INSCRIBING MEMORY:

Art and the Place of Personal Expressions of Grief in Memorial Culture

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney

December 2016
STATEMENT

This volume is presented as a record of the work undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my Supervisor, Dr Julie Rrap for her thoughtful input and guidance and my Associate Supervisor, Dr Jacqueline Millner for her ongoing support.

My special thanks to Anne Ferran for her sage words, prodigious editing skills, cups of tea and friendship.

Heartfelt thanks and gratitude to my wonderful HDR cohort at SCA. The support, discussions, wisdom, laughs and tears throughout these past few years have been amazing.

Thanks to my family.

And biggest thanks to Robert Griffin – for everything!
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ABSTRACT

Expressing grief and engaging in mourning are vital healing processes for those who have experienced loss, trauma or violence. Regardless of whether in the distant past or as an ongoing condition, evidence suggests that the mourning process and the partaking of commemorative rituals are essential to the psychological and emotional wellbeing of the individual. This thesis considers artistic alternatives to the role that monuments and memorials have traditionally played in assisting this process. A range of theorists and philosophers including those in the fields of art criticism, history, and trauma studies are referred to in ascertaining not only how monuments and memorials work, but the role that contemporary art can play in imparting meaningful remembrance and solace. This project tests the proposition that contemporary art, through both public and personal expression, can offer an open-ended re-evaluation of the past, instead of the static nature of traditional commemoration. I contend that this can be realised in the form of actions and ephemeral, temporary and materially challenging artistic means in engaging the viewer empathically. I will advance arguments to challenge fixing memory in place and time while also arguing for the place of smaller, more personal expressions of remembrance. My studio practice incorporates pertinent psychological aspects such as postmemory and trauma-induced forgetting in the form of absence, and considers the work of key artists. This studio work investigates materiality – as both traditionally employed in memorial culture, such as metal and stone - and other forms including textiles and more fugitive examples such as hair and the use of fire. The relevance of time, memory and ritual are also evident in this work as well as in the thesis. Although informed by personal, familial experience – often conveyed through my use of family possessions - my works appeal to broader aspects of memorial culture, engaging in customs and rituals and universal themes of loss and grief.
PREFACE

Having been born into a family of Hungarian, Jewish migrants in the late 1950s in suburban, North Shore Sydney, my sense of ‘other’ became finely and painfully honed from a very young age. The assumed superiority and casual racism of our neighbourhood – coupled with the puzzlingly apologetic, deferential demeanor that my cultured parents adopted – served to isolate us and incubate the seeds of shame, as is so common to ‘otherness’.

Within our family a complex dynamic of selective reminiscences emerged, where fond memories of a past ‘home’ resided alongside a painful family history. While we children knew that the Holocaust had affected the lives of our parents’ extended family and acquaintances, it was not a topic that was easily approached nor navigated. I have known for as long as I can remember that my mother’s sister, brother and brother-in-law were murdered; my orphaned cousin adopted by my mother’s remaining sister. Over the years we also learnt that family members lived in various Budapest ghettos, working at times in forced labour camps. My mother, aged 17, was arrested and interrogated by the right-wing Hungarian Arrowcross – an incident she would never talk about - related to me by my aunt. Other stories emerged including my father and grandmother’s rescue by the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg when they were lined up with other Jews to be shot. But our questions of this history were often deflected, met with silence, or worst of all with anguish. While these responses were undoubtedly symptomatic of my family’s unresolved trauma and bereavement, it served to colour my own world view in a very particular way: feelings of anxiety and vulnerability accompanied my childhood as did a sense of guilt and responsibility for what I perceived to be my parents’ burden of sadness.

This sadness, as I was to learn much later - bound closely to past traumatic events – often typified the generation who had lived through the Holocaust. Of even greater interest to me was the phenomenon of inherited memory; that is, the passing down of this trauma, anxiety and sadness to subsequent generations to be absorbed by them as if by osmosis. Initially, I chanced upon
this condition – commonly referred to as postmemory, a term coined by theorist Marianne Hirsch – in the early stages of my previous Masters degree. Inspired to delve deeper into the psychological drivers behind the artwork I was creating at the time, the discovery of postmemory discourse and its potential application to art had a profound and lasting impact not only on my artwork but also on my life. Recognising familial patterns of behaviour along with sociological and psychological theory enabled a new depth of understanding. Even more significantly, I felt a sense of belonging and validation in knowing that I wasn’t alone in having sadness and powerlessness as unwelcome lifelong companions.

I also recognised that absence was a defining concept that could manifest in several ways; the death or unknown fate of loved ones hung over the living, objects often stood in for the absent person or could act as triggers to the past, and the passing of time often served to emphasise the lost past. Less obvious were the gaps and selectivity of memory, the contestable versions of events, and the byproduct of silence – experienced as the deflection of questions as mentioned earlier, accompanied by an obvious discomfort. It also became clear to me that my parents – like most of their fellow survivors - had not only denied themselves the opportunity to properly grieve, but had been actively discouraged to do so. Whether as immigrants (even to Israel) or in remaining in their native countries, no one was keen to address this past – the emphasis seemed to be on getting on with the future. I observed that in their eagerness for integration and acceptance, my parents and their circle of friends and acquaintances had ceased to talk of their experiences – even amongst themselves – some even opting to renounce their Judaism. The stoicism that my parents and relatives adopted often translated as a disregard for any hardships that my siblings and I may encounter, leaving us to feel unsupported, that our difficulties paled beside what they had experienced. My aunt’s familiar refrain “self-control is all” still resounds.

Until my first visit to Hungary in 2012, the influence of this family background had had a minimal impact on my artwork, seeping into it mainly as an
amorphous darkness. Visits to various significant sites related to Jewry and the Holocaust, including an old Jewish cemetery that became a catalyst to many of the works discussed in this PhD, served to clarify and consolidate the various strands of my research. The experiences I had and research I undertook during this time made sense not only of my own situation, but highlighted to me a wider phenomenon - a commonality to survivors and relatives of other mass violence and trauma. It was evident to me that the need to express grief, lament and to actively demonstrate remembrance extended well beyond the formality of the traditional monument or memorial. These expressions were evident in the personal messages written onto memorials, notes and mementos left at graves or makeshift memorials intended as protests to unresolved conflicts. As has been demonstrated by various artists in this PhD, artwork can be a powerful means of expressing the grief, powerlessness and anger common to those who have suffered various forms of mass trauma either first- or second-hand. Absence can be addressed and powerfully expressed with the deployment of ephemeral and alternative material means, engaging the viewer in thoughtful exchange. In my own work smaller, more personal expressions of remembrance have also been utilised to demonstrate the comfort and inclusiveness of rituals such as the lighting of memorial candles or the Jewish tradition of leaving a stone on a person’s grave – signaling connection and continuity. Engaging with personal objects such as my mother’s dowry linen similarly enacts this sense of connection. In realising these works conceptually and opting to utilise a variety of often unconventional materials alongside more traditional ones, my aim has been to convey affect and involve the viewer experientially, sharing these important, difficult, universal experiences.
INSCRIBING MEMORY: Art and the Place of Personal Expressions of Grief in Memorial Culture

INTRODUCTION

*Remembrance is a performance of memory.*¹

The Research Question

The role of monuments and memorials, as the archetypal symbols of memorial culture, has long been regarded as important in unifying a community and supporting the grieving process. In more recent times, this view has increasingly come under question from a number of historians and philosophers concerned with what they consider to be inadequacies regarding the traditional monuments or memorial’s capacity to adequately embody the memory experience of the community.²

As a practicing artist, I have been struck by the paradoxical experience of feeling immense gratification in dealing with painful subject matter, both creatively and in engaging with research. This conundrum has led me to consider the question – or questions – around how to best represent grief and express remembrance by means other than the traditional monument or memorial. Consequently, some of the questions this thesis will pose include: Why do some monuments and memorials foreclose remembrance while others do not? How do ephemeral art, counter-memorials and actions work as aids in assisting us to mourn and express grief? What materials are more conducive to affective memory-work? How do we engage with bereavement when the channels to do so appear closed – for example, as a result of political turbulence or religious disenfranchisement? And lastly, how do smaller, more personal acts of remembrance relate to the broader memorial culture?

In the writing and research of this thesis, I will be arguing that ephemeral and alternative forms of memorialising and actions assist us to grieve and find

solace as both makers of these artistic forms, and/or as participators or onlookers. Choices in materiality, consideration of temporal aspects, and political concerns will serve to both liken and differentiate between public acts of commemoration and private studio and gallery-based artworks and more intimate, personal displays of grieving. I intend to demonstrate my belief that ephemeral and alternative forms of art, and their links to ephemeral monuments, memorials and actions give balance to our understanding of death and trauma in their capacity to bridge the gap between grieving and acceptance. I have posed this question for the following reasons:

- I am interested in the idea of finding solace from trauma in the physical act of creating memory work, in the viewing of certain art and in collective or shared grief.
- I would like to investigate the link between art and memory work
- I am keen to consider the effect of experiencing a creative expression of trauma or grief and holding it as remembrance as opposed to the experience of encountering a finite monument or memorial.
- I am interested in testing how traditional elements of commemoration, such as the gathering of names translates to alternative forms of memorialising.
- I wish to position my own art practice dealing with memory work within the field of contemporary art.
- My personal history (as explained in the Preface) has led me to examine these questions, influenced my art practice and impelled me to investigate the role of art in finding solace.

While there has been a significant amount written about monuments and memorial culture, the artists and architects involved in memory work and counter-memorials and artistic alternatives that respond to ‘traditional’ forms of memorialisation, I believe that my work will contribute to this topic in the following ways:

- While I will be discussing traditional forms of memorialising, this will be to serve and strengthen my argument for the effectiveness of ephemeral
forms and actions. I will not engage in directly discussing architecture and museums unless they are integral to the artwork discussed.

- While individual artists have written and spoken of their work in this area, I am interested in a select range of artists responding specifically to two periods of political conflict, that is, the Holocaust of World War Two, and the murders and ‘disappearances’ in late twentieth and early twenty-first century South America. Additionally, I will also contrast the circumstances of contemporary Australian artists (including myself) to these events.

- An examination of Australian artists introduces the opportunity to analyze and contextualise temporal differences between them and the European and South American cases. My research indicates that these intersections have not previously been considered within the field of visual art. It also introduces the role of domesticity, familial relationships and postmemory discourse into my argument.

- Although many of the artists and cases I will be examining have been written about quite extensively, as has the idea of art, transience and mourning, I believe my research has created fresh perspectives. One British artist/academic in particular, Mary O’Neill has written a PhD and since published extensively on the link between ephemeral art, mourning and loss. However, my research and thesis is distinguishable from hers in my consideration of the various aspects detailed above in relation to monuments and memorials and notably, the artists she discusses vary both in approach and materiality to the ones I will be discussing.

- Original research, involving documentation and site visits to Europe, has resulted in a case study in one of the chapters in this thesis. I believe that this case study, which has not been written about previously, will prove to be a valuable contribution to the area of makeshift and ephemeral memorials.

Expressing grief is a vital process to those who have experienced trauma or violence in the past or as an ongoing condition. Evidence suggests that a mourning process and partaking in commemorative rituals is essential to the
psychological and emotional wellbeing of an individual. The commemorative actions and artworks examined in this thesis demonstrate their affective potential to engage the viewer with a range of elegiac, often provocative works that provide solace whilst not necessarily conforming to the typical commemorative experience. These works also demonstrate the valuable role the artist can take in involving viewers in collective, experiential participation.

While many of the terms referring to monuments, memorials and their variations are explained in chapters specific to their occurrences, some frequently referred to ones warrant definition here. While the distinctions between monuments and memorials are detailed in Chapter One (Monuments and Memorials), other terms are defined as follows:

Anti-memorials and monuments, or counter-memorials and monuments, both aim to challenge traditional, permanent forms of commemoration. They often respond to the perceived complacency of many conventional examples of memorials and monuments. They are considered as Alternative forms of memorialising, that is, those works utilising unconventional processes or materials not normally associated with traditional monumentality or memorial works. This may also be realised in the form of Actions – interventions which are usually public and often participatory; or as Ephemeral works that are characterised by an intentionally limited lifespan, or an irreversible change of state. Embodied processes are those instances where the physical engagement of the artist with the material is paramount in the production of the work; or where the body plays a significant role in shaping or determining the physical outcome of the work. The states and processes of mourning and grieving are frequently referred to in this paper, and whilst similar in meaning, are distinguishable by the subtle temporal differences in dealing with loss: While grief (orig. from the Latin gravis, ‘heavy, grave’) is the more immediate, emotional, intense sorrow in reaction to loss; to mourn (orig. Old English

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4 These terms, and several others, are explained in greater detail in Chapter Two (Ephemeral Memorials, Actions and Counter-monuments)
murnan, ‘to long, bemoan, long after’) is the process undertaken to deal with the void left by the loss.⁵

Alternative forms of memorialising such as actions and temporary or ephemeral art possess the capacity to engage the viewer, impart affect and remain in the memory as an alternative to traditional means of commemoration. In discussing the impact that these works and actions have, I will also argue for the place of smaller, more personal expressions of remembrance alongside those more public and monumental expressions more popularly critiqued. Some of these may originate from personal possessions or mementos, while others derive from customs and rituals, such as the lighting of candles – common to many faiths. Some of these rituals and how they manifest into artworks will be examined, for example, in my work with yahrzeit candles and in Colombian artist Doris Salcedo’s lighting of candles in Accion de Duelo (Act of Mourning) in Bogota, Colombia.

The work of several key theorists will be referred to in discussing key concepts throughout this thesis. Theorist Pierre Nora’s influential work on sites of memory - Les lieux de Memoire - in examining the relationship of memory to history will be referred to in Chapters One and Two.⁶ Temporality and its significance to memory work, memorialising and artistic expression permeates each chapter. The many aspects of the temporal - ranging from ephemerality, the performative aspects of memorialisation, our interactions with various monuments and memorials, or in our interpersonal relationships to the events being represented - will be discussed. As theorist Mieke Bal asserts, art works require time and attention to unfold and be understood – much as texts are commonly perceived to be.⁷ Several of Bal’s works have been influential to this thesis, particularly in relation to art and duration and the works of Doris Salcedo. Bal, in challenging the long-held assumption that ‘images unfold in space, texts in time’ further questions the proposition that while text is measured by ‘the standard of its

processing’, that is, by how it is intellectually understood or intuited; the image is measured by ‘its ontological mode of existence’ – or, our acceptance of its physicality without the need to invest time for analysis.\(^8\) I understand this to be an issue based on presumptions regarding the immediacy of understanding and agree with Bal’s opposition to such assumptions that ‘strike the image dumb and fix it in stillness.’\(^9\) The works examined throughout this paper defy such assumptions, whilst advancing arguments to challenge the propensity of some monuments and memorials to disengage from remembrance. This disengagement, otherwise known as ‘forgetting’, where the work of memory is done for the mourner or viewer is discussed in Chapter One (Monuments and Memorials).

Bal’s coining of the term ‘sticky images’ succinctly describes those works which hold the viewer in thrall, inducing a feeling of temporal variation where time is slowed down yet viscerally experienced.\(^10\) She applies this term in analysing Salcedo’s work, amongst others, as a way to connect various political and social backgrounds, use of media and materiality.\(^11\) I will discuss the work of Salcedo in Chapters Two and Three alongside that of other artists including myself, addressing the issue of how alternative means of commemoration can engage the viewer and express grief.

Temporal aspects - particularly historical contexts are significant within the scope of this paper. For example, artists dealing with recent or ongoing violent and volatile issues such as the ‘disappeared’ of South America will have a different experience and relationship to trauma than those responding to events from several decades earlier, such as the Holocaust. In the latter case, it is usually second or subsequent generations responding to the trauma and consequences of the event rather than the survivors themselves. Many are expressing the implications of experiencing such trauma second-hand as second-generational witnesses or through testimonies; phenomena which shall

\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) “Sticky Images: The Foreshorting of Time in an Art of Duration.”
\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^11\) Bal et al., Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth.
be explored through the framework of postmemory discourse. \textsuperscript{12} Postmemory underpins much of this thesis as my experiences of being the child of Hungarian, Jewish Holocaust survivors inform the work I have produced and the interest I have in artistic expressions of commemoration and grief. Postmemory, a term coined by Marianne Hirsch, describes the relationship that the next generation bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those before them; to experiences they intuit and ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors that they grew up with. These experiences are often so deeply and affectively transmitted to them as to appear to constitute memories in their own right. \textsuperscript{13} The power of this form of memory is when, to quote Hirsch, ‘its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through speech, on the invisible rather than the visible, and a highly selective point of view.’ \textsuperscript{14} This characteristic passing down of images, stories, and documents from one generation to the next, makes an object such as my childhood dress - the inspiration for my work \textit{Hair Rabbits}, described in Chapter Three - archetypal in triggering difficult childhood recollections. The less quantifiable aspects of postmemory, such as the affects of silence or selective memories (or the withholding of memory) will be discussed later, particularly in Chapters Two and Four together with the work of theorists Jill Bennett and trauma theorist Cathy Caruth. The temporal aspects of our attachment to objects and their capacity to act as triggers to memories and places is included in Chapter Four where I interrogate the role of such items, regarding them as testimonial objects.

Many of the artworks I have produced will be discussed throughout the paper. Some of the experimental work I carried out will also be discussed within the context of how my material and aesthetic decisions developed. While the term

\textsuperscript{12} Postmemory is the subject of many books and articles written by feminist theorist Marianne Hirsch and referred to by several other theorists. Hirsch’s books \textit{Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory}, \textit{The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust} and journal articles \textit{Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile} and \textit{Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory} have all informed this paper and accompanying creative work.


'postmemory' has not previously been specifically associated with some of the artists I will refer to - such as Shimon Attie, Kathy Temin and others with relevant cultural or familial connections - I will argue for the relevancy of applying postmemory to several of their works. Academic James E. Young, whose expertise is in memorial culture – with particular expertise in regards to the Holocaust - writes about Attie and several other artists referred to in this thesis. My personal interests have also inspired an investigation into the ability of embodied artistic process to enact solace. This is described throughout this paper and more particularly in Chapter Four (Intimate Memorials) where a series of artworks and actions originating from personal family possessions are linked to ritual, remembrance and identity through my artworks.

The embodied processes in the making of work can often play an important role in unfolding meaning, creating space for contemplation, and the possibility of working towards reconciling grief. These processes will be addressed in terms of their ability to negotiate time and represent victims of trauma or the voiceless. The role of ritual is similarly examined in its capacity to provide a means of comfort through connection and communication. Artist Ann Hamilton’s references to the labour of creating as a way of ‘knowing’, has strong resonances to my own creative processes, as described in Chapter Four.15 Her stated belief that the body leaves a transparent presence in the material, also ties in with the materiality and physicality of the works of the artists I examine – particularly Doris Salcedo. In addition, Hamilton’s associations of using her hands in making, and the resultant bodily memories that recall and reinforce familial connections are of particular relevance to me in light of the work have made with similar intentions.16 This corresponds directly to my own experiences described in Chapter Three, and more extensively in Chapter Four, where several of my works employ labour-intensive, time-consuming methods to engender connections through materiality and ritual.

The desire to reach across time - or, as Bal describes Salcedo’s work, ‘rubbing the past into the present’ – is demonstrated in several of the works discussed in this thesis.\(^{17}\) I will argue that this desire could be considered and experienced as a kind of longing which can be further extrapolated as a condition of mourning. I will further argue that the use of repetition and ritualistic processes – whether in laying out stones, stitching, or lighting memorial candles - expands time, giving space to thought and reflection. This aspect of time moving back and forth is comparable to aspects of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serre’s theories on time that will be expanded on in Chapter Two. Both Deleuze and Serres refer to the non-linearity of time in their theories of time ‘folding’ in Deleuze’s case, as outlined in his work *The Fold*, and time ‘crumpling’ for Serres, in various works as well as in interview with philosopher Bruno Latour.\(^{18}\) This concept of folding and crumpling is particularly useful when considering the connection between memory, experience and making. Both also consider life and existence as topological rather the geometrical, which will be examined in relation to the works in later chapters.

