upon the stories of the individuals who were deported and murdered. The production of such empathetic emotional responses and the acknowledgement of these feelings can be seen as a result of the process of affectivity that occurs in the walkers as they uncover the history of the Hauptbahnhof and learn about the stories of the people who passed through. It could be explained that not everyone will experience such an empathetic response from the video walk because a person’s capacity for empathy is also related to his or her “physical and social awareness of one another” (Keen 209), “inherited traits” (Keen 209), “personal histories and cultural contexts [that] affect the way we understand automatically shared feelings” (Keen 209).

Another aspect of the video walk that manages to provoke reflection and emotional responses from the viewers is the artists’ constant positing of allegorical statements that force walkers to stop and reflect, as well as the recurring implementation of symbolic elements within many aspects of the audio and video components. It is impossible to know for sure what kind of reflection the artists were expecting to produce in the viewers by making use of such allegorical and symbolic elements, but like any contemporary art work, these elements are free to be interpreted by the viewers. An example of such use of symbolism can be found at the very

beginning of the walk when Cardiff says, “Ok, turn on the camera, press the video button. I’m sitting here with you in the train station in Kassel, watching people pass by. This video will be an experiment. We’re like those prisoners stuck in Plato’s cave. We watch the flickering shadows on the screen.” Perhaps what is meant by this, is that by examining the video on the iPod screen, the viewers are, in a way, peeking into another world, but like the prisoners in Plato’s cave who are only able to see the shadows of the outside world flickering on the walls, the viewers will also never be able to catch a full glimpse into the temporalities of the past that are depicted within the contemporary work. Since it is impossible to bring the walkers back to the historical point in time when the train station was used as a site of deportation, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* allows them to access shadows, traces, and reconstructed memories of the past that can never truly be revisited. Another example is when the walkers are approaching Platform 13, and the binaural audio quickly intensifies with the sounds of people hastily walking to and fro, the sounds of trains pulling up and away from the station, the sounds of bags and luggage being dragged across the stones and concrete. At this point of the walk, the audio becomes convincingly real, and the walkers are meant to feel overwhelmed, like they are being engulfed by the sounds of the people and trains rushing by. The realism of the sounds is also meant to confuse the walkers, because the people and trains on the audio track become intertwined with the real sounds of the commuters and trains pulling up to the station. This overwhelming feeling of dread and confusion that overcomes the walkers as they approach Platform 13 is supposed to be reflective of the feelings and emotions experienced by the Jewish people of Kassel as they were being contained and deported from this very location just 70 years earlier. Perhaps the intention of the artists is not to make the walkers feel like the victims, but rather to have the

walkers reflect on how these people might have felt when they were walking through this very same space.

Another example of a symbolic element is the scene on the pre-recorded video where the walkers are watching a few people walking by, each dragging a piece of luggage. At first there are only one or two commuters, but then the screen fills up with more and more people walking through the train station, dragging their bags behind them. Suddenly, someone drops their bag, and as they turn around to pick it up, more and more people begin letting their bags drop. The screen hectically fills up with a larger number of seemingly ordinary people, and it quickly becomes an obvious struggle for the many commuters who are trying to pick up their heavy bags of luggage that just seem to keep falling down. This scene could be symbolic for the people of Germany, victims and perpetrators alike, who must now carry their heavy baggage from the past with them wherever they go, and each step is a fight to stay on their feet and to carry on with their lives. An example of an allegorical element is when Cardiff is explaining the story about the Jewish prisoner who wanted revenge on the guard who held him hostage and tortured him, so he decides to go back to the concentration camp where he was held, in order to find the guard and to kill him, so as to enact his revenge. When he arrives, the former prisoner finds out that the guard has already been killed, so in order to get revenge, he kills the guard's wife and children instead. This story recalls the trauma that was experienced by the Jewish prisoners as they were being deported and detained in concentration camps, and how these feelings of anger, fear, and burden may have been passed on to some of the survivors. By taking this story into account, it is easy to see that the video walk not only provokes empathetic emotional responses in regards to the Jewish victims, but it also causes the walkers to reflect on the perpetrators and their families. This gives the walkers an opportunity to acknowledge that many German people also suffered

while trying to protect their own families. Although the video walk concentrates mainly on the lives and fates of the Jewish victims, this is a moment during the walk when the walkers are also forced to also reflect on the hardships faced by the German people during and after the war. By briefly presenting walkers with this story of revenge, one can argue that Cardiff and Miller are attempting to thematize German victimhood through their work. Although this is a topic that will not be discussed further within this thesis, it is important to acknowledge that such a narrative is ethically and politically problematic when considering Germany's history and culture of Holocaust memory appropriation.

Another example of a statement that encourages reflection is when Cardiff reminds us that "Even if you love somebody, you will never fully understand that person." Perhaps this is representative of the fact that human beings are capable of very dark and disturbing things, and that prior to the war, the followers of the Nazi regime were just normal people who were living normal lives. Many were fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, teachers, and doctors. Even if you think you know a person inside out, you will never truly know what they are capable of, and what kind of person they might become when put into a certain situation. This statement causes the walkers to reflect upon the historical events of the past that occurred at this location, and it forces them to reflect on the lives of the people who walked through this space. Similarly, this statement also causes the walkers to reflect on their own lives. A final example is the final scene where a woman of Asian descent and a man of European descent are performing an interpretive dance together in the waiting area of the old train station. The dance is beautiful, yet troubling, because the two people seem to be struggling and fighting with each other, pushing each other away and leaping away from each other. At the same time, they also clearly love one another, as they also sensually and delicately touch each other, holding one another close and helping each

other perform the various dance moves. The intimacy of the dance is very strong, as the man and woman are constantly watching each other, feeling each other, accepting one another despite their actions that seem to conflict with one another. The dance ends with the man and woman gracefully collapsing to the ground, holding one another closely in each other's arms. The conflicting views of the two different people are clearly expressed within the dance, perhaps as an allusion for the differences we as people have with one another, yet that it is important to overcome these problems in order to attain peace and happiness, to support and help one another to overcome our battles and hardships. Taking these depicted scenes into account, it is important to remember that these are my personal interpretations and that other walkers may have their own opinions concerning these dramatized moments. The manner in which each individual walker will react to these depicted scenes depends very much on their previous knowledge, life experiences, and personal perceptions.

As mentioned, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* makes use of modern media technology which leads walkers throughout the old train station, provides historical information, and depicts scenes of dramatization. One could argue that the use of such modern technology, along with other aspects, prevents this work from being considered traditionally monumental and is instead reminiscent of Young's counter-memorials. For example, it is interesting to observe that the video walk is located in a public and readily-accessible space that many people have no choice but to pass through on a daily basis, yet it can only be accessed when the viewers are given the iPods playing the pre-recorded videos. This means that the viewers are not free to return to the memorial whenever they want, and every time they pass through the Hauptbahnhof, they will be forced to recall for themselves the events that happened here, the information that they learned, and the personal experiences that they have already accumulated while walking through this

historical location. For this reason, because this memorial is not always physically present to remind us of what happened at this specific location, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* negates the idea of the invisible monument by forcing the viewers to perform the memory-work themselves. This work also makes use of media technologies that demonstrate a shift towards more modern mediums and forms of commemoration that, up until now, have not been commonly used by artists of monuments and memorials. The use of video and audio technologies creates an immersive contemporary art piece that successfully draws in the viewers and makes them a part of that depicted environment. The viewers must actively participate in bringing the memorial to life, and without them the memorial is not complete. One could watch the video from the comfort of their living room (if it were available), but like any other counter-memorial, the true effect is not achieved unless the viewer experiences the memorial for him or herself, as the artist or artists had intended it to be experienced. Another aspect that is reflective of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century counter-memorials examined by Young and Huyssen is the fact that this work which was created for dOCUMENTA (13) was originally meant to be a temporary piece that would only be available as long as the exhibition was still running (before the city decided to purchase it and offer it as a permanent piece at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof).

James E. Young has written that “people do not come to Holocaust memorials because they are new, cutting-edge, or fashionable; as the critics are quick to note, most... memorials are none of these” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 12), but these are exactly the reasons why Cardiff and Miller's video walk was so successful and why it has gained so much international recognition. The use of modern, immersive video and audio technologies that require full participation from the viewers is an enticing aspect for people of all ages and nationalities, and the educational and emotional aspects of the walk are very impressive. As Young points out,

“there is a difference between avowedly public art... and art produced almost exclusively for the art world, its critics, other artists, and galleries, which has yet to be properly recognized” (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 12). Such a commemorative memorial that was produced for one of the biggest and most internationally renowned contemporary art exhibitions in the world is a perfect example of the kind of art that Young was describing, however it is important to consider that the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* was not just produced exclusively for the art world, but also for the residents of Kassel and anyone who is interested in learning about the city’s history with regard to World War II.



Image 25. View of train platforms at Kassel’s Hauptbahnhof, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

It is also interesting to discuss the inclusion of and intersection with other counter-memorials within the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*. For example, the artists’ decision to include Hoheisel’s *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* within the video portion of the walk, or when the walkers approach Platform 13 and catch a glimpse of Hoheisel’s newer memorial project, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*. Hoheisel’s newer counter-memorial was created in 2015, while the *Alter*



*Bahnhof Video Walk* is a work from 2012, so the newer piece cannot be seen in the video portion of the walk. This reminds us that as Kassel's Hauptbahnhof changes, so does the video walk itself. The addition of *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* helps strengthen the historical and cultural relevance of the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, and it is easy to see how all three counter-memorials located at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof are very closely intertwined. Like many of the counter-memorials that Young and Huysen describe, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* will change and evolve because the space is constantly changing as things are added and taken away. For this reason, it might be interesting to consider that no group of people will ever perform the exact same video walk, because the changing environment of the train station also changes the way the train station is perceived by the walkers, and the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*'s existence is entirely dependent on the way it is perceived.