Various artists will be discussed in relation to their approaches to representing trauma and violent situations both past and present; their relationships to monuments or commemoration; and their approaches to representing grief. The key artists whose works will be examined alongside my own include Oscar Muñoz, Doris Salcedo, Esther Shalev-Gerz, Jochen Gerz, Horst Hoheisel, and Kathy Temin. The works of Shimon Attie, Lika Mutal, Gunter Demnig, Andy Goldsworthy and Anish Kapoor will also be referred to. All the artists discussed in this thesis are notable for their distinctive means of negotiating trauma and mourning, their deployment of materiality, and the context within which the work is situated. The various characteristics of the work of several of these artists will see inevitable overlaps between chapters; for example, those works by Doris Salcedo’s regarded as actions will be covered in Chapter Two (Ephemeral Memorials, Actions and Counter-Monuments), while her installation work will be discussed in Chapter Three (Materiality). Similarly, the connections to family

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\(^{17}\) Bal et al., *Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth*, 44.

history and relationship to memorialisation that informs the work of Kathy Temin is discussed in Chapter Four (Intimate Memorials), while the materiality – so vital to these works – is mainly encountered in Chapter Three. My own work is related throughout this thesis as it applies to each chapter, often with thematic overlaps.

Following on from the concerns raised in the Preface concerning the problematics of representing trauma and mourning, Chapter One – Monuments and Memorials, examines the role of monuments and memorials, their history, who they serve and how they attempt to do this. The role of monuments and memorials is considered alongside counter-monuments and actions, with each term defined, and each distinguished from the other. The role of ephemerality is also contrasted with the authority, effects and meaning of permanency. James E. Young is referred to for his extensive work regarding the inherent shortcomings of memorials and his insights into artistic alternatives. Jill Bennett is cited for her insights on sense memory and on the contributions from the early work of Gilles Deleuze.19

The anti-memorial work of artists Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz are offered as works that challenge inert memory by staging actions and inviting participation in works that provoke responses and invite further questions. This chapter also examines three case studies that illustrate this approach while demonstrating the role that spontaneous actions can play in questioning the status quo and subverting meaning. The first case, the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial in Washington, is an example of a memorial that, while conforming to the traditional narrative of the stone monument with lists of names of the fallen, nonetheless shifts conventional expectations. The second case, the Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation in Budapest, Hungary looks at the political furor in response to what was widely considered to be a gross neglect in acknowledging the role that Hungary played in conspiring to murder its Jewish population during World War II. Many responded by constructing counter-

monuments in the form of makeshift memorials as a form of protest. Lastly, the *Holocaust Memorial* in Kozma utca Jewish cemetery, Hungary, examines the effects of hand-written additions to the memorial and contrasts this with the ramifications of institutional will. This case also raises the role of graffiti, prompting questions concerning what constitutes acts of vandalism.

**Chapter Two - Ephemeral Memorials, Actions and Counter-monuments**, offers a deeper analysis of ephemeral and alternative memorials, actions and counter-monuments, considering the politics of alternative forms of commemoration and memorialising. This is then related to my own work. This chapter also attempts to distinguish between particular descriptors in the making of this art such as *ephemeral, temporary, time-based, makeshift or spontaneous, anti-memorial or counter-monument, and actions*. Slippages, similarities and overlaps between these categories and various works are acknowledged and discussed, and the temporal distinctions of each explored. Other temporal implications, such as the artist’s connection to the events they are representing are contextualised. For example, the works of Doris Salcedo, including the action *Tenebre Noviembre 6 and 7, 1985* and her silent staging of *Accion de Duelo* (Act of Mourning) in Bogota, Colombia, draw attention to current politics and often invite all those present to participate in an act of remembrance.

Other artists to be discussed include Shimon Attie and his utilisation of light and projection; Eva Hesse in demonstrating variations and permutations of ephemerality. The provocative nature of the anti-memorial work of other European artists responding to memorialisation after the Holocaust such as Jochen Gerz, Esther Shalev-Gerz and Horst Hoheisel will be compared and considered alongside the methods and motivations of South American artists such as Doris Salcedo and Oscar Muñoz. The work of theorists Alison Purpura and Mary O’Neill are referred to on ephemeral art, while James E. Young, amongst several others, are vital to my arguments relating to counter-memorials and anti-monuments. Pierre Nora’s seminal work on sites of memory *- Les lieux de Memoire* – is instructive in considering the relationship of memory and history.
to counter-memorial art. Michel Serres and Gilles Deleuze will be referred to for their interest in temporality, specifically regarding the ideas of ‘folded’ time and ‘crumpled’ time, and Dori Laub and Daniel Podell’s theories link empty space metaphorically to a hole in the psyche will also feature.

Chapter Three - Materiality

This chapter considers the effects, implications and potential of the materiality of monuments and memorials through time, and the circumstances that have led to alternative art forms to express memorialisation. The concept of time – and associated notions of timelessness and timeliness - is paramount in discussing and understanding the evolution of memorial culture.

Initially, the history and inherent qualities of materials traditionally used for commemoration, their affective qualities and associated traditional values will be considered. These applications and sets of values will then be contrasted to the work of those seeking to challenge the long-held status quo relating to monuments and modes of memorialising. Several of the artists discussed here, including myself, subvert the traditional usage of materials while others establish new meanings or challenge conventions, harnessing the very qualities that popularised these materials historically. Other artists have elected to use materials well outside the usual choices of memorial culture. A range of materials are dealt with – starting with variations on the traditional materials stone and metal – before considering various fugitive materials in the form of dust and fire, shadow and light; textiles, and the extreme position of anti-materiality.

The experiential aspects of materials – how they make us feel, how we interpret them - and what engenders a visceral experience for both the artist and the viewer are addressed here. The diversity of materiality in my work will be examined, including more personal materials such as family linen – so often downplayed or dismissed as ‘womens’ work’ or ‘craft’.
Chapter Four – *Intimate Memorials*

In this chapter, the relevance and significance of names and the written word are explored, bringing together threads that have run throughout this thesis. Initially, the importance of names will be considered historically through the frame of Jewish culture and how this has manifested into contemporary memorial work. Anne Karpf and Jean Baudrillard, Arthur Danto and others are referred to with regard to the importance of names and naming, with Karpf linking this to commemorative books. This leads into a discussion on the history and origins of the Jewish custom of yizkor bikher – or memorial books - linking to more contemporary examples of memorials responding to this learned, bookish aspect of Jewish culture.

The discussion will then move into an exploration of the how the traditional engraved listings of names that we have come to expect from monuments and memorials have progressed beyond the predictable roll-call of victims to embrace issues pertaining to identity, politics and memory. This will necessitate an exploration into the agency of names and naming, ranging from the politics and contestation of names, the emergence of the AIDs quilt project, and more personal modes of memorialising as seen in my own work involving personal and family objects, and the cryptic deployment of titles in the work of Kathy Temin. The influence of hand-written additions to memorials and monuments, as demonstrated in my encounter with the Holocaust Memorial in Hungary, are examined, contextualising my own work and the related issues of the contestation of memory and the volatile relationship between anti-monuments, vandalism and graffiti (following on from Chapter One). Gunter Demnig’s *Stumbling Blocks* (or *Stolperstein*), amongst others, are referred to in considering ways to commemorate the missing.

Expanding on Chapter Three, the influence of textiles in expounding and establishing identity and bringing a personalised facet to memorialising will be discussed here. The role and ongoing significance of my mother’s dowry linen and its links to matrilineal subjectivity will be explained and contextualised.
alongside the relevance of family names. Anne Karpf’s work on the responsibility on researchers as secondary witnesses and Dominick LaCapra on the power of original documents will be cited prompting links between the phenomenon of forgetting to the ‘missing grave’ syndrome.
CHAPTER ONE – MEMORIALS & MONUMENTS

There is nothing more human than mourning: it restores humanity. Doris Salcedo

My research is concerned with artistic means of expressing grief and mourning and mediating trauma, with particular emphasis on the role that contemporary art can play in communicating this. Much of this work considers the role of monuments, memorials and counter-memorials (or anti-memorials) and the impact that our engagement with these has on us physically, psychologically and emotionally.

This chapter will seek to define the functions of monuments and memorials within the conventions of memorial culture: how they differ from each other, whom they serve, how their roles have changed over time and, finally, how contemporary art can contribute to an understanding of the mourning process and commemoration. This will initially encompass:

• defining the terms ‘monuments’, ‘memorials’ and ‘counter-memorials’ and distinguishing the connections and disparities between them;
• considering the place of monumentality as distinct from the monument;
• establishing whom the stakeholders and interested parties are in the conception and construction of the monument or memorial.

My aim is to examine how monuments and memorials have traditionally functioned as channels for expressing either individual or collective grief and trauma and the circumstances that have given rise to the counter-memorial. Studying the affective qualities of these objects recalls Levi Bryant’s assertions that ‘all objects are defined by their affects or capacities to act or be acted upon’, and ‘affects refer to the powers or capacities of an object, and define the relational dimension of substances or how they interface or port with other objects in the world.’

To consider how monuments and memorials affect us

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and what attributes constitute a visceral experience for the viewer, will necessitate:

- examining how materiality works on us—that is, asking HOW we experience materials which are used both traditionally and non-traditionally in monuments and memorialisation;
- looking at the role and ‘life’ of an object, particularly with regards to memorials, and how contemporary art and artists have used specific objects to activate memory and time;
- the role that alternative forms of memorialising (such as ephemerality and actions)—as alternatives to concrete objects—play in both activating memory and expressing grief is of particular interest, as is the concept of absence within this.

While some of these points are examined more fully in the chapters that follow, they are salient to the general discourse on monuments and memorials and are particularly pertinent to the three case studies within this chapter. My own work will also be examined within these contexts.

While monuments are often aligned with architecture, feature architectural elements or may be designed and built by architects, this chapter—and this paper—will not focus on buildings as memorials or as places housing memorials. In some instances the architecture may have a symbiotic relationship to the monument or memorial; for example, several Holocaust museums incorporate spatial aspects such as narrowing passageways, ramps or unusual use of materials that may incorporate elements such as sound or light. In cases such as these, the architecture may be included with reference to the role it plays in the embodied experience in correlation to the memorial or monument. However, shrines, mausoleums and most museum buildings will not play a significant role in this thesis.

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4 For example, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, designed by architect Peter Eisenman and engineer Buro Happold with its underground information centre is regarded, within the scope of this thesis, as a commemorative architectural feature.
Neither shall this thesis be dealing with the monument as tribute to an individual’s contribution to a particular event (such as a war hero) or social or political standing (such as a country’s ruler or leader), apart from a brief mention within an historical framework. Most of the monuments and memorials discussed in this chapter deal with well-known or publically recognised examples and case studies, or deal with personal forms of memorialisation within these examples.

Definitions

The word ‘monument’ originates from Middle English (denoting a burial place) via French from the Latin monumentum (from monere 'remind').\(^5\) The word ‘memorial’ derives from Late Middle English from the late Latin memoriale 'record, memory, monument' from the Latin memorialis 'serving as a reminder' (from memoria 'memory').\(^6\) While both these derivations demonstrate a clear link to memory, establishing clear definitions to differentiate monuments from memorials proves more elusive. Consulting standard language authorities produces a myriad of inclusions. For example, definitions for the term ‘monument’ (specific to commemoration) ranged from: ‘Anything that by its survival commemorates a person, action, period, or event’ (1830), ‘A structure, edifice or erection intended to commemorate a person, action, period, or event’ (1602), ‘A structure of stone or other material erected over the grave or in church, etc., in memory of the dead’ (1588), ‘A literary or artistic work regarded as commemorative of its creator or a particular period.’\(^7\)

The term ‘memorial’, is often regarded as a synonym for ‘monument’ by the various authorities, and shares a range of meanings: ‘A sign of remembrance’, ‘Something to preserve the memory of a person, thing, or event, as a statue, a custom, etc.’, serving to preserve the memory of the dead or a past event; while the Oxford Dictionary (online) proffers a definition remarkably similar to that for a monument: ‘A statue or structure established to remind people of a person or

\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) These authorities included the Collins English Dictionary http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/monument?showCookiePolicy=true.
event’. Several memorial sites, whilst featuring works that are monumental in scale, are nonetheless referred to as memorials. Examples are the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1982) in Washington D.C. and the lesser-known Holocaust Memorial (1949) in Kozma utca Jewish cemetery, Budapest, Hungary, both to be discussed later in this chapter. What these two monument-memorials have in common is the standard engraved lists of names commemorating those who have died.

Referring to the interchangeability of the terms ‘monument’ and ‘memorial’, academic Martin J Murray in Collective Memory in Place notes the opposing nature of the symbolic meanings they seek to convey. Historically, while monuments have been erected to remember and celebrate triumphs and victories, victims or survivors have built memorials to express their trauma or recall their martyrdom. Murray quotes philosopher Arthur Danto’s argument: ‘We erect monuments so that we will always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget...The memorial is a special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honour the dead. With monuments we honour ourselves.’ Danto has expanded on this argument, claiming that while monuments ‘commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings’, memorials ‘ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends’.

In the introduction to The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, academic James E Young discusses the monument-memorial, acknowledging the ongoing controversy not only around its definition but its place in modern culture. He echoes the views of various historians and philosophers concerned by the propensity of monuments to ‘coarsen’ historical understanding by burying events under a static façade or under layers of myth (Martin Broszat on fascist monuments); the self-referential nature of the modernist-era monument (Rosalind Krauss); and the concern that the

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10 Ibid., 71.
monument’s material form displaces the memory experience of the community.\textsuperscript{12} \textsuperscript{13} Young alludes to the broader discourse of ‘forgetting’, which relies on the notion that, by giving memory a monumental form, we divest ourselves of the obligation to remember.\textsuperscript{14} As historian Pierre Nora similarly observes, the memorial operation can remain self-contained and detached from our daily lives, leaving us secure in the knowledge that, with the physical form of the memorial there to remind us, we are free to leave the site and return only at our convenience. We forget until we feel obliged to remember.\textsuperscript{15}

While Murray identifies the role that monuments and memorials can serve in unifying a community and supporting the grieving process in the following passage, it is, arguably, an idealised view:

The erection of monuments and memorials—along with the choreographed ceremonies of commemoration centered on them and the orchestration of public participation around them—transforms particular places into ideologically charged sites of collective memory. Monuments and memorials are powerful mnemonic devices through which the custodians of collective memory seek to encode particular histories and geographies into landscapes of power and resistance. They provide rallying points for shared memories and common identities. They are material signifiers of ideas, transmitters of sentiments, and repositories of ideologies that their permanent affixture to public space intends to immortalize. The elaborate language of symbolism and allegory embodied in these sites of memory serves a variety of didactic functions. By locating events and key personalities in the historical imagination, monuments and memorials can inspire to action, insist on vigilance, and recall the past with either sadness and regret or pride and gratitude.\textsuperscript{16}

Bearing in mind Murray’s reference to choreographed ceremonies and ephemeral forms of mourning, architect and critic Robert Ivy’s differentiation between monuments and memorials is noteworthy. Ivy maintains that, fundamentally, a monument comprises ‘a designed and constructed physical object intended as a commemoration’ while memorials ‘may take a more

\textsuperscript{12} Martin Broszat, "Plea for the Historicization of National Socialism," in \textit{Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians’ Controversy}, ed. Peter Baldwin (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 129.
\textsuperscript{14} Young, \textit{The Texture of Memory}, 4-6.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{16} Murray, "Collective Memory in Place: The Voortrekker Monument and the Hector Pieterson Memorial,” 71.
ephemeral form—including the strewing of flowers in memory of the deceased."\(^{17}\) Ivy illustrates the link between the physical world and remembrances with examples such as the distribution of flowers during the Memorial Day/Decoration Day movement of the 19th century and the spontaneous floral outpouring outside Kensington Palace following the death of Princess Diana in 1997.\(^{18}\) These examples—mostly spontaneous in nature and usually unofficial—could also be joined by the flowers, candles and other personal paraphernalia left at scenes of roadside accidents and other sites of death in the landscape, such as around the sea. In these cases the relationship between monument and memorial is more fluid in nature; the flowers, candles, photographs and so forth could be considered as the ephemeral memorials alongside the crucifix, seat or building as memorial.\(^{19}\) They may also highlight an important distinction between the way monuments and memorials function. Traditional forms of monuments, while seeking to harness and establish a physical means of remembrance, simultaneously risk ‘freezing’ time with their unambiguous stolidness. This is demonstrated by the example of the memorial to the Jewish Soldiers who died during World War I (2015), discussed later in this chapter.

While monuments and official memorials provide a focus for collective remembering—serving as markers for public and historic events or as a focus for community remembrance—it could be argued that they seldom possess the power to express what we feel, whether as victims or onlookers. In her book *Empathic Vision*, academic Jill Bennett uses the writings of Gilles Deleuze on sense memory to explore the concept of the affective experience or the bodily memories and response of the spectator. Bennett considers the role of art for registering and producing affect—alongside thought—to produce a kind of ‘understanding’.\(^{20}\) She refers to the early work of Deleuze in which he developed the concept of the ‘encountered sign’ that, in contrast to a recognised object,

\(^{19}\) More discussion on the nature of spontaneous memorials appears in Chapter Two.
can only be sensed or felt. The affect produced by this sign, however, works alongside the thinking process, not supplanting it but instead agitating, exciting and ‘fuelling inquiry rather than simply placating the subject.’ This can also be extrapolated to apply to the way we encounter monuments and memorials and alternative processes—including artistic interpretations— to engender an experience beyond simply remembering the past. This could be realised as a continuous negotiation of a present with indeterminable links to the past. Deleuze asks of a work of art, not ‘What does it mean?’ but ‘How does it work?’ How does one see feeling, where feeling is both imagined and regenerated through an encounter with an artwork?  

One could reasonably conclude that the monument or memorial bears the weight of its community’s expectations and needs. It is somewhat incongruous, then, that committees with little or no input from grassroots stakeholders almost exclusively determine the design, intended message and construction of many monuments. Whether instigated at national, state, or local level, any such determination involves institutional, political decision-making. However egalitarian the process may strive to be—for example, by inviting community or interested party input—the end decision seldom attains this. This leads to questions of intentionality: whom or what do these monuments represent, with whose interest are they invested, and what role do they play in balancing the interests of those they claim to represent?

**Who Are Monuments and Memorials For?**

In his book *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997*, art historian Sergiusz Michalski identifies the late Middle Ages as the time the first European public political monument began to emerge. This took place, Michalski

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21 Ibid.  
22 Ibid., 38, 41.  
23 As James E Young points out, in cases of citizen-instigated commemoration actions, the State or institution representatives may later avail themselves to endorse them. While not initiating the monument, it may serve them to create an official distance to past guilty or unpopular regimes. *The Texture of Memory*, 352  
contends, at a time when discerning these from funereal or public, decorative, Baroque or Renaissance sculpture proved difficult. He identifies the statue in honour of the victor of Lepanto, Don Juan of Austria—erected in 1572 in the town of Messina, Italy—as the first statue destined purely for public space. Prior to this, statuary was sequestered in castles, courts and non-civic space.\textsuperscript{25} Michalski cites this statue as marking the beginning of an almost three hundred year evolution during which time the public monument was mostly freed from its aristocratic and monarchical constraints to be fully embraced by the general public in the late 1800s. This latter period is regarded as the historic moment when ‘the urge to erect monuments to commemorate important personages or patriotic events and memories acquired a new (in both the ideological and numerical sense) dimension, moving beyond the limitations of individually conceived acts of homage.’\textsuperscript{26}

The role and tenor of the monument, in particular, has polarised opinion ever since. For example, as recently as 1964 academic Cecil D Elliott claimed that monuments are executed in a deliberate manner, designed to be neither casual nor personal. Therefore, he asserts, they are formal in design with a ‘serious and meditative objective’.\textsuperscript{27} Elliott made these assertions in response to the 1937 proclamation by philosopher Lewis Mumford (1895-1990) of the ‘Death of the Monument’, in which Mumford railed against the ‘impossibility’ of the modern monument, claiming a contradiction in terms. In Mumford’s view, society’s need to commemorate had advanced beyond the need to build monuments, ‘to the endowment of institutions dedicated to human betterment’. He therefore believed that ‘if it is a monument, it cannot be modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.’ Whilst noting a revival of interest in monuments and monumentality (particularly in architecture), Elliott notes that ‘cold stone’ was weighed against the working memorial and further notes Mumford’s decrying the monument as inappropriate to a culture that should ‘travel light’.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.\textsuperscript{27} Cecil D Elliott, “Monuments and Monumentality,” \textit{Journal of Architectural Education} 18, no. 4 (1964): 52.\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 51.
Since then the role of monuments and memorials is often ascribed as being that of a conduit for individual or collective expressions of grief and trauma. Implicit here is the notion of subjects or communities coming together to share in collective memory. James E Young, however, warns of the propensity of ‘collective memory’ to include ‘an aggregate collection of its members’ many, often competing memories’ at the expense of those of each individual. He therefore advocates for the alternative term of ‘collected memory’ in place of ‘collective memory’ to describe the many discrete, often conflicting or competing, memories which may become channeled into common memorial spaces. Young contends that while it is not possible for individuals to share another’s memory they instead share the forms of memory. ‘By maintaining a sense of collected memories, we remain aware of their disparate sources, of every individual’s unique relation to a lived life, and of the ways our traditions and cultural forms continuously assign common meaning to disparate memories.’

In this vein, activating affect—rather than apathy—in the viewer may be more powerfully realised in unofficial actions or interventions. Monuments and memorials, particularly those politically conceived, can have the effect of polarising society, often inciting reactions from the individual or group, whether they be spontaneous or planned. This may take the form of physical or destructive interventions with the site; self-expression or protest through the addition of graffiti; or more personalised gestures such as the leaving of significant objects at a site. Harnessing this energy effectively and communicating it broadly are often best realised by the artist. Artists such as Doris Salcedo, Jochen Gerz, Ann Hamilton, Oscar Munoz and many others use subversion in their art—occasionally to shock, but mostly to engage the viewer and to elicit responses. The work of these artists may combine several elements, such as challenges to non-traditional materiality, size or sensory aspects (for example, sound elements, smell), with beauty, the ephemeral or the abject deployed to communicate poignant, often elegiac or even angry art. The

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30 Young, The Texture of Memory, xi.
31 Ibid., xi-xii.
responses of these artists have resulted in works that have become known as anti- or counter-monuments/memorials. Aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial forms, these artists seek to challenge the very meaning of the monumental form. Some, grappling with a post-war legacy, carry a profound desire to distinguish the new generation from the last, or point to ongoing violence, while others are committed to seeking a new means of instilling memory into public consciousness. Common to all these artists is, as Young writes, the desire to ‘jar viewers from complacency, to challenge and denaturalize the viewers’ assumptions.

The works of these artists often involve a calculated interest in provoking and then responding to any ensuing reactions to their work. An example is 2146 Stones – Monument Against Racism (1990-1993) [Fig.1] by German artist Jochen Gerz, which challenges passive, inert Holocaust commemoration by using stealth to transform a site of historical significance. Together with Esther Shalev-Gerz, he created the equally controversial Monument Against Fascism, War and Violence, and for Peace and Human Rights, (1986) [Fig.2], a monolith designed to sink slowly but perceptibly into the ground over the space of eight years, while inviting spectator interaction. These works anticipated both positive and negative reactions. More recently, when his controversial sculpture Dirty Corner (2011) and the surrounding site were daubed with racist and anti-Semitic graffiti in mid-2015 [Fig.3], sculptor Anish Kapoor transformed these attacks into a defiant stance. Kapoor’s decision to let the offending graffiti remain on the work attracted heated debate and threats of litigation. Whether acting as a lightning rod for social unrest or as a tool against apathy, this art can be seen as political—but these are the politics of the personal, the individual’s belief as well as those of the collective.

32 Ibid., 27-28.
33 Ibid., 28.
34 These two works are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.
The following three case studies, although markedly distinct from each other, all seek to address some of the above-mentioned issues. Each starts with the basic concept of the traditional monument or memorial, yet morphs into something more complex. While Maya Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982) lists the names of the fallen dead in a time-honoured tradition on the requisite stone memorial wall, her treatment of form, materiality and even her handling of names expand conventional boundaries. *Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation* (2014) is a 7.5 metre stone and bronze monument by sculptor Peter Parkanyi Raab featuring a Germanic imperial eagle descending on the
Archangel Gabriel, symbolising an innocent Hungary. This Government commission, widely considered as yet another attempt to rewrite Hungary’s volatile history with its Jewish citizens, has sparked widespread, ongoing counter-memorials. Lastly, *The Holocaust Memorial, Kozma utca Jewish cemetery* (1949) is a classic example of many memorials to the fallen or murdered, with its list of thousands of names engraved onto marble slabs. What distinguishes this memorial from others are the poignant hand-written additions of names of those omitted and, thus, unacknowledged. This memorial is another, more personal example of the politics of remembrance.

**Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

In the decades since Cecil D Elliott's previously mentioned assertions regarding monuments, many artists have strived to break down these stereotypes—albeit not always successfully, and often not without courting controversy. Possibly the most renowned example of this is Maya Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* in Washington [Fig. 4]. Significantly, while this memorial does indeed feature lists of names, it differs in form to traditional war memorials in its eschewing of columns, obelisks, triumphal arches and so forth, instead opting to privilege the names of those to be honoured.35 Questioning what it was that brought solace in the face of such deaths, Lin states that she concluded that it was names, and that this single response drove her design.36 Whilst distinct from those more traditional forms, it is still deeply embedded, as architectural historian Jeffery L Durbin observes, in ancient memorial architecture, recalling Roman tabularia and the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem, amongst others.37 The *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* comprises two polished black granite walls, 10 feet high and 250 feet long, carved with the names of 58,000 Americans who died during the Vietnam War [Fig. 5]. While abstract in form and non-figurative, the memorial is still, as

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37 Durbin, "Expressions of Mass Grief and Mourning: The Material Culture of Makeshift Memorials."
Arthur C Danto contends, highly representational, given the textual nature of memorial art.38

Nonetheless, the monument initially caused enormous controversy, not only for its departure from the figurative mode of memorial art as demanded by many (who were later appeased by the addition of three bronze sculptures of servicemen nearby), but by several aesthetic decisions Lin made. For example, Lin’s choice of black for the granite sourced from India (for its reflective quality, once polished, to position the viewer amongst the names) was controversial. It was interpreted as a metaphor for shame until a black general intervened to challenge the debate on the language of colour.39 Lin has stated that her intention conceptually and materially was ‘to cut away the earth, giving it a skin, extracting space’, rather than adding form to the landscape.40 Addressing the interface between the memorial aspects and materials more specifically, she states:

I imaged taking a knife and cutting into the earth, opening it up, an initial violence and pain that in time would heal. The grass would grow back, but the initial cut would remain a pure flat surface in the earth with a polished mirrored surface, much like the surface on a geode when you cut it and polish the edge. The need for the names on the memorial would become the memorial; there would be no need to embellish the design.

38 Danto, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.”
further. The people and their names would allow everyone to respond and remember….  

Figure 5. Maya Lin, *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, 1982, Washington.

In the ensuing years, the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* has proved to be a popular and well loved memorial, its vast, monumental proportions and materiality proving no obstacle for viewer engagement both physically—with people reaching to touch or take rubbings of the engraved names—and intellectually, by challenging historical expectations. For these reasons, the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* could be considered a precursor to the even more materially challenging forms of memorials this paper is advocating.

**Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation**

In 2013 Hungary declared that 2014 would be a year of Holocaust remembrance to mark the 70th anniversary of the 1944 Nazi invasion and consequent deportations of Hungarian Jews to concentration camps. The government under Prime Minister Viktor Orban planned a memorial at the southern end of Freedom Square, Budapest. Representatives from Budapest’s Jewish community were notably omitted and thus absent from the planning and selection process for this memorial. The proposed 7.5 metre statue (to become known as the *Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation*) by sculptor Peter Parkanyi Raab

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41 Ibid., 71.
42 Ivy, "Memorials, Monuments and Meaning."
featured a Germanic imperial eagle descending on the Archangel Gabriel, symbolising an innocent Hungary [Fig. 6]. The inscriptions read ‘German occupation of Hungary, March 19, 1944’ and ‘To the memory of all victims’. The clear implication was of Hungary as the victim of Nazi aggression, rather than the willing collaborator it has since been proved to be. In this selective version of history, Hungary loses any culpability for aiding and abetting in the expulsion of more than 430,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz alone, with the active help of Hungarian officials at the time under Admiral Miklos Horthy.

![Fig. 6. Peter Parkanyi Raab, Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation, 2014. Stone, bronze, dimensions variable. Freedom Square, Budapest.](image)

When news of the proposed memorial reached the general population, widespread condemnation and protests occurred nationally and abroad, including an open letter to Orban from thirty Jewish US congressmen urging him to cancel construction.\(^{43}\) Orban’s response was to declare the memorial ‘not a Holocaust memorial but a tribute to all the victims of the German occupation.’\(^{44}\) Despite mounting unrest and several postponements, a barrier was erected

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\(^{44}\) Ibid.
around the intended monument site and construction finally commenced under the cover of darkness and heavy police guard. Protestors and activists—who had consistently demolished the fences—responded angrily, pelting the statue with eggs and leaving hundreds of objects such as votive candles, personal objects and protest banners in what could be regarded as a counter-memorial. Anyone was, and is still, free to add personal items to this counter-memorial, which has become a dynamic challenge to, and stark contrast with, the grandiose monument it opposes [Fig. 7].

![Spontaneous memorials at the site of the Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation, 2015. Freedom Square, Budapest. Photo: Sylvia Griffin](image)

A visit I made to the site in July, 2015 proved instructive in witnessing the power that this civil action displayed, not only challenging the official narrative on
memory and memorialisation, but in reminding a nation of its dark past. While the State sanctioned monument typically sought to concretise a prescribed historical interpretation, the spontaneous memorial took on a life of its own, bringing other memories and ideals to bear.\textsuperscript{45} This ever-evolving counter-memorial includes photographs of loved ones, historical documentation of Jews being arrested, plants, suitcases and many stones—in symbolic reference to Jewish remembrance.\textsuperscript{46} In the process of uniting to form a sense of community, the protestors and this makeshift memorial have started to redefine Freedom Square.\textsuperscript{47} More than a year after the erection of the monument, the constant presence of armed police heightened my awareness of the divide between the counter-memorial and the monument. Indeed, witnessing the juxtaposition of the two gave the impression of a standoff or impasse with an unbreachable no-man’s land between the two.

In personalizing both the individual and collective trauma of the victims and that of subsequent generations, the counter-memorial demonstrates that a more active form of memorialising is possible. This reflects and reinforces Young’s previously mentioned views regarding state sanctioned memorials’ capacity to concretise or freeze particular historical interpretations. Young also expresses the hope that monuments and memorials may change their meaning and significance over time, as new generations bring their own values and interpretations to bear. This could consequently cause any specific monument or memorial to take on a life of its own.\textsuperscript{48} While officially commissioned artists may complete memorials and monuments—as demonstrated here by the appointment of Peter Parkanyi Raab—this does not preclude other artists from joining the public in expressing their contempt for the politics associated with the commission. It is within this realm that the artist is able to express and communicate affect, taking on the role of provocateur in order to activate and keep memory alive—or simply to ask questions. The following two examples take different approaches in expressing mourning in public sites.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{45}] Young, The Texture of Memory, 3.
\item[\textsuperscript{46}] The placement of a stone on a person’s grave is traditionally performed to alert them of your presence.
\item[\textsuperscript{48}] Young, The Texture of Memory, 3.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The Holocaust Memorial, Kozma utca Jewish cemetery

In both May 2012 and July 2015, I visited Kozma utca Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of Budapest, Hungary. This cemetery, opened in 1893 by the Neolog community, is the oldest and largest Jewish cemetery in Hungary and one of the most sizeable in Europe. During its history it has been the burial place of more than 300,000 people and still serves the Hungarian Jewish community, the third largest in Europe. Aside from the many culturally rich examples of graves, unusual statuary, shrines and mausoleums—many of which are fine examples of the Hungarian Secession style [Fig. 8] —the cemetery is home to a striking Holocaust memorial [Fig. 9].


Figure 9. Holocaust memorial, Kozma utca Jewish cemetery. Marble, stone, dimensions variable. Budapest, 2015. Photo: Sylvia Griffin

49 This cemetery is also known as Kozma Street Jewish cemetery or Rakoskeresztur cemetery.
50 http://www.greatsynagogue.hu/t_cemeteries.html
This memorial, dedicated to the 600,000 Hungarian victims of the Holocaust, takes the form of several upright marble slabs bearing the inscribed names of many of these victims, supporting a long L-shaped roof. The slabs are arranged by order of concentration camp, with two reserved for those whose location and circumstances of death are unknown. What makes this Holocaust memorial particularly notable is the addition of individual memorial plaques and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of handwritten names alongside those already inscribed. These names, often accompanied by diagrams or encircled inside a heart, constitute a unique and personal form of graffiti [Fig. 10]. As historian Martin Winstone notes in his survey of European Holocaust sites, these additions 'make] the memorial more complete and personal.'\(^51\) In serving as a receptacle for peoples’ expressions of sorrow, perhaps love, and a need for remembrance, the Kozma utca memorial retains a vitality and relevance lacking in others of similar intent. Indeed, this is demonstrable when compared to the relatively recent addition elsewhere in the cemetery of a monument to those Hungarian Jewish soldiers who died in service during World War I [Fig. 11].\(^52\)


\(^{52}\) This monument has no apparent official, formal name.
Fig. 11. *Memorial to the Jewish Soldiers who died during World War I*, 2015. Kozma utca Jewish cemetery, Budapest. Stone. Photo: Sylvia Griffin
This monument to the Jewish soldiers of World War I takes the form of a stark white stone monolith bearing relief carvings, positioned on a stepped plinth. In contrast to the nearby Holocaust memorial, it serves to block any meaningful interaction. Where one can literally walk up to and touch the Holocaust memorial, such intimate engagement with the World War I monument is hampered, not only by the surrounding stepped plinth but by its prominent positioning in an open square of white gravel. Its prominent position—compared to that of the Holocaust memorial—only serves to alienate its audience, bringing to mind James E Young’s warning that ‘…memorial[s] by themselves remain inert and amnesiac, dependant on visitors for whatever memory they finally produce.’ In The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, which explores how Holocaust memorials and museums shape public memory, Young addresses both the physical and metaphysical qualities of memorial objects, as well as considering their tactile and temporal dimensions.

During my 2012 visit to the Kozma utca Holocaust memorial I felt compelled to record photographic details of the hand-written inscriptions alongside the engraved ones on the marble slabs. I also took rubbings of the engraved names onto a roll of delicate Japanese paper. Both these activities resulted in a series of artworks, which will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four, as will the visceral experience involved in their creation. On returning to the memorial in 2015 I was disturbed to discover that clean, freshly engraved slabs had replaced approximately two-thirds of the marble ones. These newly engraved slabs now extend around the sides of the memorial, which had previously been bare. These additional panels would indicate that the cemetery’s governing body desired to ‘clean up’ the memorial and include the omitted victims’ names, officially replacing the original slabs and their personal additions in the commemorative process. This action of ‘cleaning up’ or upgrading the Holocaust memorial raises the issue of what many would consider to be graffiti and defacement of public property—even though in this case vandalism was clearly not the issue, unlike Kapoor’s Dirty Corner, or the Gerz’s Monument Against

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53 Young, The Texture of Memory, xii-xiii
54 Ibid.
Fascism, mentioned previously. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the replacement of the hand-written additions to the original marble slabs could be considered as a significant loss to its relevance and vitality. By removing the precise characteristics that made this memorial a well-documented, unique example of a ‘living’ memorial, the authorities concerned risk alienating at least some of its audience. This institutionally sanctioned erasure now meant, I realised, that the photographic documentation I possessed from my 2012 visit was an historical document. Determined to reintroduce a personal intervention to the memorial, I located the appropriate allocated slab for those victims who died outside the official concentration camps and added the names of my uncles and aunt to the marble. My documentation of this action will be addressed in Chapter Four.

This chapter has sought to define the functions and roles of monuments and memorials, establish how they connect, their disparities and their shortcomings. From here I considered the effects, both positive and inhibiting that monuments and memorials impose upon the victim or viewer. The role of art and its potential to offer ways other than the traditional means to approach the memorial experience were introduced, and case studies were outlined to demonstrate the changing face of memorial culture. Three case studies were proffered, each stemming from traditional notions of monumentality and evolving to become works that challenged the political, physical and conceptual status quo. Alternative approaches to memorialising are expanded on in the next chapter, Chapter Two: Ephemeral Memorials, Actions and Counter-Monument. Temporal and political implications of various works will be examined, with a deeper analysis of the workings of the ephemeral and alternative forms of art, supported by the work of a range of theorists and academics.

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55 This issue of graffiti, along with a more detailed critique of the Holocaust memorial, is included in Chapter Four: Memorials and the Written Word.
EPHEMERAL MEMORIALS, ACTIONS AND COUNTER-MONUMENTS

In Chapter One, the traditional roles of monuments and memorials, who they served, and their success in doing so were considered from various viewpoints. The latter part of that chapter advanced the case for considering our changing needs and how they affect the means by which we connect with memorials and monuments. While instances of conventional monuments are critiqued at various points, this chapter explores the role of alternative modes of commemoration, memorialising and grieving. These alternative forms, realised as ephemeral monuments and memorials, counter- or anti-memorials, and actions, also highlight the increasingly politicised nature of commemoration. The defining characteristics of each of these modes will be examined, and the aspirations and motivations of the artists and participants involved in these will be explored.

Many of the examples examined in this chapter—and within this thesis as a whole—relate to post-Holocaust, Euro-centric, ephemeral commemoration practices and actions, in addition to examples of South American cases. While the focus is on these particular regions may initially appear incongruous culturally and temporally, they are similarly concerned with activating memory and expressing grief through commemorative actions and artwork. In comparing examples from these regions, shared political and aesthetic concerns and motivations emerge, as do distinctions and nuances between them. In referencing the Holocaust, artists such as Jochen Gerz, Esther Shalev-Gerz, Horst Hoheisel and Shimon Attie, who were mostly born after the event, respond to it despite having no direct memory to draw from. They are instead largely dependant on documented accounts and filtered, second-hand stories, experiences and behaviours. An additional layer of complexity is cast on those artists of German origin who bear the legacy of a nation still conflicted over its role in World War II, presenting a new generation with the conundrum of how to

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commemorate its predecessors’ wrong doings. The present-day commemorative works that these artists produce demonstrate attempts to straddle a vexed history with works of contemporary relevance.

The ramifications of post-memory affect and the role of remembrance for these artists are juxtaposed against examples from artists including Oscar Muñoz and Doris Salcedo who work alongside contemporaneous and on-going traumatic events in South America. These South American artists are usually witnesses, rather than victims or victims’ relatives, to their country’s internal politics and wars. Their artworks are often made in response to bereavement and may speak for those ‘without a voice’ and, in many cases, without a body to mourn. As observers who have lived their entire lives in a country afflicted by armed internal conflict, they have not only been steeped in the trauma of their compatriots, but in the resigned complacency of many who are over-familiar with everyday violence and corruption. While the traumas these artists evoke are temporally different, in their depiction of recent and current political violence, to those in the European context, there are demonstrable similarities in the approach of each group. Materials traditionally employed in commemorative memorial works are often reinterpreted and repurposed alongside new or unexpected materials. This use of materiality and the deployment of anti-memorial, spontaneous actions and other modes of expression provide the potential to add new significance and relevance to the process of remembrance whilst simultaneously promoting awareness.

Definitions and Distinctions:

*Ephemeral*

*Temporary*

*Makeshift / Spontaneous*

*Time-based*

*Anti-memorial, Anti-monument / Counter-monument, Counter-memorial*

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3 Doris Salcedo, for example, has often conducted detailed interviews with the relatives of the murdered or ‘disappeared’, and in some cases accompanying them in search of their missing loved ones. *Doris Salcedo*, 217.
Actions

The various terms listed above are often used to describe alternative forms of monuments, memorials and associated actions and artworks. Just as those works termed ‘monuments’ and ‘memorials’ may shift and overlap, as described in Chapter One, so too do these terms. My aim here is to make distinctions between these terms whilst identifying exceptions and acknowledging ambiguities and interchangeability.