When discussing the location of the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, as well as the other commemorative memorials located at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, it is important to acknowledge that although called the Hauptbahnhof, this is no longer the city's main train station. Now used as a connecting station for local and regional trains, the Hauptbahnhof has also been designated the *Kulturbahnhof* because it is well-known for its historical and cultural significance for the city of Kassel with regard to the deportations of the Jews and other prisoners during World War II. This cultural importance is strengthened by the station's three memorials, the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, and *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, all of which commemorate the Jewish prisoners who were deported from this location. Drawing from Assmann's theory of cultural memory, one can argue that these three memorials function as cultural documents housed within the Hauptbahnhof which now functions as the cultural archive. Taking this argument further, it can be said that the three memorials, commemorating the same

group of victims at the same location, work in combination with each other to memorialize this mutually shared historic site. Perhaps the Hauptbahnhof itself has now become the memorial, a location for site-specific memory, commemoration, and remembrance.

As Cardiff points out at the beginning of the video portion of the walk, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* allows the walkers to be like the prisoners stuck in Plato's cave, where they are trying to catch a glimpse into another world, but they can only see the shadows of the outside flickering on the walls. The walkers will never be able to experience, see, or feel the individual memories of the Jewish people who were deported from Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, but the use of visual and binaural sound technology brings the walkers closer to the victims by immersing them with the depicted environment. This is interesting to consider in relation to Assmann's theory of individual memory, because the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* attempts to reconstruct the living memories of these individuals who are no longer alive, but like the prisoners in Plato's cave, we will only ever be able to see shadows of these memories. Although created by two Canadian artists, the concept of political memory surrounding the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* is still very representative of German counter-memorial culture, where the focus is to bring to light the loss of life and culture, and also to acknowledge the tragedy and trauma that was experienced by the victims so that their memories will not be forgotten. By introducing the narrative of the Jewish prisoner who killed the family of the German guard who imprisoned and tortured him, the video walk forces the walkers to not only reflect on the victims, but also to briefly reflect on the fates of the perpetrators and their families, an aspect of World War II history that is not normally found within German counter-memorial culture. Lastly, the concept of social memory surrounding the video walk depends on how people of different generations and nationalities will react to the walk. People of different ages and cultural backgrounds may perceive and feel the

walk differently; some people will be more emotionally moved than others, and others will reflect more upon the historical, cultural, and philosophical importance. This is why it is difficult to determine to what extent people will be emotionally moved by the contemporary work, because everyone's reactions and perceptions depend on their beliefs, values, and accumulated experiences. This also means that it is impossible to simply conclude that such a contemporary work is not capable of producing these kinds of emotional responses, because everyone experiences and reacts differently to art.



Image 26. A walker examines the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* while performing the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

In essence, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* is a complex commemorative spatial installation that draws upon many aspects from history, philosophy, and psychology in order to inform the walkers, produce an emotional response, and provoke reflection. This is achieved by presenting historical facts, in combination with fictive and real narratives that are conveyed through the use of modern audio and video technologies in order to immerse the walkers in their present environment (Kassel's old train station in the year 2016), as well as the temporalities of

the past depicted through the contemporary work (the historical moment when Kassel's Hauptbahnhof became a site of deportation and genocide). Scholars such as Ross applaud these techniques that were implemented by the artists, explaining that the binaural technology created a realm where the 21<sup>st</sup>-century walkers and the deported Jews of Kassel seemed to coexist within a singular space. This sharing of a singular space is necessary to establish a common ground between the walkers and the deported Jews, and "this shared ground was intensely modulated by the intermixing of emotions of fear, speed, anxiety, and perplexity" (Ross 225). This intermingling of different temporalities is also achieved through the use of movement, where the walkers must move throughout the train station to uncover the history, where they must move their iPods to align the pre-recorded video with what they see in real life in order to "deepen their knowledge of sensitivity to the space in which they move" (Ross 220). In terms of psychology, the video walk relies heavily on sensorial immersion that is achieved through the use of the binaural audio technology that makes the pre-recorded audio track sound real, and through the use of media technology that allows the walkers to gather and process information about the environment that is not normally present. This gathering of information is part of a complex cognitive process that is achieved through the implementation of the media technologies that heighten the walkers' awareness of the environment in which they are moving. This heightened awareness of the history of Kassel's old train station opens up the possibility for the walkers to be affected by the narrated facts and stories, as well as the immersive experience that occurs around Platform 13. Ultimately, the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* is a complex counter-memorial that makes use of movement and media technologies in order to stimulate cognitive processes, reflection, and empathetic emotional responses from walkers of any background.

## Chapter 6: Horst Hoheisel's *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* (2015)

Another counter-memorial that is also located at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof is *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, a memorial project created by Horst Hoheisel in 2015 that can be found near the tracks at Platform 14, the very place from where the city's Jewish population was deported during World War II. Along the tracks at the platform, the names of the deported Jews have been engraved, in no particular order, into the rails. The viewer must walk down the platform and bend down closer to the tracks in order to read the names that have been written in small, but legible letters. There is also an informative display given in both German and English which describes the history of Kassel's Jews, giving information on some specific people and the three separate sets of deportations that occurred. As previously mentioned, although found at the very same location, Hoheisel's project cannot be seen in the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* because *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* was erected three years after Cardiff and Miller's work. This memorial project was realized thanks to Kassel's mayor, Bertram Hilgen, and with the help from Dr. Klaus Vornhusen, the corporate representative of the Deutschen Bahn AG for the state of Hesse. The project was supported by the Volkswagen Akademie located in Kassel and Osnabrück, and received funding from the Kasseler Sparkasse ("Das Gedächtnis der Gleise"). The informative board located at the memorial site along with the contemporary work which explains the history of Kassel's sets of deportations and provides historical photos was actualized by Dr. Gunther Richter. The names of the Jewish people engraved onto the tracks are taken from the book, *Namen und Schicksale der Juden Kassels*, a compilation of the names, stories, and fates of Kassel's Jews that was researched and assembled in 1986 with the help of Kassel's Stadtarchiv. The contemporary work consists of 120 meter-long, newly placed tracks which depict the names of 1007 former Jewish citizens of Kassel who were deported from this location

74 years ago (“Ein Mahnmal mit 1,007 Namen”). The memorial was revealed on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 to mark the 74<sup>th</sup> year since the first deportation of Kassel’s Jewish people from platforms 13 and 14 at the city’s Hauptbahnhof (Richter). The tracks at Platform 14 are no longer in use and the site has been specifically dedicated to the memorialization of the deported and murdered individuals.



Image 27. Names of Kassel’s deported Jews engraved onto the *Gedächtnis der Gleise* memorial, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

Hoheisel’s personal and familial history is one that is interconnected with the Holocaust and the events of World War II. When his mother was still pregnant with him, Hoheisel’s father was fighting for the Nazis and was held captive in Siberia for ten years. While she was still pregnant, Hoheisel’s mother travelled with her four children by boat from Riga to East Germany, from where they were meant to travel on to West Germany. The boat was attacked, however, and they ended up in Poznan, Poland, where Hoheisel was born. The artist’s childhood was a difficult and lonely one, because without a father, his mother and siblings had no choice but to work in

the fields every day in order to earn a living. During this time, Hoheisel was left alone, and being an underdeveloped child, many believed he would not grow up to accomplish much (Spitz, 421). His mother suffered greatly from depression, so in an attempt to console her, Hoheisel would create drawings and sculptures, and he would read to her. In 1953, when Hoheisel and his family were living in Kassel, his father finally returned home, and the city gathered at the Hauptbahnhof to welcome him as a hero. Hoheisel did not see his father as a hero, however; to the artist, he was a man guilty of crimes against humanity. Upon returning, Hoheisel's father remained silent about the events that he had witnessed, but Hoheisel recalls one account when his father briefly mentioned the murdering of Jewish people. As an adult, Hoheisel began using his art as a means of shedding light on this history which his parents, like most of the German people at this time, were trying so hard to repress (Spitz, 422). The artist felt like it was his responsibility to establish dialogue about the Holocaust by creating of artworks that refer specifically to these historical events to prevent them from being repressed to the point that they would become erased from the nation's memory. Rather than using his work to recall these events in history, he uses his art to create awareness about the fact that these events should not be forgotten (Spitz, 423).

Hoheisel had already erected his first memorial to the deported and murdered Jewish people of Kassel in 1993 when he created the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* project with the help of local students. In January of 2014, the city of Kassel decided that it would like to erect a new, more commemorative memorial in order to commemorate these people who were deported from platforms 13 and 14 of the city's Hauptbahnhof. By this time, Hoheisel had already established his position in the city as a prominent figure and creator of contemporary monuments and memorials through previous projects such as the *Aschrottbrunnen* (1985) and the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* (1993). The city thought that the first memorial to the deported Jewish people of

Kassel was not enough to commemorate the memory of these people, so they contacted Hoheisel once again to begin work on a new project (Richter). The memorial was created with the help of apprentices from the Volkswagen Akademie in Kassel and Osnabrück who used computer-aided design to fit the names onto the tracks. The apprentices from the Volkswagen Akademie were also responsible for organizing the transportation of the newly made tracks to the Volkswagen workshop in Osnabrück and the Henschel Fertigungstechnik in Heiligenstadt, Thüringen where the names of the Jewish people were engraved (“Ein Mahnmal mit 1,007 Namen”).