The term ephemeral, as it is applied to art and memorialisation, has proved particularly difficult to define. Variously characterised as ‘a work of art that only occurs once, like a happening, and cannot be embodied in any lasting object to be shown in a museum or gallery’, as ‘art that only lasts for a short amount of time’ and as the conscious choice of materials with ‘inherently unstable characteristics’, it is most often utilised to suggest a tension between an absence and a presence. As curator and academic Allyson Purpura suggests in Framing the Ephemeral, the juxtaposition of opposing elements is what gives ephemeral works their potency. This may be achieved by, for example, pairing opposing characteristics such as stasis and flow and by contrasting materiality with the conceptual. Ephemeral works are characterised by their capacity to change state and unfold meaning over time, with emphasis on the memory of the work rather than any fixed form it may have taken. In doing this, artist and academic Mary O’Neill suggests, ephemeral works are also noteworthy for challenging Western culture’s privileging of the permanent, durable and collectable. Ephemeral art practice exists in many cultures other than the European and South American ones discussed in this thesis. While these will not be examined in any detail (due to differing motivations and

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4 Reliable authorities such as Oxford Art Online and Art Source fail to provide definitive descriptions.
7 A thorough review of the literature confirmed that while there was a range of interpretations regarding ephemeralism, Mary O’Neill’s utilisation of the term as used in her PhD dissertation, several journal articles and book chapters is widely referred to and quoted by authors such as Alison Purpura and Katrina Windon.
8 "Framing the Ephemeral," 12.
aesthetics to the works discussed) it is worth noting the ‘presentness’ which links ephemeral work cross-culturally.¹⁰

The ephemeral may take many forms in challenging one’s perception of time, space and memory. An example of this is *Aliento (Breath)* (2002) [Fig 12] by Colombian artist Oscar Muñoz (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three), where images of deceased persons, sourced from newspaper clippings, appear on seemingly blank wall-mounted mirrors, which only become visible when activated by the viewer’s breath.¹¹

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¹⁰ Ephemerality is intrinsic to many eastern cultures and belief systems. As Allyson Purpura notes, societies such as those in India traditionally deploy ephemerality not only in a spiritual context, but also as ‘a means for coping with the present, not a way to canonize the past’. *Framing the Ephemeral*, 12

Curator José Roca, in his book *Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence*, describes the way in which art may harness ephemeral materiality (for example, mist, dust, water) to challenge the viewer’s perception when engaging with an artwork.\(^\text{12}\) While his emphasis is on ‘phantasmagoria’, or the fantastic, his observations are also relevant to ephemerality. Roca describes works that ‘play with perception and phenomenological experience, often seducing viewers with haunting images before the disturbing implications of those images are understood.’\(^\text{13, 14}\) It is interesting to recall Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s musings on the means by which we perceive objects, for example, his comments regarding the human gaze, which he believes ‘never never posits more than one side of the object, even if by means of horizons it intends all the others.’ He continues, ‘My gaze can only be compared with previous acts of seeing or with the acts of seeing accomplished by others through the intermediary of time and language.’\(^\text{15}\) This would indicate that when confronted by a perceptually foreign object or experience, we unconsciously call on our lived memory experiences, comparing and contextualising. Similarly to Roca, I would argue that artworks that challenge or confound on initial encounter, without reference to any known experience, have potential to open new possibilities in representing challenging ideas.

Mary O’Neill’s suggestion regarding Western culture’s privileging of the lasting and collectable over the ephemeral is worth examining from the perspective of culture and conservation. At a temporal level, in our desire for our cultural objects to survive undiminished, art often serves to represent the past, but it also represents—or projects—the present into the future, in what O’Neill

\(^{\text{12}}\) Ibid.

\(^{\text{13}}\) Ibid., 14.

\(^{\text{14}}\) Roca further proposes that these works can take the viewer ‘beyond the often illusory appearance of the images and delve into the more complex aspects of the artists’ reflections on death, loss, and disappearance, and thus try to involve the viewers by means of perceptual shifts, physical engagement with the work, and sheer visual deception.’\(^\text{14}\) While ‘visual deception’ and other aspects of Roca’s account need not play a role in inducing affect and curiosity in the viewer, the idea of challenging the viewer’s phenomenological experience and introducing perceptual nuance may well be effective in communicating meaningful encounters around death and disappearance not usually met by traditional tropes of memorial culture. Roca’s references to invoking reflections on death, loss and disappearance through the fantastic cohere with the ephemeral monument or memorial, whose ambition is to engage with notions of mortality through change or decay.

describes as ‘a form of cultural propaganda, a monument to ourselves…’ \(^\text{16}\) She frames this desire as an emotional investment in the art object’s longevity, in the hope that, in outliving us, it will somehow retain some part of ourselves. \(^\text{17}\) In its reliance on memory over form ephemerality denies us the opportunity to act on any of these needs, presenting a noteworthy and almost threatening challenge to longevity and durability. Allyson Purpura similarly argues that such ambivalent transience is a cultural response shaped, since the late 18\(^{th}\) century, within a worldview where permanence is a virtue and preservation a right of hegemony. \(^\text{18}\) The power of the ephemeral lies, I suggest, in its ability to change state, harnessing the tensions between absence and presence. The material and the conceptual can express cultural or political challenges and provide art (as monument, memorial, action) with agency. The ephemeral may invite longing, relief or even anxiety and, together with its implications of impermanence, the ephemeral compels us to pause or take note. \(^\text{19}\)

Ephemeral works, whilst often bearing similarities to temporary works of art, differ in their capacity to incorporate disappearance, degradation or disintegration intentionally. I propose that these aspects are integral to ephemeral works and are deployed specifically to communicate notions of irreversible change, transformation, absence and death. Temporary works, on the other hand, may be described as those works designed to last for a specific period of time before being ‘dismantled, abandoned or removed’. \(^\text{20}\) My work Coloured Threads (2014), for example, features unfixed, small stones in an unprotected outdoor environment. While these stones (and thus, the work) may be seen as ephemeral in their vulnerability to changes in position, I would argue that, as this work can be reassembled there or elsewhere, it is temporary rather than ephemeral. Mary O’Neill, writing in Ephemeral Art: Mourning and Loss, identifies ephemeral art works as those in which the abovementioned qualities are intentional and where the limitations that often affect temporary art do not apply. Their transient qualities are ‘an essential aspect of what the work

\(^{16}\) (Im)Permanence: Cultures in/out of Time, 89.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Purpura, “Framing the Ephemeral,” 12.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) (Im)Permanence: Cultures in/out of Time, 89.
communicates’ rather than the result of neglect or carelessness. The unintentional instability and resultant degradation of some artists’ works, particularly in the gallery or institutional environment, is often met with conservation or other forms of restorative attention. However this is not always the case; the disintegrative nature of much of artist Eva Hesse’s artwork, which has been well documented, offers an interesting perspective. According to art historian Anna C Chave, Hesse’s preference for latex and fibreglass led her to exasperation when her sculptures were precluded from sale due to their collapsing in the studio. Still, this did not deter her preference for such materials. On becoming aware that latex in particular was a material bound to degrade, whilst not embracing this impermanence, she accepted it as an unfortunate inevitability. She did, however, remark in a late interview with art historian Cindy Nemser: ‘Part of me feels that it’s superfluous … Life doesn’t last; art doesn’t last. It doesn’t matter … I think it is both an artistic and life conflict…’ Critic Naomi Spector argues that Hesse’s acceptance of the limitations of her ‘masterworks’, both materially and commercially, led to a kind of ‘invisibility’; her sculpture, though not planned to change or come to an end, will inevitably do so. This is in contrast to ephemeral art, which is intended to change or disappear over time.

An example illustrating the blurring of boundaries between these terms is Tribute in Light, set up at Ground Zero in March 2002, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America [Fig. 13]. Regarded by New York City as an ‘interim memorial’ until a permanent memorial solution could be decided upon, Tribute in Light commemorated the space formerly occupied by the World Trade Centre’s twin towers felled in the attacks and, by inference, the lives lost therein. For just over one month, two shafts of light—each powered by tens of thousands of watts’ worth of xenon lights—shot upward through the clouds, visible for several

[^21]: Ibid., 88.
[^22]: Ibid., 171-72.
[^24]: Ibid., 19.
[^25]: This attitude could perhaps be in the spirit of both Arte Povera and Minimalism with Hesse’s adoption of ‘everyday’ and found materials for her work.
Temporary by intent, ephemeral in its use of light, it could also be considered makeshift in its urgent response to the public’s need to address their grief. Spontaneous memorials that sprung up almost immediately following this catastrophic event demonstrated the public’s overwhelming need to express their emotions and their unwillingness to wait for a formal ceremony or erection of a monument. Affordable and readily available items, such as American flags, teddy bears, photos of loved ones and votive candles, widely used in the wave of spontaneous memorials after 9/11, proved to be invaluable as communicative tools. Although Tribute in Light differed from the other makeshift memorials by being government sanctioned, it was also politically effective in pressuring the government to provide a more permanent memorial in response to public demand.


Despite its status of being and ‘interim’ memorial, the popularity of Tribute in Light has resulted in ongoing reactivations during commemorative events on each anniversary of 9/11 since the first illumination on 11 March 2002.


Makeshift or spontaneous memorials are mostly borne from an urge to respond to an event immediately. As demonstrated above, they can be the vehicle to express shock and grief at the sudden loss of life, bypassing bureaucracy in their need to do so. They can also be deployed effectively as socio-political agents or, as academic Jack Santino writes, ‘for addressing a social issue, of trying to convince people, of trying to make something happen.’ The continuing spontaneous memorials defiantly set up in protest against the *Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation* (2014) in Budapest, Hungary, detailed in Chapter One, are an illustration of this. In this way, civil actions used alongside memorial gestures continue to honour the victims’ memory, while concurrently challenging official narratives and reminding the observer of past transgressions.

Makeshift memorials also assist in the transition to mourning, by filling a temporal gap between the early stages of grief before moving into mourning and a state of acceptance. Academic and arts director Kay Turner suggests that formal mourning rituals may fail in mediating acceptance of death because of their disregard for the visceral, embodied nature of grief—emotional, guttural, uncontrollable manifestations such as weeping, howling, sobbing and so on. She asserts that ephemeral and makeshift memorials rise to the challenge of representing this ‘messiness’.

Grief is in and out of the body. The fragility and fleetingness, the individual expressiveness—even the messiness—of the human body is matched by those memorials, which quickly rise in its tragic absence. Because they perform grief in material expressions and physical gestures, they are, in a sense, *ephemeral analogs* [my italics] of bodies….

Makeshift memorials can also invoke questions around the politics of identity. Historically, memorialisation, in the form of gravestones, tombs, statues, family plots, mausoleums and obituaries, has been determined by the social and economic status of the individual or their family. Those from marginalised

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31 Ibid.
groups or of lesser public status are often overlooked in conventional public memorial culture. Academic Margaret Gibson identifies, for example, roadside memorials as privileging the loss of individual lives from non-heroic or little-publicised events over those more monumental losses tied to large-scale events of national or international significance.\(^{32}\) Gibson also references academic Sue-Anne Ware in drawing similarities between makeshift / spontaneous memorials and **anti-memorials**, describing actions that seek to redress this lack of acknowledgement as anti-memorial, which she defines as ‘memorials seeking to disrupt and contest official histories by offering counter-histories of sacrifice and death.’\(^{33}\)

**Anti-memorials** and **anti-monuments** (or **counter-memorials** and **counter-monuments**) aim to challenge the complacency so often induced as a by-product of traditional, permanent forms of commemoration. Art historian Corinna Tomberger differentiates between the two concepts in proposing that while traditional monuments aim to offer ‘an object of identification and affirmation’, the counter-monument aims to ‘challenge the viewer’s perspective rather than confirm it.’\(^{34}\) As James E Young writes, the results are ‘antiheroic, often ironic, and self-effacing conceptual installations that mark the national ambivalence and uncertainty of late twentieth-century postmodernism.’\(^{35}\)

They also address issues relating to the potential alignment of monumental, colossal work with the politics and aesthetics of Fascism, a concern that has dogged memorial culture since World War II. While anti-memorials and counter-monuments often deploy spatial strategies to counter such associations, in at least one instance—that of *Tribute in Light*—an alternative monument has attracted criticism on such grounds. Despite enjoying widespread popularity, as seen by its ongoing iterations, *Tribute in Light* has its vocal detractors, such as renowned glass artist Ingo Mauer. Denouncing it as ‘horrible’ and ‘loathsome’,

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\(^{33}\) Ibid., 151.

\(^{34}\) Memorialisation in Germany since 1945 (224)

Mauer likened it to a recreation of Albert Speer’s *Cathedral of Light* (1937) in Nuremberg, a reference to the use of anti-aircraft searchlights as a backdrop to the Brown Shirt parades at Hitler’s annual party congresses of the 1930s.\(^{36}\) Such comparisons appear particularly inevitable in post-war Germany, where emulating fascist elements in monuments and memorials is a particularly sensitive issue. Academic Brett Ashley Kaplan looks at the problem of perceived fascist monumentality attached to commemorative sights dedicated to the Holocaust, but the discussion is readily applied to more recent events, as seen with *Tribute in Light*. Kaplan refers to the concept of ‘aesthetic pollution’, the fear that a ‘Speer-like’ monumentality would replicate the politics of Fascism, hence ‘polluting their aesthetic composition with traces of unacceptable political histories’.\(^{37}\) Whilst refuting the validity of these claims, citing evidence such as the Nazis’ paucity of originality and the tenuous ‘purity’ of their aesthetic ideology, Kaplan concurs with James E Young’s assessment of the new generation of German artists.\(^{38}\) These artists, Young claims, consider themselves ‘heirs to a double-edged postwar legacy [with a] deep distrust of monumental forms in the light of their systematic exploitation by the Nazis, and the strong desire to distinguish their generation from that regime.\(^{39}\)

While time-based memorials—media installations incorporating video, film, slide, audio or other computer based elements, either individually or in combination—are defined by their ability to unfold over time, they do not automatically qualify as ephemeral within the context of this thesis. With ephemerality intention is paramount; technical and material qualities alone cannot render a work ephemeral as it is defined here. Various artists have harnessed the signifying power of the ephemeral, enabling them ‘to visualize time and memory as active’ if not necessarily political. Their works are distinct

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37 In summary, Kaplan argues that Hitler and Speer’s monumental plans were based on others from the 1840s; the Nazi party could never agree on what architectural styles to adopt; National Socialist monolithic monuments drew from diverse styles, often influenced by the radical artists the Nazis had purged. *Unwanted Beauty*, 154.
38 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 27.
from time-based works that unfold in a linear manner and are experienced over a set length of time.\textsuperscript{40}

The capacity for film and projection to cross into ephemeral memorialisation can be seen in the following case study, where light was utilised as an indexical marker.\textsuperscript{41} Shimon Attie’s series \textit{Acts of Remembrance}, 1991-1996 sought to recall a lost past by evoking former Jewish occupants of various sites across Europe and, in doing so, also called into question the past and present politics of the host countries.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure14.png}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure15.png}
\caption{Shimon Attie, \textit{Dresden Trains}, 1993. Projections, dimensions variable.}
\end{figure}

For \textit{Sites Unseen} (1992) [Fig. 14] Attie chose former Jewish enclaves in various European cities which no longer bore any trace of these former residents. Attie bathed these sites in photographic projections to scale, depicting the identities and physical likenesses of the matching location. These traces from the past offered a potential means to redress history in the present, even if only retained in the eyes and minds of those who viewed them. Young refers to \textit{Sites Unseen}\textsuperscript{42} Purpura, "Framing the Ephemeral," 13.

\textsuperscript{41} The fugitive qualities of light, its capacity to reveal or hide, form nebulous shapes or project onto surfaces, can be considered both ephemeral and indexical. It conforms to indexicality in its ability to maintain an existential relationship to its object, a ‘having-been-thereness’ of that which is signified (such as the casting of a shadow). \textit{See Jappy, Tony. Introduction to Peircean Visual Semiotics}, 84-90
as ‘part photography, part installation, and part performance’, likening the
projections collectively to an ‘act of remembrance’ with resonances of ‘actions,
staged acts, actors, and acting out’.\footnote{James E. Young, \textit{At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 66.} For the work \textit{Trains: Dresden} (1993), \footnote{Ibid., 73-74.} [Fig. 15] Attie took a more confrontational approach. Rather than passively projecting onto walls as he did in \textit{Sites Unseen}, where passers-by had no choice other than to engage with images of the missing, Attie chose to link the murdered former Jewish residents of Dresden with the mode of their deportation. Thus he projected onto trains, rails and railway buildings, where the almost ghostly images of victims disrupted contemporary commuter’s routine with ‘the rebuke of memory’.\footnote{This description of the ephemeral qualities of water is worth comparing to the artwork by Oscar Muñoz employing water in Chapter Three.} Lastly, in \textit{Portraits of Exile: Copenhagen, June-July} (1995) \footnote{Young, \textit{At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture}, 75.} [Fig.16] Attie installed a row of nine large light boxes submerged approximately two metres below the water surface of Copenhagen’s Borsgraven Canal. These light boxes—depicting portraits of Denmark’s rescued Jews exiled by sea to Sweden to escape German occupation—were to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Denmark’s liberation from the Nazis. Young suggests that water, as an ever-changing, potentially erasing medium, could be regarded as an ephemeral landscape, ‘emblematic of memory itself.’\footnote{Ibid., 75-78.} In a twist to challenge myth, these images were joined by those of Bosnian Muslim refugees, who at the time of exhibition were moored on a boat nearby and engaged in a lengthy wait for political asylum in Denmark.\footnote{Young, \textit{At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture}, 75.} Examples such as this demonstrate resonances between the past and contemporary politics and temporally suggest aspects of Serres and Deleuze’s theories on folded time, detailed later in this chapter.
Attie, in responding to what he perceived to be a haunting absence of Europe’s Jews, sought to actualise and externalise his inner visions through these works, resurrecting old memories through the creation of new ones for the current population. In initiating others as witnesses to his memorial projections, his stated hope was that memory would supersede the installation and thus serve to render the installation redundant. The need for trans-temporal associations to place and the will to remember evoke historian Pierre Nora’s influential work *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, or sites of memory. Nora’s essay primarily considers the cultural and social politics of place and memory. It considers the point of rupture where historical memory, though lost, is still embodied in certain sites that are no longer ‘real’ environments of memory. Nora argues that without the will to remember—that is, without the capacity to attach meaning to places

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47 Ibid., 63-66.
48 Similarly to other artists employing ephemerality or performing interventions, Attie’s projections, whilst being retained in the memory – also live on through word of mouth and documentation.
49 Pierre Nora is a French historian whose seminal work *Les Lieux de Mémoire* is repeatedly referenced in many of the sources used for this thesis regarding the work of memory. *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, often translated as either *Realms of Memory* or *Sites of Memory*, is Nora’s essay contribution as one of seventeen in three parts over seven volumes.
beyond their inert physicality—one place is barely distinguishable from the next.\textsuperscript{50}

Young refers to Attie as an agent for the metamorphosis that Nora sees as essential in transforming such sites.\textsuperscript{51} Nora posits that this ‘acceleration of history’, is driven by a ‘hopelessly forgetful’ contemporary society where ‘real’ memory (unadulterated, social) is replaced by the need to change and then organise the past as ‘history’. It is this distance—between a lived, shape-shifting memory and one where we have sifted and sorted historical sources into ‘fact’—that concerns Nora.\textsuperscript{52} He proposes that the relationship between memory and history is oppositional rather than synonymous. He sees memory as being borne of living societies—perpetually evolving, vulnerable to remembering and forgetting. History, on the other hand, is a reconstruction, inauthentic and incomplete, of what no longer exists. While it could be argued that memory may be unreliable and equally incomplete, it has an authenticity and personal authority in recalling an event. History, on the other hand, presents a less nuanced point of view, often condensing collective memory down to one voice, or presenting one point of view to represent many. As Nora states, while memory is a ‘perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present’, history is merely a representation of the past.\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps this is where ephemeral works and actions of artists such as Gerz and Salcedo—discussed in the second half of this chapter—amongst others, succeed in successfully bridging the two. Nora’s assertion that history’s critical discourse is contrary to the spontaneity of memory can be challenged by work that unfolds for the viewer who is challenged to feel the historical event in the present-day; the vagaries of memory prove no obstacle in recalling the past in the present. The non-didactic characteristics essential to anti-memorials and anti-monuments respond to Nora’s concerns regarding the limitations of history; rather than representing the past, artists such as Gerz and Salcedo, while basing their work on historical

\textsuperscript{50} Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Memoire.”

\textsuperscript{51} Young, At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture, 62.

\textsuperscript{52} Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Memoire,” Representations, no. 26 (1989). 7-8

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. 8
facts, present them in such a way as to recall the old and to evoke new memories.

Gerz and Salcedo’s actions belong in the category of successful ephemeral works and actions that enable meaningful yet non-prescriptive engagement. They are sympathetic to the shape-shifting nature of memory, as described by Nora. Maurice Halbwachs, quoted by Nora, says there are ‘as many memories as there are groups; that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual’.

While Nora contends that history claims a universal authority, belonging ‘to everyone and to no one’, the works of Salcedo and Gerz allow for meaningful, individual—yet inclusive—responses, both positive and negative (particularly in the case of Gerz). The ephemeral and indexical qualities of their works mirror Nora’s description of memory taking root in ‘the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects’. They do this via their materiality and their allusions to, rather than representations of, a history.

The ‘memory-work’ is performed within each viewer in a literal sense, with the artwork providing experiential cues or pointers to the event, allowing viewer responses in melding old and new memories, experiences and histories. Such spontaneity in approaching memory is, according to Nora, counter to the aspirations of history. Nora’s contention that history ‘is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it’ suggests that it brooks no nuances. Furthermore, Nora suggests that the materials of history—that is, the museums, monuments and documentation—create artificial sites of remembrance stripping them of meaning and anything which could make them sites of memory, or lieux de mémoire. The role of testimony, so often the foundation for the works discussed in this thesis, is frequently downplayed or dismissed in the name of historical accuracy or objectivity. In *Testimony: Beyond the Language of Truth*, Argentinian writer and academic Nora

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54 Maurice Halbwach (1877–1945) was the French philosopher and sociologist known for creating of the concept of collective memory.

55 Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Memoire.”

56 Examples of this can be found in Salcedo’s *Unland Irreversible Witness* with parts of a child’s metal cot tethered to a table by hair woven through fine cloth; or *Untitled, 1995* where metal rods poke out like spines through concrete filled furniture; or Gerz’s *2146 Stones – Monument Against Racism*.

57 Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Memoire.”

58 Ibid. 9
Strejilevich discusses the disparity between what is ‘real’ for the individual suffering trauma and what is deemed ‘acceptable’ testimony, which often disregards the need for victims to tell their story. Their experiential ‘truths’, in failing to conform to the model of providing information and knowledge based on fact, are rejected in case they do not match evidence collected by other means. Strejilevich argues the merits of a truthful way of giving testimony, allowing for disruptive memories, discontinuities, blanks, silences and ambiguities, and warns against attempting to strip the witness’ account of intimacy and subjectivity. These gaps and silences may, as many others have argued, reveal their own ‘truths’ and speak as clearly as any evidence-based testimony, often with more nuance. The role of the artist can be invaluable in mediating this space where testimony, trauma, grief and memory meld. The artist can work in a parallel position to testimony, working to ‘(keep) traces alive, defeating annihilation by working through loss’. In producing work that reflects the disparities of fixed memory with active, transitioning responses to history, they can advocate for a more inclusive form of remembrance.

Counter-memorials have the potential to confront these concerns by disrupting the traditional monumental form. This is exemplified in the example of Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s *The Harburg Monument Against Fascism* (1986) [Fig. 17] in which the monumental form ‘erases itself and therefore its claims to monumentality’.  

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60 Ibid., 703-05.  
61 Several theorists have written extensively on this subject including those cited in this thesis such as Brett Ashley Kaplan, Marianne Hirsch, Joan Gibbons and Jill Bennett.  
Unveiled on 10 October 1986, the twelve-meter-high, one-meter-square stele was made of hollow aluminum and plated with a thin layer of soft lead. Harburg’s citizens were encouraged to engrave their names onto this surface with the steel styluses provided, thereby taking ‘ownership’ of remembrance and making a stand against Fascism. The public also had a role in determining the rate of the monument’s disappearance. As each physically accessible section of the monument became covered in writing it was lowered 140 centimetres, for a total of eight times—more or less at yearly intervals—before completely disappearing on 10 November 1993. All that remained was a small observation window into the underground shaft in which the monument is now enclosed and a tablet describing the chronology of its sinking. While many of Harburg’s citizens did not embrace the idea of a sinking monument, and took exception to

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the ‘engraving of names’ devolving into contentious and ‘unsightly’ graffiti, the
Gerzs stood firm in their belief in their memorial’s capacity to effect change by
flouting long-held conventions.\textsuperscript{65} The Harburg Monument Against Fascism’s aim
was, as Young noted,

…not to console but to provoke, not to remain fixed but to change, not to be
everlasting but to disappear, not to be ignored by its passersby but to
demand interaction, not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and
desanctification, not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw
it back at the town’s feet.\textsuperscript{66}

Going a step further, in privileging memory over the physically enduring
monument, it may be possible, in Gerz’s words, ‘that one day we will reach the
point where anti-Fascist memorials will no longer be necessary, when vigilance
will be kept alive by the invisible pictures of remembrance.’\textsuperscript{67} This sentiment
mirrors those expressed earlier by Shimon Attie who, reflecting on his own
installations, hoped that memory would make these memorial works redundant.

While for Gerz the most effective memorial may be no monument at all, but
rather the memory of the absent monument, the work of German artist Horst
Hoheisel and the linked concepts of anti materiality and invisible memory go
further still. Rather than adapting traditional materials to communicate
alternative forms of memorialising and commemoration, artists such as Hoheisel
have taken a more radical stance, questioning the need for memorialising
through materiality at all. In opting to discard materiality altogether, Hoheisel
stated his belief that ‘a memorial per se is located neither in the materials the
artist uses nor in its design but always and only in the minds of its beholders.’\textsuperscript{68}

The proposal that best exemplifies Hoheisel’s position was his provocative
response to the 1995 competition calling for a German national memorial to the
murdered Jews of Europe. Hoheisel’s proposed Project for the Removal of the
Brandenburg Gate (1997) in Berlin entailed blowing up the famous symbol of
Prussian might, the Brandenburger Tor, grinding the stone remains to dust, then

\textsuperscript{65} The issue and role of graffiti and other forms of writing on monuments, memorials will be further
discussed in Chapter Four.
\textsuperscript{66} Young, At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture, 131.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{68} Ellen Handler Spitz, “Loss as Vanished Form: On the Anti-Memorial Sculptures of Horst Hoheisel,”
sprinkling these remains over its former site before covering it with granite plates. Hoheisel’s anti-memorial work also includes *Aschcrott-Brunnendenkmal* (1985) in Kassel, Germany, a re-working of the original Aschcrott Fountain (1908) incorporating a negative concrete hollow that mirrored the shape and dimensions of the original, above-ground, desecrated and forgotten fountain [Fig. 18]. The fate of the original pyramid-shaped fountain was emblematic of the town’s callous treatment of its Jewish population during World War II and its and subsequent amnesia. In this way Hoheisel hoped to ‘rescue the history of [the] place as an open wound and as an open question…so that such things never happen again.’

While the (ultimately unsuccessful) *Brandenburg Gate* proposal was not entirely devoid of materiality—evident in its proposed use of dust and plates—in replacing the original celebrated landmark with what essentially would be a void, Hoheisel was again commemorating disappeared, murdered peoples with empty space, challenging the politics of memorialisation by playing with spatial perception. As Tomberger states, counter-monuments attempt, amongst other things, to negate the dominance of the vertical plane of the traditional monument, an impulse evident in some of the other examples in this chapter.

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70 At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture.

71 Niven and Paver, Memorialization in Germany since 1945, 245.
It is worth considering this point of view alongside those of psychoanalysts Dori Laub and Daniel Podell, who suggest that trauma is best understood by the metaphor of an empty space—a hole in the psyche. In their essay *Art and Trauma*, Laub and Podell use the term ‘empty circle’ to describe the latent but powerful feelings of rupture, absence and loss of representation often experienced by the trauma survivor. They often arise from the failure ‘of the empathic dyad at the time of traumatisation and the resulting failure to preserve an empathic tie even with oneself’.\(^{72}\) Academic Natasha Goldman suggests that recognising this space rather than filling it is the right step towards healing and functioning in the normal world.\(^{73}\) This view supports Laub and Podell’s assertions that art that engages in an ongoing dialogue with trauma, requiring the viewer to respond by entering into a dialogue of his or her own, is the most successful in breaching the aforementioned dyad. They contend that such works of art ‘reveal much in indirect ways: often, the most meaning can arise from the

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empty spaces, silences and omissions within them.\textsuperscript{74} Laub and Podell quote psychoanalyst Gilbert Rose in \textit{Necessary Illusion: Art as ‘Witness’} (1995) on artwork that responds to absence, advocating his view that rather than ‘communicating’ meaning, it generates meaning in receptive minds.\textsuperscript{75}

While many forms of art can be used to successfully illustrate these views, I am particularly interested in the various forms of alternative monuments and memorials being advocated in this thesis.\textsuperscript{76} These works conform to what Laub and Podell term a ‘witnessing’ presence, that is, a space in which the viewer can experience connection rather than the ‘abandonment of listening and communication’—or the shutting down—that characterises trauma.\textsuperscript{77} The methods and materials that artists employ, such as traces, transience, spatial disruption or empty spaces, have the capacity to convey these powerful affects, as opposed to the solidity of traditional monumentality with its propensity to fill in these gaps. The silences and holes contained in these artworks perform, as Natasha Goldman suggests above, the spaces for a presence to emerge from absence and to become sites for engagement.\textsuperscript{78}

Jochen Gerz, in another of his actions, \textit{2146 Stones – Monument Against Racism} (1993), applied invisibility as a commemorative strategy. Unlike the previously discussed works of Hoheisel, he did this not through inversion or permanent removal but by stealth. Targeting the forecourt of Saarbrucken Schloss, Germany, home to the Gestapo during Hitler’s Reich and the site of the 1938 Kristallnacht public humiliation of Jews, Gerz mobilised groups of his university students to secretly remove several cobblestones, replacing them with marked substitutes. Repeated over several nights, these cobblestones were then engraved with the names, locations and dates of all the destroyed and

\textsuperscript{74} Laub and Podell, "Art and Trauma". 992.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Such elements of artworks as the exquisite pauses in recorded testimonies in Claude Lanzmann’s film \textit{Shoah}; the spaces within the recurrent motif of biscuit tins in Christian Boltanski’s \textit{The Storehouse}, in for stowing, for example, bits of fabric; the holes burnt or gouged into the heavily-textured paintings of Anselm Kiefer, are amongst the many widely-known examples of well-known artists who have explored strategies that infer absence and trauma while allowing space for the viewer to extract meaning. Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis precludes discussing them in greater detail.
\textsuperscript{77} Laub and Podell, "Art and Trauma". 992-93.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 991.
abandoned Jewish cemeteries in Germany—amounting to over two thousand. Returning these engraved cobblestones, face down, to their former positions in front of the Schloss, this memory operation left no trace, becoming an invisible memorial, a memory held only in the minds of those who participated or who knew. By communicating this action, in seeking public funding from the parliament to continue the project, Gerz sparked both political and public outrage. This then precipitated the public's becoming an intrinsic part of the memorial, as they flocked to the square in search of the 'invisible' markers. In questioning the credibility of the project, as James Young points out, visitors quite literally questioned 'where they stood', fulfilling Gerz's hope that memory would become internalised and that, by standing in the square, the visitors 'would become the memorials for which they searched...[returning] the burden of memory to those who come looking for it.' Despite political divisions, Parliament voted to support the monument, ironically renaming the plaza Square of the Invisible Monument, with a name plaque the only visible sign of this memory-memorial.

Ultimately, as Young notes—and keeping Hoheisel's Project for the Removal of the Brandenburg Gate in mind—perhaps the conundrum of how to engage with an event of the magnitude of Holocaust memory in Germany is best resolved by its permanent irresolution, that is, 'that only an unfinished memorial process can guarantee the life of the memory. Better a thousand years of Holocaust memorial competition than any single ‘final solution’ to Germany’s memorial problem.'

**Alternative Forms of Memorialisation in South America**

All the alternative forms of monuments, memorials and actions and artworks discussed in this chapter have in common a well-documented dissatisfaction with what have become regarded as 'traditional' forms of memorialisation. As Young asks, "How does a state incorporate shame into its national memorial...

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80 Ibid., 140–44.
81 Ibid., 144.
82 “Horst Hoheisel's Counter-Memory of the Holocaust: The End of the Monument".
landscape? His question has pertinence for artists struggling to approach the representation of the Holocaust some seventy-plus years on, as well as for those grappling with recent and continuing events in countries such as South America. The more pressing question, however, for artists operating within politically volatile countries such as Colombia, Peru and Argentina is how to represent the grief of citizens within a totalitarian environment. The ongoing violence and the power structures operating in many South American locations can foreclose the possibility of a formal, uncensored commemorative process, particularly one addressing the murder and disappearances of their fellow citizens. Under these conditions citizens themselves can become numbed in their responses to trauma. As Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano has pointed out, ‘Guatemala suffers from an official history that is mutilated…as though it is dangerous to remember, because to remember is to repeat the past like a nightmare.’

In such cases, ephemeral memory work and actions in the form of anti-memorials may be an effective means of working through trauma and expressing grief, leaving their mark on the viewer without necessarily leaving implicating evidence in the form of provocatively controversial work. Turner’s previously mentioned expression ‘ephemeral analogs’ for visceral expressions of grief is a fittingly poetic way of expressing our need for deep, significant acknowledgement, for an embodied gesture of some kind to represent or stand in for those whom we mourn. Many of my own artworks follow this dictum, as do several of Doris Salcedo’s ephemeral works and actions including Tenebre Noviembre 6 and 7, 1985 (2002) and Accion de Duelo of July 3, 2007. Both are examples of short-lived works that perform this function. Relating to a still contested political event, Tenebre Noviembre 6 and 7 [Fig. 19] was staged across the facade of the Palace of Justice in Bogota. Reconstructed after the 1985 massacre of up to two hundred and eighty citizens, including most of the Palace judges, by the guerrilla invasion, Salcedo’s reclamation of the site was

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an elegantly staged memory work. On the 17th anniversary of the event two hundred and eighty chairs—one for each victim—began a slow descent down the palace walls, lowered by ropes one chair at a time. Initially almost unnoticeable, as time progressed the action was unmistakable as scores of chairs made their descent.

Starting on the hour of the first victim’s assassination and continuing for the 53-hour duration of the violent event, the empty chairs became statements of absence, presenting a temporal challenge between remembering and forgetting, particularly for passers-by, whom Salcedo intended confronting with their own memory of the event.85 This use of chairs is typical of the artistic ‘language’ Salcedo has developed, where everyday domestic and/or organic objects stand in for the victim, speak of the absence of a body and become a kind of mute testimony. This evocation of presence in absence reiterates Laub and Podell’s theory linking trauma to an empty space or a hole in the psyche.86 Indeed, Salcedo has referred to possessions becoming impregnated with an owner’s presence, while every space is a reminder of his or her absence.87 88 In Salcedo’s public staging of Tenebre Noviembre 6 and 7, similarly to my act of writing names of forgotten victims on a Holocaust memorial (described in Chapter Four), it is also possible to see the slippage between terms such as ‘ephemeral’, ‘action’, ‘spontaneous’, ‘anti-memorial’ and ‘makeshift’. Salcedo’s performance was ephemeral in its (apparently) spontaneous commencement and in finishing as it began, with the blank wall; an action in its performativity and political message; spontaneous in catching the viewer unawares; and makeshift in its use of everyday, familiar items.

85 Bal et al., Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth, 54-57.
86 See page 9
88 Chapter 3 – Materiality, will extrapolate on this aspect of personal items and the use of materials in referencing absent bodies.
Salcedo’s later action, *Accion de Duelo (Act of Mourning)* [Fig. 20] was more immediate in addressing a traumatic political event. On hearing the announcement that eleven previously kidnapped Colombian legislators had been assassinated in Bogota, Salcedo began planning a public act of mourning to take place in Bogota’s main square, Plaza de Bolivar. This event epitomised…
Colombia’s civil conflict and the widespread, insidious phenomenon of ‘the disappeared’. Similarly to *Tenebre Noviembre 6 and 7*, Salcedo sought to counter the emotional inertia and profound sense of loss overwhelming her compatriots. Aiming to take on ‘the complex facets of what it means to be a citizen, performing acts of willful remembrance and commemoration while simultaneously exposing the lack of official address’, Salcedo’s *Accion de Duelo* entailed lighting 24,000 candles. These candles, arranged formally to convey a heaviness and lack of spontaneity in the action, attracted hundreds of people to participate, unprompted, alongside Salcedo in the mammoth task of lighting each candle. Interviewed, one of Salcedo’s studio partners, Joaquín Sanabria, interpreted the *Accion* as Salcedo’s desire to teach Colombians how to mourn. This view is confirmed by Maria Carrasquilla, a young student at the time, who recalled participating despite her passive acceptance of the historic violence at the time, as voiced earlier by Salcedo. Feeling nonetheless drawn to participate in the work, she described the respectful silence ‘that was heard so loudly throughout the Plaza’ and the inclusiveness and empowerment of working as one ‘as if we were doing something meaningful for our country’. Interpreting the experience as one of support and defiance, she concludes ‘…and we all mourned accordingly’.

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89 In international human rights law, the term ‘disappeared’ or ‘enforced disappearance’ is defined as ‘the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of, a State or political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time’. *Customary International Humanitarian Law: Rules*. Cambridge University Press. p. 342. Importantly, such actions leave no body to prepare for burial or any evidence of the victim’s death.
92 Ibid.
93 Maria Carrasquilla to MCA DNA, 2015, http://www2.mcachicago.org/authors/maria-carrasquilla/.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
**Accion de Duelo** was just one of several ephemeral, public, participatory actions of mourning in South America and elsewhere that functioned as interventions offering space and a public platform to express emotion and forge a sense of connectedness. This form of intervention as memorial can also be applied to the two case studies outlined in Chapter One, Kozma utca Jewish cemetery and Freedom Square in Budapest. In all these public actions and site-specific works the traditionally private act of mourning gains political potency and civic unity in claiming the public realm. In consistently responding to the political climate of their countries and the ongoing violence, Salcedo and other South American artists can be considered as representatives or mediators for the victims, as described by psychoanalyst and child survivor of the Holocaust, Dori

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96 Grynsztejn et al., "Doris Salcedo," 19.
97 Another similar South American example of this is Lika Mutal's *Ojo que llora (The Eye That Cries)* in Lima, Peru where a monument has been transformed and reinvigorated by public actions in the face of political turbulence. This case will be discussed in Chapter Four in a section dealing with contested memory.
98 Grynsztejn et al., "Doris Salcedo."
Laub. Working alongside this violence they could also, arguably, be described as ‘insiders’ to violence. Laub, whilst referring specifically to the Holocaust, contends that those caught in the direct trauma of events and who are in the position of bearing witness (and wish to unburden themselves of their experience) are seldom able to extricate themselves enough from the event to allow for objective description. In Laub’s work on bearing witness he explains the precarious psychological state over which the trauma victim presides, using ‘silence’ as both sanctuary and enslavement to guard against unbearable reality. Laub contends that the role of the ‘listener’ is to hear this silence and address it obliquely, as a ‘companion in a journey onto an unchartered land, a journey the survivor cannot traverse or return from alone.’ As Jill Bennett reasons, the role of therapist or listener can be assumed by others, such as the filmmaker videoing testimony, or the artist as creator or memorial maker. The artist can act as facilitator assisting witnesses to process and come to terms with their traumatic experience, and enable each to articulate his or her own experience. The artist’s ability to work within this ‘silence’ as identified by Laub — and reiterated in Maria Carraquilla’s interview—is a key driver in this thesis.