Image 28.  
Names of  
Kassel's  
deported Jews  
engraved onto  
the tracks at  
Platform 14,  
June 2016  
(photo credit:  
Richard  
Barnett)

Provided along with the contemporary work itself and also located at Platform 14 is an information board that was created by Dr. Gunnar Richter which describes the deportations of the Jews from Kassel and which offers actual pictures of these occurrences. The pictures show a group of Jewish people who were transported to Kassel from the Hanau Main Station and who



were waiting at the Hauptbahnhof before being sent to the Majdanek and Sobibór camps in order to be exterminated. The photos were taken on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1942 by Franz Weber, a teacher from Hanau who was working and collecting information for the city archive, and they depict the various stages of these organized deportations. The board shows pictures of young children, as well as older people, all of whom are calmly waiting on the platform despite the disturbing and horrific events that were unfolding around them. There are pictures of Jewish people boarding trains with their bags of luggage, probably the few remaining belongings that these people were permitted to take with them. Even though these pictures were taken in May, almost all of the deportees are seen wearing their winter jackets. All the people shown in these pictures from the second set of deportations were murdered, and almost all of them have been identified. Some believe that the Gestapo ordered these photos be taken, perhaps as proof of the events that were happening at this time. The organized and procedural nature of these pictures demonstrates that mass deportations such as this were a normal part of everyday life in Germany during the Nazi era (“Das Gedächtnis der Gleise“ / ‘The Rail Track of Remembrance’ Kassel 2015”).

Hoheisel’s project demonstrates that memory-work pertaining to the deportation and systematic murder of a specific group of people is not easy. The names of the deported have not been engraved in alphabetical order. Those who come to the memorial in order to commemorate a specific person will have to walk up and down the tracks, examining each individual name before they come across the specific individual they are seeking. This technique underscores the strenuous work, time, and commitment that is necessary to keep the memory of these people alive, especially when the final witnesses are disappearing, and the history of these people is becoming nothing more than distant, historical facts that younger generations must learn about from history books. Just like the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, the *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* memorial

has the potential to tap into smaller, individual stories of these former Jewish residents of Kassel. By providing the names of these people at the very location from where they were deported, Hoheisel's work forces the viewers to face these historical facts, and learning this history suddenly becomes more personal, more real. In a way, the artist has become a catalyst that works to provoke and stimulate memory-work in the viewers. The memorial works to inform the viewers of the historical events that happened at this location, and the names cause viewers to reflect on the lives and fates of each individual. The memorial commemorates not only the Jewish people who were deported from this specific location, but it also stands for every Jewish person who was forced from his or her home and was boarded onto a train to face extermination. It is not only important to remember such a devastating historical event as a whole, but it is also just as important to remember the stories and fates of the individual victims, so that the memories of these people do not disappear into a generalization of historical facts that slowly diminish in relevance as the event recedes in time. For this reason, every deported and murdered Jew deserves to have their names recorded and remembered.



Image 29.  
Hoheisel's memorial  
at Platform 14 of  
Kassel's  
Hauptbahnhof, June  
2016 (photo credit:  
Richard Barnett)

By establishing Kassel's Hauptbahnhof as a site of cultural and historical importance concerning the events of World War II, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* demonstrates how it is necessary that these victims and individuals be remembered in connection with the historical locations from which they were initially deported, the places that they called home ("Gleis 13/14 – Das Gedächtnis der Gleise"). It is also interesting to examine how this memorial builds upon Hoheisel's previous work that commemorates the deported Jewish people of Kassel, the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* from 1993. As Young writes, "this memorial claim – a witness-pile of stones – marks both the site of deportation and the community's education about its murdered Jews, their absence now marked by the still evolving memorial" (Young, "Horst Hoheisel's Counter-memory"). This evolution is still presently occurring, as is demonstrated through Hoheisel's creation of a new memorial that commemorates the same group of deported Jews at the same location. By erecting memorials that bring the events of the past to light in such an unforgiving and relentless manner, Kassel's Hauptbahnhof (otherwise known as the Kulturbahnhof) is transforming into a space that is becoming more painstakingly self-aware of its grim history. The dark events of the past are no longer hidden, and the memorials forcibly remind viewers of the events that occurred at this location every time they happen to pass through on their daily routes.

Just like the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, Hoheisel's *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* project fits into Young's definition of a counter-memorial for similar reasons. The nature of the memorial itself is not traditionally monumental in the sense that it was not given a nice location in a park where it would be hidden from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The importance of the memorial's location within one of Kassel's busy train stations helps to combat the concept of the invisible monument, because viewers need not visit the memorial to be haunted by the events of the past, just the sight of the Hauptbahnhof itself, located in the midst of the city's centre, is

enough to provoke such torment. Also, rather than being elevated out of reach, the memorial itself is found upon the train tracks at platform 14, where the viewers are free to jump down in order to examine the contemporary work more closely. The work also does not dictate to the viewers what they should feel or think in regards to the people and events that it is commemorating; instead, the viewers must examine the tracks, read the names, and reflect upon the history and symbolism for themselves. The informative board is there to deliver factual information, and this helps to strengthen the viewers' understanding of the historical events that occurred at this location, and it reminds them of the historical and cultural importance that this memorial holds in this space. When the memorial was first erected in 2015, the names engraved on the tracks were still golden and shiny, and the work itself was very aesthetically impressive. After having returned in 2016, it was clear to me that after only a few months, the memorial's aesthetic beauty was slowly fading, after having succumbed to the elements. The tracks that no longer appeared new and pristine, and the names that were no longer shiny and golden were now becoming covered in a layer of rust and wear. Just as Young described, this counter-memorial was, in a way, inviting its own desecration, not to be desecrated by the people, but by the natural elements that it is constantly exposed to. To combat this, Hoheisel suggested that local schools should organize a Gedenktag (Memorial Day) for the students, where children would volunteer to go to the Hauptbahnhof and help polish and maintain the memorial. By doing so, the children would be confronted with the unpleasant yet important history that surrounds their city's old train station. By having the children personally work on Hoheisel's memorial piece, they would also be introduced to the names of these people that were deported and murdered, and who are now being commemorated through the creation and maintenance of such memorial projects. This is a technique to help maintain the memory of these deported individuals, and it is a way of

making the events of the past more personal and real for younger generations who may feel like they have no connection with these devastating events.



Image 30. Rusted names of Kassel's deported Jews engraved on the tracks at Platform 14 of Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

Similarly to the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, Hoheisel's *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* memorial project is a commemorative artistic work that functions as a historical document, whereas Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, being a spatial location of historical importance in regards to the city's history of World War II, functions as the "cultural archive" (Assmann, "Four Formats of Memory" 31). The names of the Jewish people engraved on the tracks symbolize the individual memories of these people who were deported from this very location, and the memorial itself is a reminder of every deported Jewish person who was forced to leave their homes at the hands of the Nazis. The information board that is located near the memorial provides historical facts and pictures that teach the viewers about the importance of the Hauptbahnhof as a site of deportation and genocide during the Nazi regime. This combination of symbolic art and factual information

provides the viewers with a sense of historical awareness that unapologetically exposes the grim events of the past, while stimulating reflection. Only the Jews of Kassel could have possibly known what it was like to board the trains at the Hauptbahnhof, but it is interesting to note that the historical pictures provided along with the information board can offer viewers a glimpse into these lost memories. By examining the old pictures, viewers can uncover forgotten memories that have been buried within the train station's dark history. We are given the opportunity to see what some of the victims looked like, the clothes they wore, and most interestingly, the nature of their organized deportations. These pictures are proof of the historical events that occurred at this location, and the names engraved onto the tracks make these events more real and personal, because viewers learn the names of these deported individuals, and are given the opportunity to reflect on their lives and fates. Young argues that through the creation of his memorials, "Hoheisel has built into these spaces the capacity for changing memory, places where every new generation will find its own significance in this past" (Young, "Horst Hoheisel's Counter-memory"). Through the creation of his memorials, Hoheisel is essentially bridging the temporal gap between the historical events of the past and the present, in order to bring the contemporary viewer closer to the victim and to underline the reality of these events. The political memory surrounding the *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* memorial project is consistent with that of other contemporary German memorials pertaining to World War II, where the focus of the work is to enlighten viewers about the victims as well as the trauma that these people experienced.