Most of those involved in the two Budapest memorials are representing Holocaust survivors or upholding the memories of other victims. These participants are usually the second or third generations, profoundly affected by their family’s suffering. They have a comparable status to Salcedo as secondary witnesses. By adding names and drawings to the marble slabs, and leaving stones at the Kozma utca Holocaust memorial, families are ensuring their dead are not forgotten, while the demonstrations at Freedom Square insist on honouring not just the protestor’s memories of their dead, but what is widely

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99 As many commentators, writers and Salcedo herself have pointed out, Salcedo’s work and her concerns carry relevance beyond the South American region where she works. The global omnipresence of war and inherent threats to mankind are palpable in her work. Doris Salcedo, 18-19.
102 Ibid., 58-59.
103 Bennett, Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art, 31.
considered as historical truth—by holding those responsible accountable. All
conjure the absent body, all advocate for the memory of the dead who could be
regarded—like Colombia’s victims—as ’disappeared’. The victims represented
in each of the case studies had been abducted, often tortured and murdered by
a State or political organisation; most families were left with no body to mourn.
Salcedo’s work aims to address this disappearance and loss through artistically
and materially balancing appearing and disappearing rather than through
didactic or literal representational means. She has expressed her desire for her
work to function like a funeral oration, as a means to ‘formulate a poetics of
mourning’. Salcedo considers her task as an artist to be that of remembering
those killed, particularly those who have ’disappeared’, stating, ‘All the funerary
rituals that confirm the humanity of the person who was killed are missing, so
they should be put in place.’ Whilst operating distinctly within an overtly
political milieu, Salcedo’s work does not openly address or attack particular
politicians or events in an accusatory manner, instead it allows her artistic
renderings to deliver her messages. As museum director Julie Rodrigues
Widholm observes when differentiating between activism and Salcedo’s art,
Salcedo has spoken about her work’s inability to change reality and claims that
‘its silence symbolizes our inability to solve profound crises.’

Salcedo’s concern for remembering and honouring the individual victim is
echoed in the two Budapest case studies. The purposeful public demonstrations
of anger, memory and grief that combined protest with memorialising in
Freedom Square and the addition of names and memorial stones at the Kozma
utca Holocaust memorial ensure that the victim/victims are remembered and
memory stays active. This is in stark contrast to the contradictory nature of
many monuments; in their struggle for relevance and visibility they are too often
doomed to invisibility and insignificance. As noted by legal scholar Sanford
Levinson, this contradiction is often accompanied by the monument’s propensity

105 Chicago, Doris Salcedo’s Public Works.
to stop time. Ephemeral monuments and actions possess the potential to counter this, and the artist can play a vital role in bringing the past into the present and ensuring that the subjects’ concerns retain vitality and relevance, thereby activating and expanding time.

**Time**

_Ephemeral monuments and actions possess the potential to counter this, and the artist can play a vital role in bringing the past into the present and ensuring that the subjects’ concerns retain vitality and relevance, thereby activating and expanding time._

All the forms of commemoration discussed throughout this chapter, ephemeral or otherwise, involve distinct temporal aspects. While both artists and theorists may refer to temporal aspects of ‘past’ and ‘present’, I am interested in the nuances of the multi-layering of time, of time moving back and forth, of activating memory to reference past events while contemplating the present and the future. This, I suggest, should be the role of the monument or memorial, whether as permanent form, action, or ephemeral gesture which lodges permanently in one’s mind.

Kay Turner, stresses ephemerality’s reliance on the present, writing of its ability to humanise time by referring us to the crises of our mortality. Ephemerality, she says, exists ‘only in the present moment, and its performative tense, even if it makes reference to the past or to the future, is a performative present.’ In referencing this heavily emphasised present tense, Turner aligns ephemerality with the vernacular working of the phenomenological - referring us to the everyday, the fleeting events as they unfold; the mostly unacknowledged experiences and performances of everyday life. Turner also refers to academic José Muñoz regarding the value of ephemera when incorporated performatively, suggesting that ephemera is a ‘useful concept for ‘reformulating’ and expanding our sense of the materiality of memory’. Muñoz regards ephemerality as linked to alternative modes of narrativity, citing as an example

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109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid., 159.
‘…all those things that remain after a performance, a kind of evidence of what has transpired but certainly not the thing itself…[it follows] traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things.’  

This reliance on memory and the holding of an experience in the mind complements the stated intentions of many of the artists referred to in this paper. Turner’s suggestion that the ephemeral and traditional ‘speak’ to each other also aligns with my belief in the validity of embodied processes and their intrinsic relationship to ephemeral memorial works, performative actions, spontaneous acts and so forth.

Doris Salcedo’s frequent references to still-contested political events are typical of her longstanding exploration of the temporal as well as spatial dimensions of loss. In mediating the traumatic experiences of others, Salcedo attempts to eradicate the distance between herself and her subjects. By captivating the viewer and slowing down time she presents an antidote to forgetting. Introducing temporal displacement or disjuncture to captivate and engage the viewer, thus redefining the memorialising function of monumentality. This is demonstrated in her work Unland: The Orphan’s Tunic (1997) [Fig. 21] where hair is used to join disparate elements. Playing with temporal elements also enacts one of the main factors of ephemeral art, the capacity to hold an event in the imagination. In making work that recalls victims—whether from the widely known, infamous or political catastrophe or smaller, more personal tragedy—our memories keep them alive, altering time yet again.

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113 Bal et al., Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth, 55-57.
114 This is described below, while other, similar works will be discussed in greater detail in other chapters.
Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serre’s theories of time have implications for this capacity of artworks or possessions to move back and forth in time. Both Deleuze and Serres refer to the non-linearity of time in their theories—time ‘folding’ in Deleuze’s case and time ‘crumpling’ for Serres. Both also consider life and existence as topological rather than geometrical, as will be explained below. Deleuze offers a theory of time in the traditionally philosophical sense, with a technical, physics-based description that explains time as an emergent phenomenon, as a process with degrees of actuality that are the result of a number of syntheses. Serres, while basically agreeing with Deleuze’s description of the emergent process, offers a less technical, more intuitive and experiential method where he compares time to a crumpled handkerchief.\footnote{Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., Time and History in Deleuze and Serres. 31.} In explaining this model, he describes laying out a flat, freshly ironed handkerchief with distinct fixed distances and proximities. He then proposes sketching a circle
in one corner, marking out nearby points and measuring far-off distances. If this handkerchief is then crumpled and shoved into one’s pocket, the two distant points are suddenly close, perhaps superimposed, but if one then tears certain parts of the handkerchief, two points that were close are now distant. The *Orphan’s Tunic*, as mentioned above, brings together materials that hold both different histories and different memories. In bringing them together through an action in the present day, they metaphorically ‘crumple’ time into a new configuration. Serres refers to this science of nearness and rifts as topology, while the science of stable and defined distances is known as metrical geometry. Classical time is related to geometry and to metrics rather than space. Serres argues that when viewing time topologically the rigidity of the proximities and distances becomes apparent. Our experience of time, both internally through our inner senses and externally, resembles the crumpled version of the handkerchief much more accurately than the flattened one. The passage of time is also regarded as ‘percolating’ rather than ‘flowing’, according to Serres. Serres draws other analogies with topology, such as comparing the flight pattern of a fly or wasp to a baker working and transforming dough as he kneads it; in folding half a plane of dough over another half, turning and repeating the action over and over, the baker produces a design comparable to the haphazard flight path of a fly. In this simple example, Serres offers another way of explaining the end result of the crumpling effect.\(^{116}\)

Possessions, as clearly seen in Salcedo’s use of objects or my use of my mother’s dowry linen, become impregnated with a person’s presence, while every space is a reminder of his or her absence. Mieke Bal, in recalling academic Michael Levan’s evocative description of trauma in the art of Alfredo Jaar as a ‘stickiness in space and time’, similarly refers to Salcedo’s creation of ‘sticky images’ that enforce a slowing down, whilst simultaneously intensifying the experience of time.\(^{117}\) Ephemerality, performative actions, and other

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\(^{117}\) Levan writes: ‘One of the defining features of traumatic experience is its persistence. It exhibits stickiness in space and time, lingering unexorcizably in the places of its perpetration, in the bodies of those affected, in the eyes of witnesses and in the politics of memory. Traumas are experienced not only in lived
alternative art forms can offer means of working through the pain of bereavement, grief, or even ambiguous loss. They enable a more meaningful, active form of viewer engagement that can inspire an ongoing and open-ended re-evaluation of the past, rather than the mere historical closure implied by traditional forms of memorials and monuments.

Serving as both memorials and testimonies for events that had not yet been officially reconciled, works such as *Tenebre Noviembre 6 and 7* are, as Salcedo herself has said, acts of memory.\textsuperscript{118} She has spoken about the vital importance of the notion of duration—something unfinished, an ongoing process—whilst also locating these pieces out of historical time, leaving time for reflection open for herself and the viewer.\textsuperscript{119} This aspect is active in my own work. In both *Coloured Threads* [Fig. 22] and *Hair Rabbits* [Fig. 23], the connections I make between materiality and ritual and the performative aspect in their making hint at wider relationships and larger stories, allowing the viewer room for contemplation. The gesture of sewing may speak of a larger feminist discourse; the use of hair in Salcedo’s *The Orphans Tunic* can allude more broadly to gestures of repair.\textsuperscript{120} Folding the distant and the near, producing an intimate encounter, animates the imagination. It also has the capacity to give a life beyond death. As Mary O’Neill observes, rather than capturing the frozen moment of death, ephemeral works ‘begin with death and are alive.’\textsuperscript{121} These temporal themes will have further resonances in Chapter Three, *Materiality*, where these works will be discussed.

\textsuperscript{118} Bal et al., *Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth*, 83.
\textsuperscript{120} Several of these works will be discussed in greater detail in other chapters.
\textsuperscript{121} (Im)Permanence: Cultures in/out of Time, 97.
The rise of alternative forms of memorialising such as anti-memorials, actions and other forms of artistic expressions has been the focus of this chapter. Whether political or personal, they can be seen as responses to the inadequacies of traditional modes of commemoration in addressing the needs of victims, their families and all those affected. Examples of post-Holocaust, Euro-centric examples alongside South American cases were examined and compared, with a focus on their cultural, political and temporal differences and similarities. The work of various philosophers and academics was used to highlight the inherent complexities within works. Pierre Nora’s influential work *Les Lieux de Mémoire* on historical memory was considered, alongside trauma theorists including psychoanalysts Laub and Poddell on the shape of trauma; Nora Strejilevich on aspects of testimony; and Serres and Deleuze on temporal issues. The chapter considered works by artists such as Salcedo, Munoz, Gerz and Attie that were both evocative and provocative in challenging the viewer as well as the political status quo. Conceptually formidable, materially audacious, these works challenge the promise of permanancy so often ascribed to memorial culture.
CHAPTER THREE—MATERIALITIES

The whole world is made of stone…it is a direct link to the heart of the matter—a molecular link. When I tap it, I get the echo of that which we are—in the solar plexus—in the center of gravity of matter. Isamu Noguchi

Traditional Materials and Monumentality

In his 1964 article Monuments and Monumentality, Cecil D Elliott expressed the general belief that the decision to build a memorial presupposes the lasting importance of the person or event to be commemorated. He further acknowledged that this necessarily implies that the person/event’s significance will endure, therefore the monument must necessarily likewise endure.

This long-held assumption of the need for the monument or memorial to convey permanence and ongoing importance—often through physically imposing means—has been challenged in more recent times, particularly from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Many artists are resistant to the idea that lasting commemoration must employ materials specifically compliant with this ideal—such as stone, metal and to a lesser extent concrete. These artists may approach commemoration by activating memory through provocative actions, ephemeral materiality and subversive devices designed to stay in the viewer’s consciousness longer than commemorations by any traditional means. While the works of these artists may not endure in the manner of the traditional monument—that is, fixed in time and place—this does not necessarily preclude them from maintaining lasting relevance and power in the message they wish to convey. This stance conforms to that of Italian architect and theorist Aldo Rossi’s renowned view of the monument, expressed in his 1983 Selected Writings and Projects, as ‘the sign upon which one reads something that cannot

2 Elliott, "Monuments and Monumentality."
3 Arguments regarding the propensity of traditional monuments and memorials to induce ‘forgetting’ in the mourner or viewer are discussed elsewhere in this paper. This chapter will focus instead on the affects imparted by materiality.
4 As an example, Doris Salcedo’s Noviembre 6 y 7 was an action that, despite lasting only two days, has maintained a relevance over time and, arguably, a notoriety that have resulted in its ongoing vitality. Widely documented in a myriad of media—print, images, interviews, websites and so on—and kept alive in the minds of those who witnessed it, it continues to communicate affect long after the actual unfolding of the work/event, proving that impermanence need not preclude memorialising.
otherwise be said...'. The fundamental concept of monumentality—of an object designed to inspire awe and a sense of being overwhelmed—has been appropriated and reconceived by artists to implicate or directly involve the viewer in aspects of the experience. This can be illustrated by examples from those artists who play with size or materiality—deliberately challenging the viewer's perception or experience, making them feel uncomfortable, compromised or even amused—thereby prompting the viewer to ask more questions and go beyond the mere façade.

These artists, several of whom are discussed in this chapter, may choose to utilise traditional materials in unconventional ways, or subvert the traditional formalities associated with such materials. Materials such as brass, bronze and stone exemplify the traditional properties desirable for the commemorative process—that is, an unyielding, impermeable, long-lasting materiality. Metal and stone have long been the common choices: stone for gravestones, markers, arches, statues and sculptures and metal for plaques, towers, sculptures and statues. It is worth noting that these materials also continue to be favoured by many artists for reasons more to do with performative, aesthetic or ritualistic reasons than traditional monumentality. For example, sculptors often speak of the artistic potential in the variations between different stones, the influence of these characteristics and the attraction of using a material borne of the earth. In addition, the materiality of stone has led to broad assumptions about its value—and limits—as a means of expressing the intricate dynamics of the mourning process. As a material, stone holds significant historical resonances and, for many, it holds a deeply felt connection to the world—both metamorphically and metaphorically—as demonstrated by the previous point. Connerton describes the inherent qualities of stone as follows:

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6 While there are many definitions of 'monumentality', *Artlex Dictionary of Art* provides a particularly good outline in *What Monumentality is Really About* at www.cloud9.net/~bradmcc/monumentality.html

7 Harvey et al., *Stone: A Legacy and Inspiration for Art*.

8 For example, Judith Collins in *Sculpture Today* refers to artists such as Ulrich Rückreim who privileges process before form, using the stone’s inherent characteristics as guides, and adapting the ‘cut in space’ methods from the 1960s (after Carl Andre and Richard Serra); Espirito Santo who cuts marbles and
We intuit a tangible resistance, something that transcends our humanity, something which, in its strength, its motionless, its size, is not human. In its grandeur we are faced with a force that belongs to some world other than the profane one of which we are part.\(^9\)

These aspects will be discussed in connection with several of the examples offered in this chapter.

While the material implications of traditional monumentality have been questioned by several of these artists, the concept of size and monumentality—and the many implications therein—are also worth exploring. For example, Lewis Mumford’s earlier concerns (referenced in Chapter One) regarding the inappropriateness of the monument in a culture that should ‘travel light’, could be seen as an opportunity to advocate for a more appropriate, egalitarian, portable form of memorialising, utilising the same materiality in new ways.\(^{10}\) Also of concern have been the inevitable associations with, and legacy of, Fascism, as discussed in Chapter Two which looked at the post-9/11 Tribute in Light, the concept of ‘aesthetic pollution’, and the growing trend towards anti-monumental art as a response. The counter-memorials from artists of the later generation are held to bypass such concerns by disrupting the monumental form. This is exemplified in the example of Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s The Harburg Monument Against Fascism (discussed in Chapter Two) in which the monumental form ‘erases itself and therefore its claims to monumentality.’\(^{11}\)

Furthermore, some female artists have perceived the monument as overwhelmingly male in its implications of monumentality. UK artist Tracy Emin, for example, challenged this masculine nature of monuments with her Baby Things (2008) from the 2008 Folkestone Triennial. She is quoted as saying she finds public sculpture ‘very big, very macho and dominating and intrusive’, preferring ‘little things in public’.\(^{12}\) Emin responded by installing a range of baby granites according to their veining; and Richard Long who uses stones because he likes the idea that they ‘are what the world is made of’, as just a small example of this affinity and connectedness. Sculpture Today, 178-78.

\(^{10}\) Elliott, “Monuments and Monumentality,” 51.
\(^{11}\) Kaplan, Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation, 161.
items, to scale, in painted cast bronze, which were located off the beaten track, scattered throughout the seaside town. These works incorporated a social message in seeking to expose the town’s hidden problem of a high teenage pregnancy rate. The traditional bronze materiality of these objects, which is detectable only by touch, managed to balance vulnerability with defiance—a moving attribute when contemplating commemoration. Academic Anna Moszynska, writing in *Sculpture Now*, notes the rise of the female voice in contemporary sculpture as corresponding with the increase of anti-memorialisation in public spaces, with Emin’s work an example of this.\textsuperscript{13} Several of Kiki Smith’s works, along with my work *Shifting Sands* (2014)—described in more detail later in this chapter—take a similar stance to that of Emin in intentionally feminising the more masculine associations of bronze and designing pieces to be experienced at an intimate scale. While smallness of scale and intimacy in the encounter are not the exclusive domain of female artists, for many it is a deliberate strategy to reclaim the feminine in what could be regarded as a male dominated field—particularly in the area of public sculptures, where male dominance is noticeably strong. These associations between gender and scale are supported historically by eighteenth century philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke who assigned gendered attributes to size in their writing on beauty and the sublime. Both link the sublime to ‘masculine’ attributes such as immensity of scale, while aligning the beautiful with more ‘feminine’ attributes such as smallness.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation*, 7.
As another female voice, Colombian artist Doris Salcedo regards monumentality as a vital instrument in her work, yet never at the expense of human scale. Salcedo considers monuments as relating to memory and scale, referring to them as tokens of memory.\(^{15}\) While some of the contemporary Holocaust monuments discussed in this thesis rely on inducing invisibility as their spatial strategy—for example, Micha Ullman’s buried library, *Bibliothek* (1995), and Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s sinking obelisk, *Harburg Monument Against Fascism* (1986)—the power of Salcedo’s work lies in her attempts to retrieve forgotten histories in order to ‘enrich the surface of the present.’\(^{16}\)

Theorist Mieke Bal points to the suspended, low internal brick walls in Salcedo’s *Abyss* (2005) [Fig. 24] as a clever device to induce discomfort in the viewer.\(^{17}\) Seemingly built from the top down, rather than from the ground up, the installation appears to float only a metre or two from the ground, inducing what Julie Rodrigues Widholm describes as ‘an empathic physical experience of oppression and near-entombment…’.\(^{18}\) *Abyss* is a fine example of Salcedo’s handling of monumentality—of bringing in time by suspending it—as are *Tenebre Noviembre 6 y 7* [Fig. 26] and the installation *Plegaria Muda* for the 8th

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\(^{15}\) Bal et al., *Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth*, 51.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 55.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

The metaphor of suspended time is realised through the use of walls in these two works, with suspended and stacked chairs used to redefine monumentality. Salcedo manages to harness the memorialising function of monumentality through direct references to political occurrences while retaining human proportions in her choices of materiality—in these cases chairs. In this way she is able to represent and direct our attention to those people whom she

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19 This aspect of Salcedo’s temporal treatments, particularly seen through the example of Noviembre 6 y 7, is discussed in Chapter Two under the section ‘Time’.

20 For more discussion on ephemeral art, actions and how they manipulate time see Chapter Two under the subheading *Time*. 
seeks to keep alive in our memories.\textsuperscript{21} In Salcedo’s other works, monumental scale and the ‘weightiness’ of her materials are countered with reminders of victims—sometimes in the form of bones or fabric—but also within the materiality itself. For example, on encountering one of Salcedo’s \textit{Untitled (1998)} concreted wooden armoires [Fig. 27] during her 2015 retrospective, what moved me was less the monolithic form of the furniture consuming a helplessly inverted table, than the subtle yet distinctive crack in the concrete [Fig. 27]. Rupturing the formality of this seemingly impenetrable piece, the crack seemed to be the only spontaneous gesture in an entire room of similarly mute, somber pieces.\textsuperscript{22} This would initially seem a stark contrast with Salcedo’s monumental crack in the floor of the Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall, \textit{Shibboleth (2007)}. Yet, while \textit{Shibboleth} could initially appear disproportionate in terms of human scale, in architectural terms it was comparable to a hairline crack capable of bringing a building down. Thus, arguably, \textit{Shibboleth} could be regarded as another anti-monument.

\textsuperscript{21} Bal et al., \textit{Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth}, 55-56.  
\textsuperscript{22} These references to Salcedo’s works reflect my own responses on visiting the retrospective show \textit{Doris Salcedo} held at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, June 26 – October 12, 2015.
In the hands of contemporary artists, traditional materiality—whilst maintaining age-old associations of resilience, durability, and a literal weightiness—is ripe not only for reinterpretation but subversion. For example, in utilising engraved brass plaques—a time-honoured commemorative tradition—for his Stolpersteine or Stumbling Blocks (1993- ) (Fig. 28), German performance artist Gunter Demnig transformed what was initially an art action into a collective monument. Rather than being simple memorial markers, these Stumbling Blocks sought to redress the traumatic disappearance of individuals during the Nazi era, including Jews forcibly removed from their homes and deported to concentration camps. They mark the place where the victim once lived, rather than the site of death. These plaques, like miniature memorials, are mostly located on the ground—literally underfoot. Hence the title Stumbling Blocks that aims to ‘trip’ the memory of the passer-by. The plaques are also complex and rich in symbolism, working on various levels; for example, the brass plate with the engraved details of the victim never tarnishes as it is continually burnished from passing foot traffic, thus
‘visually refreshing the memory’. Although Stumbling Blocks has spread to more than three hundred and fifty communities over Europe, Demnig has retained control over the engraving process, hand-punching each letter individually. On a metaphorical level, this handcrafting of remembrance provides a poignant contrast to the industrial enormity and scale of the Nazi killing machine. In contrast to the methodology of anonymous murder, the various iterations of Stumbling Blocks commemorate and honour each victim’s individuality—by name—embedding him or her into their community once again.

Figure 28. Gunter Demnig, Stolpersteine (Stumbling Blocks), 1993-. Brass, 10x10cms. Berlin. Photo: Sylvia Griffin

As academic Michael Imort notes, Stumbling Blocks has played a part in transforming the role of memorials. The popularity and transnational distribution of these memorials also spatially generates ‘a map of deportation sites that, much like a pointillist painting, [allow] for different images to emerge as one’s perspective zooms out.’ Germans identify this aspect of art, where the many

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23 Niven and Paver, Memorialization in Germany since 1945, 235.

24 Ibid.
individual components combine to form a larger entity, enhancing and transcending its original intention, as *Gesamtkunstwerk* (literally translated, a total or ideal work of art). The increasing spread of *Stumbling Blocks* throughout Germany and Europe represents not only a new type of decentralised monument but also a new process for memorialising's decentralisation. Unlike UK artist Rachel Whiteread and Israeli sculptor Micha Ullman’s memorials (discussed in Chapter Four)—subjected to lengthy and multiple phases of official scrutiny—*Stumbling Blocks*, while conceived by a performing artist, has been sustained by individuals rather than by institutions or the State.

My work *Shifting Sands* [Fig. 29] similarly repurposes traditional materiality—in this case metal—in an attempt to elicit new meanings. *Shifting Sands* evolved from an earlier artwork, *Shoreless* (2012), that consisted of wax and sea urchin pieces. Reducing the original sixteen blocks to one and changing the material to bronze produced a shift in the work’s conceptual frame. The shift in materiality from wax to bronze served to abstract the work, generalising the original form and thus opening the work to broader interpretation. In addition, material transformation—as realised in the steps and processes fundamental to the production of bronze sculpture—is both materially and conceptually significant to the themes of most of my work. This is demonstrable in the preparation and completion of *Shifting Sands*. The processes involved included the creation of silicon rubber moulds, followed by wax replicas that were then reworked and subsequently destroyed by the intense heat of the lost-wax casting process. The void left by this process was then replaced by bronze, completing the cycle of loss and absence woven through the various processes and stages of the work’s development.

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 233.
27 Whiteread and Ullman’s memorials will be discussed further in Chapter Four.
28 The experience of working away from the studio, in the foundry environment, required a different set of decision-making skills and working processes and presented new challenges. Aesthetic decisions such as choice of finish and performing the wax chasing were partly collaborative; other aspects involved relinquishing control and responsibility to the metal foundry workers. The processes, particularly the molten metal pouring and restricted access, were the inverse of the intimacy and immediacy of my own artistic processes and sense of involvement from inception to conclusion.
Such dramatic instances of material transformation offer the opportunity to explore how we experience materials, particularly within the context of monuments and memorials. In maintaining an intimacy in scale despite the formality in materiality, my intent for the bronze work was to promote an intimate relationship between the viewer and the piece. In deference to traditional notions of the sublime, the work was lit so as to cast shadows on the adjacent walls. In this way, my intention was to realise scale through indexical/ephemeral shadows rather than through the object itself [Fig. 30].

American artist Kiki Smith’s sculptural work is notable for the connective links she makes with materiality and intimacy and the affect she is able to generate from a wide range of materials. Wax, wood, glass, paper, aluminium, plaster and bronze are often used by Smith as motifs for transformation, and are usually aimed at evoking a visceral experience in the viewer. Her work often conveys a plasticity, using disparate materials to explore her subjects from various angles, whether it be the female body from the inside out, or creatures, anthropomorphised or mythologised. Many of these works are realised in bronze, some painted and others finished with a dark patina: a woman curled into an inverted foetus figure in Lilith (1995) [Fig. 31]; a scattering of crows on the gallery floor in Jersey Crows (1995) [Fig. 32], wings spread and talons curled in death; a severed head on the floor in Getting the Bird Out (1992) [Fig. 33], with eyes closed and string trailing from the mouth. These works, while not
strictly speaking memorials, carry an elegiac quality; arguably they speak of loss and suffering. In placing these works on the ground, or suspending others from the wall, Smith subtly undermines our associations with bronze. Valued not only for its durability, bronze is also associated with the idealism of high art, a connection Smith has consistently challenged with her works. I would argue that Smith’s work conveys a sense of vulnerability by counterbalancing impermeable materiality with fragility. This aspect is similar in my ambitions for *Shifting Sands*. Whilst Smith is not the only artist to produce small scale bronze works, I contend that by giving such conceptually challenging subject matter the gravitas of bronze, she provokes us into considering the role of affect and grief in relation to monuments and memorials. While the materiality of many of Smith’s works readily evokes feelings ranging from vulnerability to abjection, her bronze works have a vulnerability that belies their solid, impermeable materiality.

Figure 31. Kiki Smith, *Lilith*, 1995. Bronze, glass, 33 x 27.5 x 19in.
Figure 32. Kiki Smith. *Jersey Crows*, 1995. Bronze, dimensions variable.
Many of these cast bronze pieces also carry traces of the artist in the form of fingerprints and other gestural marks carried over from making the original form. Smith’s unapologetic avowal of the importance of craft in her work extends to her interest in the transference of energy into her art, such as the leaving of traces through the contact of her hands with materials. This interest in energy transferences is a continuation and refinement of ideas pioneered by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), who is often credited with bringing traditional sculpture into the modern realm. Critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss has written extensively on the internal forces realised on the surfaces of Rodin’s sculptures, remarking that these marks of process, gouges and evidence of foundry accidents ‘could almost serve as illustrations for a manual on bronze casting.’ Decades later, Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) expanded on material concerns, believing that

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various materials have inherent energy that can be transferred with the possibility of relating to ‘inner processes and feelings’.\(^{31}\) Animal fat, for example, often used in his work, could be considered as a physical manifestation of transformation, ‘…chaotic, formless and flowing liquid when warm, and as a defined and ordered solid when cold’.\(^{32}\) According to Beuys, ‘in human physiology, everything that is ultimately hard has begun its existence in a fluid process; this can clearly be traced back to embryology. Gradually it firms up, emerging from a fluid, generalized motion, from a basic evolutionary principle, and that means movement.’\(^{33}\) In this fluidity—encapsulating change and energy transference—I see the potential for materiality to visually express feelings associated with grief, mourning and remembrance.

In utilising stone, another material traditionally and inextricably linked to memorial culture, my work *Coloured Threads* sought to combine such associations with intimacy and ritual. *Coloured Threads* is the most abstract in a series of works based on my mother’s dowry linen and monograms that utilise stones to maintain the connection to memory and intimate family history. My maternal grandmother’s handkerchief—featuring an embroidered border of coloured spots in a grid-like pattern—was the point of departure for this work. The title maintains a link to the original textile; however the intimacy of the original soft textile is both materially and conceptually transformed by rendering the spots in stone. *Coloured Threads* was initially installed in the grounds of *Kirkbride* in Callan Park, formerly a psychiatric hospital and now Sydney College of the Arts. The institutional setting, with its cracked, stained, stone arcades and paths, suggested multiple histories; a state of continuing benign neglect made it ripe for nuanced readings. The work was subsequently reinstalled several times and photographically recorded on each occasion [Figs. 34, 35].


\(^{33}\) Ibid.
Figure 34. Sylvia Griffin, *Coloured Threads*, 2014. Quartz stones, 24 x 24cm approx. Installation view. Photo: Sylvia Griffin.
Figure 35. Sylvia Griffin, *Coloured Threads*, 2014. Quartz stones, 24 x 24cm approx. Installation view. Photo: Sylvia Griffin.
The scale of *Coloured Threads*, both in relation to its situation at Kirkbride and in its relationship to the body, created a tension between formal and informal, public and private. The act of making these assemblages from stones references the ancient and comforting Jewish ritual of leaving a stone on a loved one’s grave to alert them to your visit. It is a ritual of remembrance and connection. Performatively, the work evoked these bodily memories and created a deeply contemplative space that I occupied for the duration of its making. The intimacy of handling each stone paralleled the intimate act of holding the handkerchief in one’s hand, folding it and keeping it close to hand. This could also be regarded as a component of the mourning ritual. Aspects of setting out of stones reference the concept of bodily ‘habits’ as described by social anthropologist Paul Connerton and their relationship to ritual.34

*Coloured Threads* is inherently unstable, with each unfixed stone vulnerable to disruption at any time. Left in situ for days or weeks, changes occur organically, from climatic conditions, disruptions from passing traffic and so on. Arguably ephemeral in its capacity to undergo change, it can nonetheless be relocated and reassembled, bringing it closer to being a temporary work—again demonstrating the slippery nature of definitions as discussed in Chapter Two. Another iteration of *Coloured Threads* was installed on a basalt block, located on the ground by the front door of my home. The basalt support—a stone often traditionally used for memorials—made the quartz stones more elevated and more prominent against their dark background. Left for several months, the arrangement very slowly unraveled—like fabric—and was photographically recorded as it did so [Fig. 36]. Having the work constantly close by, habitually monitoring every change to the arrangement, was a very different experience to the previously described one at Kirkbride. It was illuminating to note the feeling of comfort I derived from absorbing the work into my daily ritual and noting each change with interest. Comparable in its domesticity to hearthside memorials and other Jewish customs, it also suggests another variation in the

34 In *How Societies Remember*, Connerton refers to ‘a knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body, and in the cultivation of habit it is in our body which “understands”’. Connerton’s concepts of bodily ‘habits’ are also explored with regard to the memorial potential of textiles in the Fabric section of this chapter.

monument/memorial paradigm—with the basalt block as monument and the quartz stones as the memorial.

Figure 36. Sylvia Griffin, Coloured Threads, 2014-16. Quartz stones, basalt. 24 x 24cm approx. Installation views.

In reimagining the shape and role of the traditional monument, the historically resonant material qualities that Connerton alludes to need not necessarily be compromised. His ‘silence of awe to the sublime experience’ may be realised in myriad ways, while the smaller, more intimate interpretation may render awe of a different kind. As demonstrated throughout this paper, many traditional materials can be deployed in a range of ways to inject the vitality often missing in commemorative works. The use of rocks and stones in fashioning monuments and memorials allowed British artist Andy Goldsworthy the opportunity to make a permanent memorial with ephemeral aspects. The ephemeral qualities of Goldsworthy’s work can be generally considered as having two distinct aspects: one being the use of the ephemeral, natural materials within their natural environment that he is well known for; and the other being the lesser-known, permanent large works he produces mostly on commission.

Goldsworthy’s permanent works, such as Garden of Stones (2003) [Fig. 37], are as experiential as they are visual. Garden of Stones is a memorial garden

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35 The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body.
36 Goldsworthy’s ephemeral works—those that dematerialise relatively quickly—are usually experienced in their documented forms, that is, as either photographically or on film. While this does not necessarily diminish the value of the work itself, it introduces the role of documentation. Academic Lenore Metrick observes that although Goldsworthy may start with an ephemeral sculpture, he relies on capturing the transitory nature of the event by other means. (Im)Permanence: Cultures in/out of Time, 171-72.
commissioned by the Museum of Jewish History New York City (MJHNYC), comprising eighteen boulders forming narrow pathways in the 4,150-square-foot, almost triangular space. Each boulder contains a single dwarf oak tree, growing from a central cylindrical cavity that will grow to eventually fuse with and become part of the stone. Loaded with symbolism, the work makes metaphoric connections between elemental materials and plays between permanence and ephemerality. The eighteen boulders reflect the number’s symbolic value in Hebrew, in which eighteen means ‘life’—as in the celebrated toast ‘L’chaim!’, ‘to life!’ The stones carry connections beyond the traditional Jewish remembrance ritual of placing stones on graves; by interconnecting the stones and oak trees, Goldsworthy intertwines ideas of life cycles and survival, reflecting the tensions between young and old, permanent and ephemeral and the pliable with the unyielding. As a living memorial, the garden is ‘a tribute to the hardship, struggle, tenacity, and survival experienced by those who endured the Holocaust.’ Also noteworthy is Goldsworthy’s attention to material and conceptual detail throughout the process. He spent considerable time searching for and selecting the granite boulders, noting ‘there is an energy within a group of stones of various sizes. It becomes a family.’ For the arduous process of hollowing the stones, a flame torch method was selected, not only for its efficiency but also for what Goldsworthy considered to be an affinity between the way the granite surrenders to the fire, mimicking its original inception as a fire-formed stone. Designed to be viewed from various angles and in all seasons, the garden demonstrates survival and struggle and, for the viewer, an encounter with the elemental.

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
Anti Materiality and Invisible Memory

In contrast to the preceding examples of adapting traditional materiality to communicate alternative forms of memorialising and commemoration, other artists have taken a more radical stance, questioning the need for memorialising through materiality at all. While many artists have used ephemeral materiality to express loss and absence, Horst Hoheisel opted to discard materiality altogether, as outlined in Chapter Two, where he states his firm belief that ‘a memorial per se is located neither in the materials the artist uses nor in its
design but always and only in the minds of its beholders’. Hoheisel’s proposal to blow up the Brandenburger in response to the 1995 competition calling for a German national memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe was not completely devoid of materiality - as evidenced in its proposed used of dust, stone and granite plates. As James Young noted in Chapter Two, the question of engaging with some catastrophic events are best left as permanently unresolved—with countless proposals but no permanent resolution. Once again, this strategy is worth considering alongside the work of Dori Laub and Daniel Podell in Chapter Two, regarding the relationship between trauma and the metaphor of an empty space.

**Alternative and Fugitive Materiality**

Alternative materials, that is materials not traditionally associated with monuments and memorials, may nonetheless prove effective in expressing grief and mourning in a contemporary manner. Other elements may be deployed to do so, including ephemeral or indexical devices such as light and shadow; the primal unpredictability of fire; dust, hair and other matter originating from the body (such as nails, blood); and detritus. All these materials have the potential to render absence, trauma, grief and mourning in challenging ways. For example, by its very nature, the uncanny may introduce unsettling aspects into work, create a shroud of mystery or suspend belief, if only momentarily. Hair and other material related to, or suggestive of, the body can stand in for the absent subject; shadows can play with notions of size, as proposed earlier with *Shifting Sands*. As José Roca reflects in *Phantasmagoria*, while some ephemeral phenomena, such as shadows, have been used in art for centuries to convey absence and death; they have been joined by more contemporary manifestations such as breath, vapour, mist, and smoke. Colombian artist Oscar Muñoz, for example, uses the ephemeral qualities of water in various works to address the fragile and transitory nature of human existence. In works

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41 Spitz, "Loss as Vanished Form: On the Anti-Memorial Sculptures of Horst Hoheisel," 422-23.
42 Young, "Horst Hoheisel's Counter-Memory of the Holocaust: The End of the Monument".
43 The uncanny is used here to describe that which may appear strange or otherworldly, unsettling or, as the Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it, “strange or unusual in a way that is surprising or difficult to understand” (http://www.merriam-webster.com).
44 Roca, *Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence*. 
such as *Proyecto para un Memorial (Project for a Memorial)* (2005) [Fig. 38], portraits of Colombia’s disappeared were painted with water onto hot concrete footpaths—disappearing before they could be completed, adding a feeling of panic to the inference of disappearance. In another series, *Los Narcisos* (2001-02) [Fig. 39], Muñoz screenprints faces in charcoal powder onto the surface of water in containers, where they distort and eventually lie decomposed on the bottom of the tray as the water evaporates.

As demonstrated by the uncanny nature of these works by Munoz, the ephemeral nature of light and shadow as a material—whether through projection, illumination or spotlighting—has the capacity to capture the imagination and introduce an element of wonder. As previously noted, Shimon Attie demonstrated the versatility of light and projection in conjuring a distant past, filling voids and challenging contested spaces with his series *Acts of Remembrance, 1991-1996*. By indexically recalling the displaced, former Jewish residents in various European enclaves, Attie was able to merge memory, history and politics, lodging remembrance within the mind of the viewer. In this

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46 Ibid.
way, memory has the capacity to outlast the artwork. The directional properties of light—that is, the ability of light to guide the viewer’s attention whether it be to the ground, to the sky, to buildings and so on—can be utilised to great effect in evoking commemoration.

In my work *Absent Presence* (2016) [Fig. 40], I have drawn on both the ephemerality of light and its ability to evoke presence to create an intimate work. In utilising projection, I have been able to manipulate, animate and choreograph a series of still images featuring my mother’s monogram. As with many ephemeral works, their impermanent materiality demanded renegotiation with the installation space. The space, together with ambient conditions, overrode my preconceived expectations, making compromise an integral factor in the work. I believe that such conditions can introduce a spontaneity and vitality to such works which in turn is imparted to the viewer. Originally intended to ‘dress’ a bare domestic dining table, much as the original linen bearing the monogram had, the projection eventually cycled through its various phases over a crack on the gallery’s concrete floor.
Absent Presence resonates for me with some other memorials in its siting and its recall of an individual person. Gunter Demnig’s previously mentioned Stolpersteine or Stumbling Blocks was similarly aimed at reasserting identity and redressing the traumatic disappearance of individuals.\(^47\) Similarly located on the ground—in this case in the public arena—Stumbling Blocks commemorates victims individually, rather than as a collective.\(^48\) My mother’s monogram represents the maternal side of my family killed during the Holocaust. While my

\(^{47}\) A more general description of Stumbling Blocks can be found above, in the section titled Traditional Materials.

\(^{48}\) Niven and Paver, Memorialization in Germany since 1945, 234-35.
mother did survive, her maiden name, as seen in the monogram, recalls the family name of her sister and brothers who did not.

The complementary opposite to light is, naturally, darkness. Darkness and light—one of the most basic and primal of binaries—give rise to endless possibilities for dramatic expression, whether through the poetic expressiveness of chiaroscuro, as a velvety cloak of shadow, or simply as a counterpoint to light.49 As Roca notes:

The representation of shadows has been present in art almost since its inception, but the use of actual shadows as an integral component of the work of art is a rather recent trend. The shadow—literally, the blocking of light—has often been used in art (and literature) to allude to death, the obscure, and the unnamable, as well as to construct allegories of loss and disappearance, evoking something that is beyond the object yet inseparable from it.50

The word ‘shadow’ is often used to intimate something hidden or hazy, not quite apparent, or waiting to be revealed. Shadows often carry negative associations: ‘lurking in shadows’, ‘living in the shadow of an incurable disease’ and the classic ‘shadow of one’s former self’. These associations of mystery and unknowing, loss, death and disembodied association have historical precedents in the tale of Pliny’s Corinthian maiden. Academic Lisa Saltzman recalls the Grecian tale of a Corinthian potter’s daughter tracing the shadow, cast on the wall by candlelight, of her departing lover as a paradigm for considering art of the present where imminent loss drives the impulse to record and remember. A body, soon to vanish into exile, war or death, is commemorated via a visual representation which in form, shape and place acts as a ritual of remembrance.51

Several of my works use the shadow in various ways, from indicating the passing of time to activating cast shadows to denote size. In Marking Time (2013) [Fig. 41], my mother’s needlework monogram, taken from a pillowcase of

50 Roca, Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence, 235.
her dowry linen, was set out in stones on a black cloth. Each stone represented one of the drawn threadwork squares forming the letters of the original monogram [Fig. 42]. Photographs I took of the work at regular intervals recorded the raking light from my studio window as it moved across the cloth and stones; subsequently these images were assembled into a stop-motion video. My aim with the video was to capture a sense of passing time, impermanence and material ambiguity in the distorted shadows.\textsuperscript{52} The works Naming Memory (2014) and Shifting Sands are connected by their references to memorials as well as by their reliance on shadows to activate meaning.\textsuperscript{53} In Naming Memory (also discussed in Chapter Four), the negative spaces from rubbing engraved names from the Holocaust memorial in Budapest left positive images to contrast against the cracks from the marble. They could therefore be regarded as shadows on the paper. The frottage process also served to isolate and redefine those names, whilst revealing the strength and viscerality of the negative crack.