It may also be interesting to examine *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* in comparison with Hoheisel's older and more renowned memorials such as the *Aschrottbrunnen* and the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, commemorative works which have already been well documented and researched. As Young reminds us, "any concept of the Holocaust that reduced it to the horror and terror of destruction alone ignored the stupendous loss and void left behind" (Young, "Germany's Holocaust Memorial" 73). Through the creation of the *Aschrottbrunnen* negative-form monument, it was this loss and absence of Jewish life and culture in Kassel that Hoheisel sought to emphasize, however, some criticized that the monument only "rested on its dark invocation of the mimetic obligation to 'never forget'. For the citizens of Kassel, the *Aschrottbrunnen* already incorporated the cliché Holocaust imagery of depth and darkness" (Lupu 151). But how can an artist create a Holocaust memorial that acknowledges this void of life and culture that was left behind without "reviving old metaphors: the Holocaust as abyss, a dark history in the depths of German consciousness" (Lupu 150)? The answer to this question can be seen within the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung*, where the collection of stones with the names and stories of Kassel's deported and murdered Jews depict the void, the loss and absence of Jewish life and culture, while the community's education about specific victims works to negate the Holocaust memorial cliché of depth and darkness. By asking the community to help research these people and their stories, Hoheisel is promoting the community's education of these deported individuals and events that belong to Kassel's history. In addition, by researching these individuals, the focus of the work has shifted from emphasizing the loss and void left behind as a general concept, to specifically indicating what exactly was lost. In this case, "identification—and an awareness of identification—has become the principal focus in a dual sense" (Spitz 427), where the main goal is to identify and inform viewers about Kassel's Jewish deportees. Similar



to the *Glaskubus* monument, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* takes this process of identification even further by publicly presenting the names of these individuals in the form of a commemorative memorial that gives viewers the chance to acknowledge these specific individuals, to take their names home and research their personal stories and histories that pertain to the city of Kassel. Likewise, as examined within the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* and *Glaskubus* memorials, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* negates the clichéd Holocaust memorial depiction of darkness and abyss by openly indicating what exactly was lost during the Holocaust. By informing viewers about specific individuals and historical events, these memorials not only seek to commemorate and promote reflection, but they are also meant to be sites of pedagogic learning, discussion, and discourse.

Not only is the *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* memorial project commemorative of the Jewish people of Kassel who were deported from Platforms 13 and 14 at the city's Hauptbahnhof, but on a bigger scale it also symbolizes the deportation of all the individuals and groups of people who were affected by the Nazi regime. Through the creation of his contemporary work, Hoheisel's goal was to ensure that the memory of these individual victims would not be forgotten, while underlining the importance of tolerance and respect ("Ein Mahnmal mit 1,007 Namen"). The engraved tracks, in combination with the information board and historical pictures, remind us that such unfathomable events are indeed possible and that they occurred right here at this very location. The individual names remind us that these people who suffered were people just like us, people with families, jobs, homes, and hopes for the future. By examining the names of these people at the very location from they were deported to face imprisonment and extermination, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* allows the viewers to establish a connection with the victims, because they are standing at this spot and are reflecting on the

fates of each individual. Hoheisel argues that the most important aspect of Holocaust memorial culture is not the memorial itself, nor the space in which it is located, but rather the connection to historical and cultural memory which the memorial establishes with its viewers. Rather than alleviating viewers of the burden of the disturbing events of the past, Hoheisel's memorial exposes this trauma, making it unavoidable and impossible to ignore. In order to understand the consequences of such events and why they remain relevant for present and future generations of people, viewers must assume responsibility and "look within themselves for memory, at their actions and motives for memory within these spaces" (Young, "Horst Hoheisel's Counter-memory").



Image 33. Memorial to Kassel's deported and murdered Jews at Platform 14 of Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, June 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

## **Chapter 7: Luigi Toscano's *Gegen das Vergessen – Lest We Forget* (2015)**

The final contemporary piece is *Gegen das Vergessen* (*Lest We Forget* in English), a work created in 2015 by the German-born photographer, filmmaker, and son of Italian guest-workers, Luigi Toscano. It is a collection of photographs and videos taken of World War II survivors. The project was created to mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps and was initially displayed at the Alte Feuerwache in Mannheim, an old fire-hall that has now become a popular venue and location for events such as live music shows and contemporary art exhibitions. The pictures of over 200 victims and survivors, 70 of which were displayed facing out the large windows of the Alte Feuerwache, represent “a silent encounter with the individual biographies [of the victims]. The effect of the 70 photographs is intensified by the concentrated manner in which they are presented. The viewer is made visually aware that this genocide happened a mere 70 years ago and that some of its victims are still alive today. This may be the last time their faces are seen” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). The project is described as being “a medium to help us to recall what has happened in the past, the installation represents a concrete tool against forgetting” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”), the goal ultimately being “to work actively against anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and violent right-wing extremism” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). Mannheim’s public and easily accessible Alte Feuerwache was chosen as the location for the photographs in “a deliberate move to make them available for everybody, not just an elitist group. Every passer-by encounters the visual stories, be it deliberately, by accident, or subconsciously.” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”).



Image 34. Toscano's *Gegen das Vergessen* memorial displayed at the Alte Feuerwache in Mannheim, 2015

Photo credit: Gegen das Vergessen, Facebook, 31 Dec. 2015. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.  
<<https://www.facebook.com/153748908295561/photos/a.216004485403336.1073741830.153748908295561/216004962069955/?type=3&theater>>

*Gegen das Vergessen* is not the first project of this nature that Toscano has created and displayed in the windows of the Alte Feuerwache in his hometown of Mannheim. In 2014, he initiated a similar photo-installation project called *Heimat-Asyl*, where he took photos of the faces of refugees from different countries and displayed them in the second storey windows. The photographer revealed in an interview that ever since he was a teenager, he wanted to make a project that focused around the theme of Holocaust survivors and having their stories heard. For this reason, he initiated his second project, except this time on a much larger scale; instead of

only displaying his photos in the second-storey windows of Mannheim's historic fire-hall, he would display his photos in every single window (Kaiser, "Toscano zeigt 'Gesichter'"). *Gegen das Vergessen* was first exhibited on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, 2015, and was exhibited until the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 2015. The project is expected to be exhibited in other cities and countries around the world ("GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN. EINE FOTOINSTALLATION"). Some of the recorded interviews with the photographed survivors are available for viewing on YouTube, and the collection of 200 photographs have been assembled by Toscano into a picture-book which has also been titled *Gegen das Vergessen*. He is expected to release a mobile app for smartphones that will offer pictures, videos, and information about the photographed survivors ("Gegen das Vergessen – Fotoprojekt"). Although the picture book and video documentation all make up a part of Toscano's bigger project, the memorial only constitutes the temporary display of the 70 photographs facing out the windows of the Alte Feuerwache. When applying Assmann's theory of cultural memory to the commemorative work, it is apparent that the memorial itself functions as a cultural document within a bigger cultural archive of art and literature which pertains to the Holocaust. However, taking this stipulation a step further, one can argue that on a smaller scale, each of the 70 photographs functions as a separate cultural document, while the Alte Feuerwache, functioning as a vessel in which to contain and display these documents, functions as the bigger cultural archive. The temporary exhibition of the photographs at Mannheim's Alte Feuerwache essentially transforms the entire building into one giant memorial which commemorates the survivors whose pictures are on display in the windows.

Initially, Toscano's goal was to photograph 70 different Holocaust survivors from around the world in commemoration of the 70th year since these people were freed from the Nazi

concentration camps. At the beginning, such a project seemed almost impossible, but Toscano wrote to as many organisations for Holocaust survivors as possible and finally established contact with five Polish prisoners who had survived the Sandhofen labour camp in Mannheim. Toscano met personally with the five men and explained his project to them, how he wanted to photograph them and display their photos as an exhibition in the windows of the Alte Feuerwache. The men were impressed with Toscano's proposal, and also with the idea of displaying such a project in such a public space in order to combat the forgetting of these events, people, and memories. The next day, the survivors contacted Toscano to let him know that they were interested in being a part of his project, so the artist set up his photography equipment in a small hotel room, where he asked the men to put on the striped labour camp hats and took frontal portraits of their faces. In an interview, Toscano explains that this was a very difficult project to actualize, because the stories of these people were difficult to hear and were emotionally devastating. Although Toscano revealed that this was a project that required much perseverance, it was also not one that he could simply shut the door on and call quits. For Toscano, this was work that needed to be done, no matter how difficult and demanding (Lennartz). With the help of Stefanie Horn from the Yashar Foundation for German Israeli Perspectives, Toscano was able to contact several more Holocaust survivors from other countries such as the United States, Israel, Russia, and Ukraine. Suddenly, a project that initially required the photographs of 70 Holocaust survivors became a project where 200 survivors agreed to participate, have their pictures taken, and have their names and stories heard (Kaiser, "Gesichter gegen das Vergessen").

When Toscano first began contacting organisations in 2014 to receive support for his project, he discovered that the task would be a difficult one, as many organisations doubted the merit of his project, and most were reluctant to fund his work. Likewise, the artist initially had a

difficult time coming into contact with Holocaust survivors who were interested in being a part of his work (Kaiser, “Toscano zeigt ‘Gesichter’”). The team to realize the project consisted of photographer and filmmaker, Luigi Toscano, art historian and cultural manager, Julia Teek, and communications designer, Holger Lehmann (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). The first organisations who agreed to help fund the project were the Kulturstadamt der Stadt Mannheim and the Baden-Württemberg-Stiftung. Toscano also received support from Hans-Joachim Hirsch, a historian who works for the Sandhofen labour camp memorial site and who is also well known for having conducted research on the deported and murdered Jews of Mannheim. Hirsch facilitated the initial contact with the five Polish men who agreed to be photographed in the small hotel room in Mannheim. The artist also received support from the Aktion Sühnezeichen (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace) who helped him connect with Holocaust survivors from Kiev and Moscow. Toscano travelled to Ukraine and Russia where he photographed 43 men and women with the help of Sofia Samoylova, who filmed the documentation, and with the help of a friend who was responsible for translating and communicating. Support also came from the United States Holocaust Museum which facilitated contact with Holocaust survivors now living in the United States. The artist also received support for his project from the Jewish communities in Frankfurt and Köln, where he had the opportunity to locate and come into contact with many Holocaust survivors still living in Germany. Due to the immense support Toscano ended up receiving for his project, not all of the photographed survivors received a place for their picture in the windows of the Alte Feuerwache when the work was initially revealed, so for this reason, all of the photographs and information on the survivors was organized into the extensive picture-book under the same name as his project, *Gegen das Vergessen* (Kaiser, “Toscano zeigt ‘Gesichter’”).

The final result was a powerful display of photos in all of the windows of Mannheim's Alte Feuerwache, where "post-production editing [of the photos] was kept to a minimum, leaving the photographs realistic and pure, but with an aesthetic and powerful expression" ("GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET"). This minimal post-production editing was essential in order to capture a sincere, genuine presentation of the photographed survivors. In doing so, Toscano was ensuring that his documentary art would portray the survivors' faces and expressions exactly as they are, using photography to deliver an honest and real depiction of these individuals. Completely covering the large windows of the fire hall located in Mannheim's busy Neckarstadt district, across from the historic Alter Messplatz, Toscano's project was made unavoidable to the 30,000 to 50,000 people who pass through this area on a daily basis ("GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET"). The project, which has been described as "a collection of human fates" ("GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET"), was essentially an invitation to all passersby to acknowledge and reflect upon the lives of these individuals who were persecuted by the Nazis and are still alive to tell their stories (Kaiser, "Gesichter gegen das Vergessen"). By being displayed in the windows of the Alte Feuerwache, the exhibition was free and all of Mannheim's citizens, regardless of age, interests, or social status, were invited to observe the installation. The photographs portrayed the victims looking forward and directly into the camera, their eyes and faces telling the stories of their lives and fates in various concentration camps during the Nazi era (Kaepelle). Although Toscano intended for the survivors in the photographs to appear emotionless, many of the people appear tired, others appear bitter. Through their expressions, some of the survivors convey strength, and others even seem to be smiling (Fasse). By displaying the photographs of 70 survivors in the giant windows of the fire hall, the goal of the work was made obvious: although Toscano's



original intent was to photograph 70 survivors, his work developed into a project where the goal was to photograph and document as many Holocaust victims, survivors, and witnesses as possible.

The photographs of the victims were “set against a black background, [to] show the people from a frontal perspective. The over-sized presentation focuses on the face, eyes, and the tracks left by the lives of those portrayed. The photographs are devoid of theatrical gesture of facial expression. The people look unemotional and without artificial orchestration” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). This technique of focusing solely on the “unadorned faces of the elderly individuals” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”) was implemented in order to “tell us their stories and make us a part of their lives” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). Many of these people lived in extreme poverty for the majority of their lives and did not receive compensation for what was done to them. Toscano’s project ensures that their stories, faces, and names will not be forgotten, and that the trauma and hardships which they endured at the hands of the Nazis will always be remembered as a part of Germany’s history (Lennartz). The work does not just commemorate the Jewish victims who were condemned by the Nazis, but also other groups who were persecuted, such as the homosexual victims, the Sinti and Roma victims, political prisoners, and also those who were physically and mentally handicapped. Toscano even had the opportunity to travel to southern Germany to interview and photograph two witnesses who had survived the ‘Zigeunerlager’ in Auschwitz-Birkenau (Kaepelle). Toscano has described *Gegen das Vergessen* as one of the most emotional projects he has worked on to date, because working with these people who have survived such atrocities is an extremely serious matter that must be handled

with delicate care. How does one react appropriately to such a horrific accounts (Kaiser, “Toscano zeigt ‘Gesichter’)?

Toscano’s book offers pictures of all 200 witnesses and gives information regarding the individuals such as their names, dates and places of birth, the labour, concentration, and extermination camps they were put into during the Nazi era, and their current places of residence. The photographs, presented along with the black and white pages, give the book a grim and dark appearance which some have described as a “Todesanzeigen” (Fasse), but the opposite is true: the book instead collects photos that demonstrate life and survival in the face of one of the grimmest recorded events in history, and the strength of the people in the pictures reflects the stand they are taking against xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Many of the photographs and their descriptions take up an entire page or two, while others only take up half of a page and some share pages with others. Some readers have complained that the layout of the book and the font of the text make it difficult to read, however, a possible explanation for this could be that this technique was implemented in order to compel readers to analyze the pictures and descriptions more thoroughly than one normally would with any other book. This is perhaps a reminder for the strenuous memory-work and dedication that is necessary to work on such a difficult topic of historic and cultural importance, and that such information should not be so quickly and easily consumed (Hencke).

Overall, Toscano’s work was very well-received. The manager of Mannheim’s Kulturamt, Sabine Schirra, gave the art installation high praise during her speech at the grand opening, and Toscano’s book received a nomination for the Deutscher Fotobuchpreis 2016 (Kaiser, “Gesichter gegen das Vergessen”). In an online article, Toscano’s work is further applauded: “Dieser direkte Blick. Wow. Er zieht mich sofort in seinen Bann. Ich kann gar nicht

anders, als diesem alten Mann in seine blauen Augen zu schauen. Sie sind etwas getrübt, strahlen aber eine faszinierende Tiefe aus” (Hencke). From the documentary interviews, it is clear that the survivors are also very thankful of Toscano’s efforts and are very appreciative of the work he has been doing. Toscano’s work was so well-received that his book was nominated for the Deutscher Fotobuchpreis in 2016 (Toscano, “Gegen das Vergessen Deutscher Fotobuchpreis”).

DMITRIJ BOBENSKIJ  
WYSCHKOWO/POLEN  
1934  
  
1939 BIS 1940  
KONZENTRATIONSLAGER  
NAHE WARSCHAU  
1940  
VERSCHLEPPUNG  
IN DIE UDSSR/  
VERWALTUNGSGEBIET  
ARCHANGELSK/  
SONDERSIEDLUNG  
  
GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN  
KIEW  
26.02.2015



LIDIJA TUROWSKAJA  
WARSCHAU/POLEN  
1929  
  
AUGUST 1944  
WARSCHAUER AUFSTAND  
BIS 3. OKTOBER 1944  
LAGER PRUSZKÓW  
OKTOBER 1944  
KZ AUSCHWITZ/  
KZ NEUENGAMME  
TRENNUNG VON  
DER MUTTER  
APRIL 1945 BEFREIUNG  
IM KZ NEUENGAMME  
  
GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN  
MOSKAU 09.01.2015

Image 35. Page example from Toscano’s *Gegen das Vergessen* picture-book

Photo credit:  
Toscano, Luigi. *Gegen das Vergessen*. Mannheim: Edition Panorama GmbH, 2015. Print.

By watching the documentary videos that Toscano has uploaded to YouTube, viewers have the opportunity to hear some of the survivors, some of whom may be recognizable from the walls of the Alter Feuerwache or from the pages of Toscano’s book, tell their stories. By watching and listening to these people, viewers can observe how these people react, and this

makes their history more real. The survivors explain what happened to their families, which concentration camps they were put into, how they were finally freed, and what they did after the Nazis were defeated. The witnesses tell the stories of deportation that occurred when they were children, and we see Toscano visiting these people in their respective countries to photograph them. The manner in which Toscano interacts with these people is demonstrated as being respectful, attentive, and empathetic. In an interview, Holocaust survivor, Alfred Münzer explains: “I feel it is very important to tell the story of the Holocaust in many different ways, and this is another way of reaching people and telling people what happened during the Holocaust” (United States Holocaust Museum). Münzer was born in 1941 in The Hague, the Netherlands. His two older sisters were killed in Auschwitz in 1944. Münzer lived in hiding in the cellar of an Indonesian-Dutch who took very good care of him. His father died in 1943 near Ebensee, Austria. In 1945, his mother was liberated from the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women by the Swedish Red Cross. In 1952, Münzer and his mother moved to Belgium, and in 1958, they both immigrated to the United States. Today, Münzer resides in Washington D.C. and is a volunteer at the United States Holocaust Museum (United States Holocaust Museum).

Another survivor depicted in the YouTube documentaries is Henry Greenbaum, born as Chuna Grynbaum. Greenbaum reveals: “We promised each other on the death march, that if you – we survive, make sure you tell what they did to you, and I’m keeping my promise. Hopefully the pictures help... it couldn’t hurt” (United States Holocaust Museum). Greenbaum was born in 1928 in Starachowica, Poland, and moved with his family into the Starachowica ghetto in 1940. In October of 1942, Greenbaum’s mother and two of his sisters, as well as his sisters’ children, were sent to the Treblinka extermination camp to be murdered. In 1943, Greenbaum and his sister, Faige, attempted an escape from the Starachowica ghetto; however, Greenbaum was shot

in the head. He survived the attack, but when he awoke, he discovered that his sister had been killed during the escape attempt. In 1944, he was sent to Auschwitz, then Flossenbürg, and from there he was sent to Dachau on a death march. Greenbaum was liberated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 1945 in Neunburg vorm Wald. Once freed, he was able to locate his brother, Zachary, and in 1946 the two brothers immigrated to New York to be with their sister, Dina and their brother, David. Today, Greenbaum lives in Maryland with his wife and is a volunteer at the United States Holocaust Museum (United States Holocaust Museum).

By listening to these interviews which Toscano conducted with these Holocaust survivors and learning about their lives, it is clear that *Gegen das Vergessen* is a catalyst which moves viewers to become interested in these victims and to learn more about their experiences. Each of the witnesses photographed has their own story to tell, and through the creation of his project, Toscano is using photography and contemporary art to make their stories known. In an interview, survivor Andrzej Branecki, one of the initial 5 Polish men who agreed to be photographed, tells the story of how he survived four different concentration camps, including the Adlerwerke concentration camp in Frankfurt (“Gegen das Vergessen – Fotoprojekt”). Lev Selezney tells the story of how he was chased through the forest by a pilot in an airplane who was shooting at him, and how he was sent to concentration camps such as Auschwitz, Oranienburg, Landberg, Landshut, and Dachau (Hencke). Amira Gezow, originally from Mannheim and now living in Israel, explains how she became a forced labourer in the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp in Sandhofen, Mannheim (Kaiser, “Gesichter gegen das Vergessen”). Rema Tchoudnovskaia from Mogilew, Russia, explains how she survived the siege of Leningrad from June, 1941 to May, 1945 (Fasse). 94 year old Horst Sommerfeld from Köln who was imprisoned in Auschwitz explains that after having a telephone conversation with Toscano, that “An der Stimme habe ich

schon gehört, dass ich ihm vertrauen kann” (Kaiser, Kaiser, “Gesichter gegen das Vergessen”), and that “Es ist wichtig, dass sich die Menschen erinnern, was damals geschehen ist” (Kaiser, “Gesichter gegen das Vergessen”). In response to modern anti-Semitic conduct and the importance of having his picture shown in the windows of the Alter Feuerwache, Sommerfeld reveals that, “es ist traurig, dass es da hängen muss” (Kaiser, “Gesichter gegen das Vergessen”), because even 70 years after the Holocaust, such xenophobic behavior is still prominent.

When photographing the survivors, the focus of the survivors’ portraits set against the black background was implemented as a technique to encourage viewers to focus solely on the people’s eyes, faces, and emotionless expressions. The darkness of the background symbolizes the grim history that surrounds these people who were persecuted at the hands of the Nazis. The real photographic portrayal of these survivors offers the feeling that these people were photographed during a genuine moment of reflection and remembering, even though we know that these moments were staged by the artist. The eyes, which are said to be mirrors into the soul, tell the stories of these people’s lives and the trauma that they experienced, and these individual and historical narratives, these “visual stories” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”), are reflected back onto the viewers by compelling them to pose questions about the past, present, and future: Who are these people? Where do they come from? What have they experienced? How is this relevant to me, my society, and my culture, here and now? What lessons can this teach future generations (Hencke)? This process of reflection is amplified by the manner in which the witnesses are looking directly into the camera, their eyes looking straight forward, almost as if they were being held prisoner by the gazes of the viewers who are looking up at them from the street. The confrontation with the individuals in the photographs is exactly what moves viewers and causes them to reflect on these people, their lives, and the open and

sincere manner in which the artist has used photography and contemporary art to tell their stories (Kaiser, “Gesichter gegen das Vergessen”).

The transformation of the historic Alte Feuerwache into a vessel which contains the memories and stories of these photographed individuals who are hanging in the windows is also an interesting technique implemented by the artist; “The walls of the ‘Alte Feuerwache’ create an aesthetically appropriate location for Toscano’s large-formatted photographs, while the building’s windows form the picture frames. Windows are the eyes of a building, sensory organs that sometimes view things we don’t want to see. Our eyes mirror our souls, visualize our emotions, and hint to others how we feel” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). By displaying these photographs in the windows of the old fire hall, the entire building becomes one large memorial that is commemorating not just the photographed witnesses, but also every human being who was persecuted at the hands of the Nazis. It has been described that the realism of the people in the photographs, in a way, personifies the Alte Feuerwache by adding human qualities and presenting human emotions to the building through the portrayal of these witnesses in the windows. By hanging the photographs in the windows, the building seems to come to life with the memories and stories of these individuals who are peering out onto the street, almost emotionless, yet somehow hypnotizing (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN. EINE FOTOINSTALLATION”).

It is also interesting to consider Toscano’s project in contrast to Germany’s *Stolpersteine*, a memorial project first initiated in 1990 that, like *Gegen das Vergessen*, is also commemorative of specific individuals. Rather than elevating the individuals’ faces above the streets and the viewers passing by, *Stolpersteine* document the victims’ stories by inscribing their names and fates on commemorative brass plates that are placed in the ground. With more than 56,000 of the

informative plaques now scattered throughout Europe, this form of remembrance has developed into a well-known phenomenon that has proven to be a successful method of commemoration (“Stolpersteine | Erinnerungsmale für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus”). With that being said, there have also been many Jewish people who have voiced their disagreement towards this project because they did not wish for Germany’s people to once again trample over them, even if only symbolically. For example, the city of Munich decided to ban *Stolpersteine* in 2004 after Charlotte Knobloch, leader of Munich’s Jewish community consisting of 4000 members, former president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and Holocaust survivor, stated her disagreement concerning this form of commemoration, explaining that “people murdered in the Holocaust deserve better than a plaque in the dust, street dirt and even worse filth” (Ziv). The 2004 ban was so severe that the city dug up 2 *Stolpersteine* that had been placed not too long before and which commemorated two Jewish art dealers, Siegfried and Paula Jordan. Even though many efforts from Jewish residents and Holocaust survivors of Munich have been made to have the ban removed, including a petition with over 100,000 signatures, the memorial blocks are still prohibited from being laid on the streets of the city (Ziv). In contrast to Germany’s *Stolpersteine*, Toscano opposes this method of commemoration by placing the over-sized pictures of the photographed survivors in the large windows of the Alte Feuerwache, high above the street and the people walking below, ensuring that the memory of these people will not be stepped on. Instead of peering down at the names of the victims, the people of Germany, the viewers, must look up at the face of these individuals who are now peering down at them (Kaeppele).

The use of photography and video technology which allow the witnesses to deliver their own stories of trauma and survival, in combination with other techniques implemented by the



artist, ultimately prevent *Gegen das Vergessen* from being considered as traditionally monumental. Although the size of the enlarged photographs hanging in the windows of the Alte Feuerwache seems to echo the imposing nature of the traditional 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century monument, “where the ‘monumental’ has traditionally used its size to humiliate or cow viewers into submission” (Young, “Germany’s Holocaust Memorial” 78), Toscano’s work is nonetheless more reflective of the counter-memorials discussed by Young and Huyssen for several reasons. As per usual when discussing such memorials, *Gegen das Vergessen*’s public and readily accessible location at Mannheim’s Alte Feuerwache worked to negate the idea of the invisible monument, because thousands of Mannheim’s citizens had no choice but to witness the project whilst on their way to school, work, or the city centre. The historic Alter Meßplatz situated directly across from the Alte Feuerwache is also considered a social hub for Mannheim’s residents, and here the memorial was plainly visible to all who happened to pass through. Rather than exhibiting the installation within an enclosed area, for example, tucking it away inside the walls of the old fire hall, by displaying the enlarged photographs of the survivors directly in the windows, the memorial became available to everybody, and everyone who passed by was forced to encounter the work, whether they wanted to or not. This technique was implemented so that “every passer-by encounters the visual stories, be it deliberately, by accident, or subconsciously. This democratic concept enables everybody to feel personally stimulated and become part of our culture and historic memory, just like the protagonists in the photographs are part of our society and our history” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). The nature of Toscano’s memorial negates the truly monumental forms that were often used by the Nazis to commemorate their fascist convictions. Rather than embodying his work into a permanent monument that remains unchanging over time, regardless of how the views and attitudes of

Germany's society and culture also change over time, Toscano implemented photography in the form of individual, documented accounts in order to provoke reflection in every viewer who passed by. Regardless of age or nationality, the photographs of the survivors compel viewers to reflect on who these people are, the stories they are trying to convey, and the lessons we as viewers can take away from this.

Toscano's decision to present his work in the form of documentary photographs may have been a consideration for the survivors who he was documenting, as Young explains that "many survivors believe that the searing reality of their experiences demands as literal a memorial expression as possible. 'We weren't tortured and our families weren't murdered in the abstract,' the survivors complain, 'it was real'" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 9). Taking this into consideration, Young forces us to ask ourselves: "if the aim is to remember—that is, to refer to—a specific person, defeat, or victory, how can it be done abstractly" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 11)? For this reason, such a memorial as Toscano's, which documents real survivors sharing personal accounts that will haunt them forever, seems to be the most appropriate form of commemoration for these people who are still alive and would like their memories of persecution and oppression to be acknowledged and remembered. Young stipulates that "what has come to be regarded as 'documentary' art and literature seemed to them the only mode in which evidence or witness could be delivered" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 11). This realism and deliverance of actual, living accounts is exactly what Toscano has achieved by implementing an effective combination of photography, documentation, and contemporary art within his work. Since these people are still alive and because they have braved such grim atrocities, it only seems appropriate that they should be the ones to tell their stories.



Image 36. Photo of Mannheim's Alte Feuerwache, the initial location of the *Gegen das Vergessen* memorial, taken from the neighbouring Alter Meßplatz, July 2016 (photo credit: Richard Barnett)

Similar to the Gerzes' vanishing monument in Hamburg that was once present in the community to take the stance against xenophobia, racism, violent extremism, and anti-Semitism, but has now disappeared from everything but memory, *Gegen das Vergessen* also functions in a similar manner, because the memorial was only exhibited for a few weeks before it was disassembled, as Toscano had scheduled. For those who had the opportunity to view the memorial when it was still exhibited in the large windows of the Alte Feuerwache, these viewers are now forced to recall these photographs for themselves, as the memorial is no longer present to perform the memory-work for them. Viewers who now pass by the Alte Feuerwache and see its empty windows will be compelled to recall the moment when this historic building was transformed into a giant memorial which commemorated the witnesses whose pictures once hung in the windows. Since Toscano had planned for the memorial to be exhibited in other cities and countries around the world, *Gegen das Vergessen* could also be considered what Huyssen describes as "a nomadic installation. It was not designed as a permanent built space but rather as its temporary dissolution" (Huyssen, "Monumental Seduction" 198). The obvious benefit of such a memorial is that it gives the opportunity for people of different cultures and nationalities to be

subjected to the contemporary work, but perhaps more importantly, it negates the assumption that such a project will always be present to commemorate the memories of the victims and that it will always be around to alleviate viewers of having to remember these events and accounts for themselves.

Out of all the commemorative works examined within this thesis, *Gegen das Vergessen* is especially interesting to look at because this is the only project where the people being commemorated were still alive and able to tell their own stories at the time of the memorial's creation. For this reason, it is important to consider that in regards to this contemporary piece, the individual memories of the victims are still alive, and these living memories that are still present within Germany's society, culture, and history are being delivered in the form of photography and documentary art. This is especially important, because as previously mentioned, we are entering a period in time when the witnesses who were persecuted by Nazis are disappearing, and when they go, so do their personal accounts that have gone untold, their individual, living memories. In order to establish a personal and real connection with the past, which is arguably and especially important for younger generations who are only able to read about these events in history books, it is necessary that as many of these stories be recorded in the form of video documentation and photography, for it is a different matter to hear these accounts from a real, living person capable of demonstrating emotion rather than from words on a page. Rather than reading these stories and attempting to understand the emotional experiences for themselves, Toscano's work presents viewers with first-hand accounts, real memories that the victims have gathered the courage to personally share. Taking into consideration the number of Holocaust victims who can no longer be recalled, meaning their names and stories will never be acknowledged, it is important that remaining survivors share their experiences in order to

strengthen the archive of information pertaining to the memories of Holocaust victims. With regard to Assmann's idea of social memory, by observing these personal accounts in the form of photography and video documentation, people of all ages and nationalities are able to witness these people's reactions for themselves. This is important, because it is arguably easier for viewers to empathize with real people who are gathering the courage to tell their own stories rather than to read these accounts from books. In the context of political memory, *Gegen das Vergessen* is consistent with the rest of the memorials presented within this study in the sense that the focus of commemoration is on the victims and having their stories and memories acknowledged.

*Gegen das Vergessen* has been described as an account of visual stories which depict the survivors (also called the protagonists) in a realistic and unfiltered manner, and this authentic presentation has an enormous impact on the viewers' capacity to be emotionally affected by the work. The memorial, in combination with the extensive picture book and the documentary videos which depict the survivors telling their own stories of persecution, deportation, and detainment, present the viewers with a collection of real narratives that tell stories of how these people were oppressed, discriminated against, and while facing almost certain death, still managed to survive. This relates very well to Keen's idea that an artist's realistic presentation of narrative has a significant effect on the viewers' capacity to generate empathy for the depicted characters. When watching the documentary videos, viewers are brought face to face with these people, and they are able to witness the difficulty and delicacy with which these people share their accounts, and the emotions that run through them as they recall these horrific memories that no human should ever have to endure. It is very difficult not to feel empathy for these people who probably do not wish to recall these memories but are still brave enough to tell their stories.

The memorial itself, the pictures hanging in the windows of the Alte Feuerwache, are also enough to generate some emotion; by encountering the emotionless faces of these survivors in the form of documentary art, viewers are compelled to feel for the individuals because of the hardships that they endured. By witnessing these visual stories, viewers are compelled to imagine the unimaginable: “Unvorstellbar, wie ein kleines Mädchen mit ihrer Familie ins KZ gerät, die Eltern dort unmittelbar getötet werden und sie als Versuchskind endet” (Fasse). On a more positive note, the sight of these individuals hanging in the windows may generate in the viewers a sense of relief, relief that these people did indeed survive these horrific events, are able to tell their stories, and are able to carry on with their lives, as difficult as it may be (Fasse).

Ultimately, *Gegen das Vergessen* is a complex memorial project that makes use of modern media technologies such as photography and video documentation in order to deliver real, personal accounts of these people who are being commemorated, their stories of persecution that must not be forgotten. Toscano’s work has been described as “the first public installation of its kind. Although there have been presentations on building façades before in the form of projections or paintings, nothing compares in terms of concept to this project. It is also the most comprehensive open-air display of portraits in a public area” (“GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN – LEST WE FORGET”). A major aspect of the memorial is to provoke the reflection of the viewers with regard to the individuals being portrayed and the grim historical events that are being recalled in order to prevent forgetting. The confrontation with these survivors and their photographs forces viewers to pose questions that are relevant to modern society and culture: What would we do if this happened to our society? How would we feel if those were our pictures hanging in those windows? What would we do, how would we react if we were in the victim’s positions? How can we prevent something like this from ever happening again? Such questions

are necessary and are the result of stimulating reflection and empathetic emotional reactions in the viewers concerning the photographs, descriptions, and video documentation of the surviving witnesses. It is especially important to consider that these individuals had to gather together their entire courage and composure to tell their frightening stories of persecution, especially at such a time when violent and radical movements against refugees, foreigners, and those of different religious beliefs are still prominent in many societies and cultures.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

By examining the four chosen contemporary works, Jochen Kitzbihler's *Glaskubus* (2003), Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012), Horst Hoheisel's *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* (2015), and Luigi Toscano's *Gegen das Vergessen* (2015), all of which commemorate the deported and murdered Jews of Europe during World War II, I have sought to answer whether or not these German counter-memorials of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demonstrate an implementation of new forms and techniques that were not prominently used by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century counter-memorial artist in Germany. Along with answering this question, I also intend to discuss the similarities these memorials have with each other concerning these forms and techniques, as well as other aspects which have been discussed throughout this thesis, for example the importance of the counter-memorials' locations in regards to the people they are commemorating, the historical conclusions portrayed through the works, and the overall messages the works are trying to convey.

It would appear that since the 1990s, Holocaust memorials in Germany are becoming more personalized, more commemorative of individuals rather than a generalized group of victims. This is apparent through the artists' inclusion of individual names on the various commemorative memorials, where each of the victims has their own place that is dedicated specifically to them. In the case of *Gegen das Vergessen*, and perhaps to a lesser extent also *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, the artists decided that providing names would not be enough; they would also need to provide documentary photographs in order to achieve the full potential of their works. In his picture-book, Toscano has provided the names, fates, and present-day photographs of the portrayed survivors in order to depict the terrifying reality of these traumatic events which these people endured and survived. By providing their pictures along with their



names and fates, the survivors have been given the opportunity to silently deliver their visual stories in the form of contemporary art and documentary photography. Concerning *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, the inclusion of documentary photographs was conducted in a different manner, because unlike *Gegen das Vergessen*, Hoheisel's memorial at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof commemorates Jewish victims who are no longer alive to tell their own stories of deportation and genocide. For this reason, provided along with the memorial is the information board which offers several historical pictures of some of these Jews who were deported from Kassel and murdered during the second wave of deportations in 1942. Although most of the victims whose names are engraved onto the tracks at Platform 14 are not pictured on the memorial's information board, the inclusion of some photographs gives viewers the chance to learn more about the victims and the organized deportations.

By including the names of the victims along with these memorials, viewers have the opportunity to tap into the individual stories of these people who faced such atrocities at the hands of the Nazis. Although it is useful and perhaps easier to commemorate a generalized group of people together, artists of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Holocaust memorials are demonstrating that it is perhaps even more necessary that these victims be remembered by their individual names so that their individual stories will not be forgotten, so that their personal histories will not become lost in what Huyssen describes as a sea of frozen memory (Huyssen, "Monument and Memory" 260). Although this technique of including the individual names of the victims, sometimes along with photographs, seems to have been prominently implemented in regards to the four chosen works examined within this study, it is necessary to consider 20<sup>th</sup>-century counter-memorials that have also made use of this technique. Perhaps a good place to start would be with Germany's *Stolpersteine*, a memorial project that began in the 1980's which still continues today, where the

names, birthdates, and fates of Jewish victims are engraved onto metal cobblestones and placed in front of the homes and businesses where these people lived and worked before being deported. In the case of *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, it would be essential to consider the work which Hoheisel conducted concerning the *Denk-Stein-Sammlung* memorial project, where he had students of Kassel research the lives and fates of the city's Jewish community. Hoheisel's book, *Namen und Schicksale der Juden Kassels*, may possibly shed some more light on the importance of collecting these victims' names, and the impact the presentation of these names, in combination with historical or documentary photographs, has on viewers who wish to be informed of such personal and historical evidence. Similarly, in the case of the *Glaskubus*, similar research could be conducted with regards to the collection of names from Mannheim's Jewish population during World War II that was assembled into the book, "*Auf einmal da waren sie weg*": *jüdische Spuren in Mannheim: mit einer Gedenkliste jüdische Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft aus Mannheim* by Klemens Hotz and Leonore Köhler with the help of the Stadtjugendamt Mannheim.

Although the use of photography has just been briefly discussed with regard to *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* and *Gegen das Vergessen*, the use of media technologies in a broader sense also plays a role. In the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, video and audio technologies are implemented as a means of informing the walkers about Kassel's Hauptbahnhof as a historical location, and also to help stimulate reflection concerning the dark history that occurred here. The use of video technology and binaural audio was also used as a means of immersing the walkers with the depicted environments pertaining to Kassel's Hauptbahnhof as a site of cultural and historical importance. The presentation of the acted, dramatized scenes, in combination with the very real facts concerning the train station's history opens up the possibility that the walkers will

be affected, perhaps emotionally, by the different themes and narratives presented throughout the work. In *Gegen das Vergessen*, the use of photography was implemented as a means of helping the viewers establish a memorable connection with the depicted protagonists. Viewers see the photographs and read these people's names, and in doing so, they are acknowledging that these people survived horrific events and are still living to tell their stories. The inclusion of these people's photographs, their faces which tell stories of trauma and survival, help to make these historic events more real for younger generations of viewers for whom such trauma is almost unimaginable and such history seems more like what Huyssen describes as mythic memory (Huyssen, "Monument and Memory" 256). The use of media technology within these two works demonstrates that 21<sup>st</sup>-century artists of German counter-memorials are experimenting more with modern technologies that may help to bridge the temporal gap between the viewers and the victims in order to establish a better understanding of history. In the case of the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* and *Gegen das Vergessen*, media technology was also used as a means of establishing a connection between the viewers and the victims with the use of photographs and video footage presented in the form of a narrative which opens up the possibility for viewers to be affected, to feel for and empathize with the protagonists depicted within the works.

Another interesting point to examine, something which all four chosen contemporary works have in common and which they share with the counter-memorials that were analysed by Young and Huyssen, is the importance of these memorials' locations in regards to the people which they commemorate. As Young points out, "most discussions of Holocaust memorial spaces ignore the essentially public dimension of their performance, remaining either formally aestheticist or almost piously historical" (Young, *The Texture of Memory* 11). For this reason, just like Young and Huyssen with their discussions of 20<sup>th</sup>-century counter-memorials, I too have

chosen to discuss the public locations of the memorials presented within this thesis. Taking into account the discussions presented by Young, Huyssen, and myself concerning the locations of counter-memorials, it seems to be a necessity that memorials of this nature be displayed publicly and readily, as is apparent when examining the busy, central locations of the *Glaskubus* monument and the *Gegen das Vergessen* memorial, spaces where these commemorative works become unavoidable to all who pass through. With regards to *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, the busy location of Kassel's Hauptbahnhof is also consistent with that of the previously mentioned memorials. Furthermore, the location of the memorial at Platform 14 from where Kassel's Jewish population was deported is also representative of these traumatic historical events that occurred there. The *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, also located at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, holds similar significance to its location as the *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* memorial, because they both commemorate the same group of victims who were deported from this location. Similarly, the *Glaskubus*' centralized location at Mannheim's Paradeplatz also holds historical and cultural significance due to the fact that this was the location of many Jewish homes and businesses prior to World War II. Taking these findings into consideration, it would seem that the locations of such counter-memorials which commemorate the Jewish victims of World War II, regardless of whether they were created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century or the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are just as important to consider as the memorials themselves.

Out of the four chosen works, the *Glaskubus* monument seems to retain the most traditional monumental form because it does not change, does not evolve, it remains permanent. The monument appears the same now as it did when it was erected in 2003, and for this reason, this 21<sup>st</sup>-century counter-memorial is the most reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century monumental forms. *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* also seems to possess similarities to the monumental forms of

the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the fact that the names engraved on the tracks become rusted and worn out overtime works to negate the concept of the eternally unchanging monument. The *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* and the *Gegen das Vergessen* memorial projects, with their prominent use of modern media technologies, demonstrate the least traditional forms of monumentalism. Since we have concluded that the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* evolves and changes with its environment, Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, this prevents this counter-memorial from being associated with the monumental forms of the past. Also described within this thesis as a vanishing memorial and a nomadic installation, *Gegen das Vergessen* opposes the seemingly everlasting permanence of the traditional monument by temporarily transforming an entire building into one big memorial. Even though some of these memorials demonstrate forms that could be considered more traditionally monumental than others, each has proven to be an effective method of informing the viewers and stimulating historical, as well as personal reflection.

As Young points out, an appropriate Holocaust memorial should not only focus on the trauma and terror experienced by Europe's Jews, but it should also remind us of the magnitude of Jewish life and culture that was lost (Young, "Germany's Holocaust Memorial" 73). Taking this stipulation into account, it is important to consider the ways in which each of the chosen works accomplishes these two tasks. Works such as the *Glaskubus* and *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise* use the inclusion of names as a technique to underscore the significant loss of Jewish life from Mannheim and Kassel, because by encountering the memorials, viewers are subjected to the many individual names of the deported and murdered Jews. In the case of the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, the sounds of the people and passengers rushing by on the pre-recorded sound track at Platform 13 encourage viewers to reflect on the feelings of confusion and dread that were experienced by Kassel's Jews as they were boarding the trains at that same spot. At the same

time, by leading the viewers to Platforms 13 and 14 of Kassel's Hauptbahnhof, viewers are given the opportunity to learn more about the specific individuals who were deported from this location, because they encounter the names engraved on the tracks of *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, and by doing so, they are also confronted with this void. In *Gegen das Vergessen*, because the victims were still alive at the time of the memorial's creation, Toscano's project brings to light the stories and fates of Holocaust survivors rather than focusing on the loss of life and culture. The photographs of the victims' faces, as well as the stories and descriptions in the picture-book and the documented accounts on YouTube, work in combination to inform viewers of the traumatic experiences that these people endured and survived. For this reason, despite Young's stipulation that Holocaust memorials should concentrate on both the destruction of life and the void left behind, it seems that *Gegen das Vergessen* is more reflective of the terror and destruction of the Holocaust rather than this loss of life. At the same time, however, by reading and listening to the survivors' stories, *Gegen das Vergessen* reminds viewers that most Holocaust victims were not fortunate enough to survive such trauma and that many will never be commemorated because their names and stories are forever lost.

Although the various contemporary works examined within this thesis each commemorate different individuals and different groups of Jewish people who were affected by the Nazis, they all nonetheless seem to convey similar messages and present similar historical conclusions in regards to Germany's history of Nazism. A similar theme present within each of the works is, not only are they reflective of the specific individuals whom they commemorate, but on a bigger scale, they are also representative of every Jewish person who was deported and murdered during the Nazi regime, regardless of nationality. While the *Glaskubus*, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, and *Gegen das Vergessen* use the inclusion of names to underscore the

importance of commemorating individual victims, at the same time the memorials not only work to remind us of the loss of Jewish life and culture from Mannheim and Kassel, but also the entire country as a whole. Each of these memorials seeks to bring to light the horrific experiences that these people were forced to endure, these people who were religiously, ethnically, and ethically discriminated against. For this reason, these memorials work to remind us that we too must take a stance against anti-Semitism, that we too must take a stance against similar injustices such as racism, xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny, and violent extremism. As Young stipulates, Holocaust memorials to Europe's murdered Jews should "not speak for the Nazis' other victims, but [they] may, in fact, necessitate further memorials to them" (Young, "Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem" 72). This is accomplished by generating discussion about the different groups of Holocaust victims, how to appropriate their memory, and through what forms of commemoration. Since these memorials seek to prevent the events of World War II from ever happening again, it is necessary to broaden our understanding of what these memorials truly seek to achieve, the understanding that any form of bigotry cannot be tolerated.

Effectively, the study of Holocaust memorialization in Germany has evolved immensely since the 1980s, and artists of memorials and memory are beginning to work with new media, forms, and techniques which have proven to be useful in diminishing the temporal gap between younger generations of viewers and the historical victims of these events. The forms and techniques of the counter-memorials presented within this study each work, in their own way, to establish a connection between the viewers and the victims, while simultaneously seeking to educate the viewers and to instill in them an understanding of these historical events. In response to the work conducted throughout this thesis, other questions and areas of research that deserve further analysis are: like the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, what other counter-memorials could be

considered spatial installations, and how are these memorials also dependant on their environment? Like the *Glaskubus*, *Das Gedächtnis der Gleise*, and the *Gegen das Vergessen* memorial projects, what other counter-memorials employ the individual names of the victims as a technique of commemoration, and for what reasons might this technique be used other than establishing a connection between the viewers and victims? Like the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* and *Gegen das Vergessen*, what other counter-memorials make use of media technology, and how do they make use of audio and video components? Does the use of media bridge the temporal gap for younger generations of viewers? How will modern technologies such as phone apps and GPS maps influence the development of counter-memorials in the future? Similar to the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, what other counter-memorials are produced specifically for the art world, and are these memorials normally well received? Similar to *Gegen das Vergessen*, what other counter-memorials assume the role of documentary art? Such questions will help in shaping our understanding of the counter-memorial's role in modern culture and society, 25 years after Young and Huyssen first brought these kinds of memorials to our attention.

Although the memorials introduced in this thesis make use of modern forms, techniques, and mediums that were not exhaustively explored by artists of monuments and memorials of the 19<sup>th</sup> or even 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, that does not mean that “today’s monuments, designed and built with great public participation, lively debate and memorial engagement will not one day stand, like their predecessors... as figures of forgetting” (Huyssen, “Monument and Memory” 255). We as viewers, students, and researchers of Holocaust monuments and memorials must remind ourselves that Holocaust memorial culture in Germany is constantly changing, and discussion and contemplation regarding this topic will always be necessary. Similarly, Young asserts that “in the end, the counter-monument reminds us that the best German memorial to the fascist era



and its victims may not be a single memorial at all—but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end” (Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory”). Such a debate concerning the preservation of memory is ongoing, and for every new memorial to the victims of World War II that is created, new discussions will be generated, previous assumptions will be challenged, and our understanding of these historical events, as well as their impacts on present-day societies and cultures, will be tested.

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