\textbf{Figure 41. Sylvia Griffin, Marking Time, 2013. Video stills. Photos: Sylvia Griffin}

\textsuperscript{52} A related play on materiality can be seen in Australian artist Robert Owen’s work Hiatus, with a similar scene of a window casting its “shadow” onto a stone on the floor. In reality, the ‘window’ is a wall-mounted photograph on linen, the ‘light reflection’ is talcum powder, and the deep ‘shadow’ from the granite rock is lead. Robert Owen: Different Lights Cast Different Shadows, 24-25.

\textsuperscript{53} Naming Memory is discussed in Chapter Four – The Importance of Names, and Shifting Sands is discussed earlier in this chapter in connection to the material qualities of bronze.
The use of fire, whether in its captive form as candlelight or in its untamed natural state, exemplifies the power of ephemerality as an agent of transformation and drama:

A winter’s evening with the wind howling around the house and a bright fire within is all that is required to make the grieving soul give voice to its memories and sorrows.\(^{54}\)

Fire—or even the suggestion of fire in its aftermath or ashen remains—is utilised in a wide range of works of remembrance, memorials, anti-memorials and actions. The ways in which artists choose to utilise or harness fire differ widely. Goldsworthy’s *Garden of Stones* utilised the primal force of fire to shape the holes in his massive granite boulders; Mel Bochner’s *Yisgadal (For the Jews of Rome)* (1993) [Fig. 43], by contrast, responds to a specific historical event in its use of burnt matchsticks.

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These matchsticks—365 in number, referring to the Jewish period of mourning—were arranged on army blankets on the ground in a series of six-pointed Jewish stars, or Magen David (Stars of David). This work was one of several from the *Via Tasso* project in which Bochner responded to the Roman apartment block’s use in the 1930s as a Gestapo headquarters and a place where political and Jewish prisoners were incarcerated. The manner in which Bochner lit each match, quickly extinguishing it before it completely burnt out, leaves space for various interpretations. Curator and art historian Mark Godfrey comments on Bochner’s spirit of economy in the relatively impersonal arrangement of matchsticks in each iteration of Bochner’s *Via Tasso* works, and compares his material approach to Jannis Kounellis’s use of coal in the 1969 work *Untitled*. However it is the reverberations with burning that stand out for me. The burnt matches have resonances to Holocaust atrocities, starting

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56 Ibid., 169.
57 Ibid., 176-78.
58 Jannis Kounellis’s use of coal in *Untitled* 1969 was connected to his belief in the energy stored in material and its potential to generate fire and heat. (This bears similarities to Beuys’s regard for materials such as wax, fat, felt etc). As Godfrey points out, Bochner’s work differs to Kounellis’s in that the matches in their burnt state have no practical future use. Ibid., 176.
with the burning of books and the burning of synagogues, through to the Nazis’ methods of extinguishing lives, and then to the act of lighting candles in remembrance. Godfrey suggests that as ‘burnt offerings’, they equate with the Greek meaning of ‘Holocaust’.59

In considering the materiality of Bochner’s Via Tasso works, it is interesting to note that, while this project is consistent with his ‘devotion to uncertainty, the uncertainty of both language and experience and their interface…’, it also caused him to acknowledge a ‘Post-Holocaust epistemological crisis’, leading him to rethink his earlier certainties regarding the relation of ethics and aesthetics. His former unflinching denial that “there is no such thing as unethical work of art” eventually softened.60 Materially, Bochner encapsulated this doubt with works such as those in Via Tasso, which were not intended to have a life beyond the exhibition: ‘chalk could be rubbed away, stones kicked out of place’. While the materiality of the work mattered greatly to Bochner, in a manner reminiscent of Eva Hesse (1936-1970) their longevity did not. Described as provisional and expedient, his intention was weighted towards expressing a sense of vulnerability and sparseness, with Godfrey attributing this material approach to Bochner’s acknowledgement of the shattered certainties of a post-Holocaust landscape.61 62

As a different form of fire, candles are amongst the most widely utilised items in memorial culture. Having a long history as devotional instruments, they are also universally regarded as symbols of hope and remembrance. They are exemplary of ephemeral materiality—as evidenced in the limited life and vulnerability of the naked flame—yet are easily replenished and handled. As noted in previous chapters, they are firmly embedded in a variety of forms of remembrance: as spontaneous memorials at roadside accidents; as integral parts of vigils; and in drawing attention to particular causes, such as Doris Salcedo’s Accion de Duelo where 24,000 candles were lit in Bogota’s main

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59 Ibid., 176-77.
60 Ibid., 190.
61 Ibid., 190-91.
62 By the 1990s, Bochner’s work, as with other artists tackling similar interpretations of pivotal catastrophes in history, was both ‘site-specific’ in generating works with meaning specific to their location whilst also responding to a site’s architecture. Ibid., 172-73.
square (see Chapter Two). In their ready availability, candles have the capacity
to address the private needs of the mourner, as well as a larger, public function.
The lighting of candles as an act of mourning and remembrance is one of the
few acts of religious origin that have crossed into secular usage and been
adapted to retain an element of original rituality. The comfort derived from the
lighting of a candle can be illustrated by my own experience as a child,
witnessing my mother light a yahrzeit, or memorial candle, for my grandmother
each year on the anniversary of her death. Being secular Jews, this was one of
the few domestic rituals I witnessed in our home. Nevertheless, I recall being
moved to tears by the grace and reverence of the gesture, the mesmerising and
calming effect of the flame and the readily intuited connection to memento mori
which was obvious to me, even as a child. Many years later, I continue this
ritual—one of the very few Jewish rituals that I observe—lighting Yahrzeit for my
grandmother, mother and now for my father. This observance is an example of
the deep sense of connection that ritual can bring to the making of work, and the
role that particular rites or rituals can play in temporally linking generations. With
both matrilineral and ceremonial links, this ritual provides me with not only
comfort but also the capacity to ‘shrink’ time and reinforce connections. In a
more formal variation of this ritual, my father’s recent death required me to light
a yahrzeit candle for Shiva during the seven days following the funeral. Shiva is
the Jewish week-long mourning period for immediate relatives and is described
as follows:

*Shiva begins immediately following the burial and lasts for seven days,
ending after the morning service on the seventh day….A tall candle
traditionally burns in the shiva home for seven days as a sign of memorial.*

Commencing at sunset on the day of the funeral, the yahrzeit candle burned day
and night for seven days, amply fulfilling its functions—rooted in centuries of
tradition and ritual— to aid the mourner, guiding him or her through an
emotionally difficult time. Whether in the middle of the night or on returning
home to a darkened house, the constant warm glow of the candle was a
palpable and gentle comfort and reminder of my father. As the days progressed
and emotions were less raw, it was also an opportunity to observe the action of
the flame itself as it burned a path through the wax—an action that had been measured and predicted to last exactly seven days. I noted the indexical, cylindrical hole left by the flame tunneling its way through the wax and the befitting ephemerality of the burning and negative trace of this action. This process and the emotional links of the ritual have informed several of the works I have completed featuring wax, lighting and soot.

The materiality of neglect—as evidenced in the employment of dust, hair and other detritus in artwork—can aid in opening dialogue on the abject, the forgotten and other nuanced themes related to commemoration which may otherwise be difficult to convey effectively. Bochner’s use of burnt matches—objects that are routinely discarded once they have outlived their immediate purpose—could also be included here. As materials generally regarded as waste matter, when deployed by the artist, dust, discarded hair, ash, mould and so on have the potential to articulate difficult concepts or speak on behalf of those with no voice. Human hair similarly has the capacity to express a wide range of associations. As a material which transforms dramatically in perception—from living and growing on the body to being cut, pulled or shed from that body, passing from ‘alive’ to ‘dead’—it is ripe for artistic interpretation. Its indisputable relationship to the body and its connection to death and mourning have a long history. For example, locks of hair from a child or lover have long been kept as keepsakes—worn in lockets close to the body and incorporated in mourning jewellery, most prevalently in the Victorian era.63 Hair’s more abject associations and elements of its history can be found in cases related to wartime atrocities and other traumatic occurrences, such as shaving the hair of female concentration camp prisoners—ostensibly for reasons relating to ‘hygiene’—or the harvesting of hair from bodies as stuffing for mattresses. An example of the potential affect of an object made from hair is the small blanket made from human hair, donated to the Sydney Jewish Museum by Holocaust survivor Olga Horak, known as Olga’s Blanket (1945) [Fig. 44].64 While this blanket is inextricably linked to traumatic past events, those events are

personalised through the materiality of the blanket, which doubles as material
evidence and indexical trace of the (female) victims. Contemporary artists have
also used hair to allude to similar themes and traumatic experiences,
approaching this materiality fully cognisant of the associated implications. Kiki
Smith’s *Dowry Cloth* (1990) [Fig. 45], made from human hair and sheep’s wool,
felted and sewn together, also draws on traditional female practices, while my
work *Hair Rabbits* (2015) (discussed below) references postmemory and family
connections.

![Figure 44. Unknown, *Olga’s Blanket*, 1945. Human hair, animal hair. Sydney Jewish
Museum.](image)

![Figure 45. Kiki Smith, *Dowry Cloth*, 1990. Human hair, sheep’s wool, 108 x 108in.](image)

While numerous artists have used hair in their work—sometimes playfully, in
other instances to signify neglect, or signal distress or trauma—several of Doris
Salcedo’s elegiac and monumental works use it in combination with other
materials. 65 This is evident in her *Unland* (1995-98) series which features
several pairs of mismatched tables joined together with human hair and raw silk,
laboriously sewn through thousands of tiny, follicle-like holes drilled into the
timber surfaces. As curator Helen Molesworth writes, ‘these fractured, dismembered tables—which often stand in for family life—allude to interrupted, broken

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65 Artists using hair, influential but not included in this thesis include Anne Wilson, Helen Pynor, Mona
Hatoum, Christiane Löhr, Ann Hamilton and several others.
families, with the stitching in hair holding these lives together by the most precarious of means. In allowing materials to ‘speak’ in this way, Salcedo invites us into an experience of empathy which in turn works towards negating apathy towards others.

My own intention has been to utilise the subtlety of dust as a marker of absence. In a manner somewhat reminiscent of Man Ray’s *Dust Breeding* (*Duchamp’s Large Glass with Dust Motes*) (1920) [Fig. 46], my intention is to delineate objects by their absence, measuring the duration of their presence by the thickness of the coating of dust left behind. As a way of measuring time and marking absence, dust is a particularly useful ephemeral material. This concept manifested in my artwork *Dust* (2016) almost by accident. Having set out small stones on a black cloth in the shape of my mother’s monogram, and left them there for more than two years, I noticed that the accumulation of fine layers of dust had created a kind of time-lapse record. The photographs I took periodically to document how the work changed as pebbles became dislodged later revealed a subtly gradated work [Fig. 47]. My intention in enlarging and printing the final photograph onto rag paper was to retain the fabric-like texture or feel of the three-dimensional work, thus creating a 100 x 100cm companion piece rather than a photographic representation.

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Textiles, Identity, and Remembrance

Textiles are produced by situated and active social beings. As products of our material culture, textiles reflect cultural identity, social values, group organization, social status, gender relations, and artistic creativity.67

Artists commemorating people and traumatic events have long used fabric to express loss, absence and mourning, producing work that is often elegiac and mournful and at times confrontational. These works may be considered as memorials and, in certain cases, monuments. Examples of such works are many, ranging from the incorporation of clothing in artworks standing in for the absent owner; the creation of AIDS quilts involving broad community involvement and political activism; textiles made from materials considered as abject (such as Kiki Smith’s hair Dowry Cloth, or Olga’s Blanket, both mentioned earlier); and the use of personal items with connections to family or past events. Paul Connerton, in his book The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body, refers to the memorial potential of fabric thus:

[cloth is] a privileged material because it is yielding, because it is not stone or bronze or steel. When a memorial is made of stone or bronze or steel the rhetoric of the materiality implicitly claims that the memory of the dead recorded there will last forever. Cloth carries no such illusions of enduring witness. It is fragile, it frays, it fades, it needs mending. It remembers the dead by sewing together mere fragments of their lives.68

Long regarded as feminine pastimes, textile practices and needlework—both traditional and contemporary—have strong links with memorialising. Many of my own works, as has already been demonstrated, originate from family possessions with intimate histories, represent past times and convey loss, often standing in for their absent owners. Works based on my mother’s monogram, sourced from several items from her dowry linen, will be further discussed in the next chapter. Specific works demonstrating my connection to intimate memorialising are discussed here, in relation to Australian artist Kathy Temin’s memorial work. Unlike me, Temin mostly avoids the incorporation of personal references in the textile components of her ‘monument’ series, preferring instead

67 Effstratia Antoniou Katahan, “Stories of an Immigrant Greek Woman: My Mother’s Dowry Textiles” (University of Alberta (Canada), 1997), 1.
to activate anthropomorphic elements with her use of materials and play with shapes and size.\textsuperscript{69} Employing her trademark soft fabrics, felt, faux fur and stuffing, she aims to evoke all the inherent emotional associations of soft toy imagery, such as comfort and refuge. Academic Susan Stewart, while pointing out the potential of the toy to open an interior world, ‘lending itself to fantasy and privacy in a way that the abstract space,… the social space does not’, also notes that ‘to toy’ is to ‘manipulate…to try it out within sets of contexts, none of which is determinative.’\textsuperscript{70} The medium has allowed her to explore and introduce new associations and enable physical interaction—or at least encourage a relationship—between the artwork and the viewer.\textsuperscript{71} As Olivia Sophia writes, synthetic fur is a material that Temin considers is capable of combining minimalism with sentimentality, whilst simultaneously surprising people with a materiality generally unassociated with sculpture.\textsuperscript{72} She quotes Temin as follows:

\begin{quote}
Originally, when I began working with textiles, it was because of the emotional content of soft-toy imagery, and the heightened, exaggerated, references that soft-toys elicit ... They go from extreme jubilation to pathos. I use it as a material to generate emotional response, or as a reference to history.\textsuperscript{73} \textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

Temin’s references to history, together with the clues suggested by her titles (discussed further in Chapter Four), lead us to reappraise her use of materiality. When we look beyond the playfulness of the soft disproportioned forms we may take note of the funereal implications of a ‘black’ forest—the narrow pathways, and the small bench at the end inviting rest and contemplation in a manner

\begin{footnotes}
\item[69] See Chapter Two for a discussion on Kathy Temin’s later, more personal memorial works such as her 2015 The Memorial Project.
\item[70] Susan Stewart, \textit{On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 56.
\item[73] Ibid.
\item[74] Other artists have similarly deployed materiality—previously derided as ‘craft’ or ‘handcraft’—in contemporary art to draw attention, subvert, politicise or in some other way make their points of view heard. A prime example of this is Marianne Jorgensen with the Cast Off Knitters’ Pink M.24 Chaffee of 2006, a beautifully articulated pink knitted ‘blanket’ covering a military tank, including a pink pom-pom cannonball hanging from its gun. \textit{Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art}, 207-209
\end{footnotes}
similar to memorial gardens. It is also possible to perceive that, unlike the small, soft toys Temin’s fur references, her monumentally scaled ‘forests’ of trees and hedges encroach on our personal space, forcing us into a physical negotiation with her objects. As Sophia notes, in *My Monument: Black Garden* (2010-2011) ‘there is a direct relationship to the human body that must be negotiated. The senses are engaged as the viewer interacts with the sculptures to find a path through the comforting landscapes of fur.’ She also refers to Temin’s activation of other sensory elements, such as the muffled silence viewers may experience inside the sound-absorbing fabrics, suggesting the potential for quietening anxieties and offering space for ‘reflection, remembrance and ultimately optimism’. Temin’s other memorial works such as *My Monument: White Forest* (2008) and *Black Cube* (2009) [Fig. 48] similarly confound with their playful materiality. In other, more recent works such as *The Memorial Project* (2015) [Fig. 49] Temin combines textile components with a variety of sound and solid sculptural elements to elicit yet another set of corporeal and sensory interactions. The monochromatic synthetic fur component constitutes a material intervention, demarcating the large space with its monumentality.

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76 Sophia, “Kathy Temin - Black Gardens”.
77 Temin’s *The Memorial Project* is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two.
While Frank Stella and others may have informed Temin’s minimalist sensibilities, female artists were critically influential to her conceptual development and choice of materiality. Feminist artists such as Eva Hesse, Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) and Carolee Schneemann and others influenced Temin with their re-evaluation of ‘the feminised and fetishised object, the haptic and the humanistic’.

Temin has acknowledged the influence of Hesse in particular for her means of expressing absence. Although initially unaware of Hesse’s Holocaust survivor background, Temin understood and appreciated Hesse’s attempts to represent the unrepresentable, particularly with reference to the inner body and the representation of the unspoken.

Temin’s reference to Hesse’s ‘concern for the material qualities and mutability of disparate media, indeterminate outcomes, the evocation of the artists’ hand, and the capacity for art and process to recall the body’s physical states and degrees of emotional intensity’ recalls my earlier comments regarding Kiki Smith’s gestural marks and her material affinity to craft.

Temin’s stated desire to combine serious, adult themes with materials that have associations with sentimentality and play, and her harking back to childhood and

78 Jason Smith, Sue Cramer, and Naomi Evans, Kathy Temin (Bulleen, Vic: Heide Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 16.
79 Kathy Temin: Three Indoor Monuments,” 34.
80 Kathy Temin, 16.
recollections of childhood games such as ‘Fuzzy Felt’, have resonances with my own work. Her interest in what she refers to as ‘the process of transformation of images and memory, where there is a disjunction between the source and the end result’ correlates with my silk georgette and human hair work, Hair Rabbits. Hair Rabbits [Fig. 50] similarly harks back to childhood, transforming benign childhood imagery into something more unsettling. The suggestion of trauma via the deployment of human hair is also suggestive of the ‘adult themes’ Temin has referred to. One of the differences in our approaches lies in my material choices; while Temin disguises her message under layers of soft, seductive textiles, my use of human hair to render imagery reminiscent of childhood innocence signals trauma more pointedly.

![Hair Rabbits, Sylvia Griffin, 2015](image)

Figure 50. Sylvia Griffin, Hair Rabbits, 2015. Human hair, silk organza, Perspex, steel, 27 x 120 x 5cm. Verge Gallery, Sydney. Photo: Marty Lochmann Photography.

Whilst reflecting my ongoing interest in links between trauma, family, textiles and the potential of material transformation, Hair Rabbits was originally conceived as a work where the embroidered rabbit border of my childhood dress would be reinterpreted as a metallic silhouette of pins through silk organza [Fig.51]. In the finished work, the necessary tension was achieved instead by the use of human hair, allowing the abject element to add a darker edge and subverting the usual expectations of childhood imagery [Fig. 52]. As noted in the previous section, by implicating the absence of the human body, human hair—estranged from its usual context—has the capacity to trigger in the viewer a

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81 Fuzzy Felt is a simple fabric game created in 1950, consisting of a flocked backing board onto which a number of felt shapes can be placed to create different pictures or scenes. In its early iterations it consisted of simple silhouettes rather than the more detailed printed shapes of more recent times.

visceral awareness of an ambiguous experience of loss.\textsuperscript{83}

As academic Laura Garcia Moreno notes, presenting these objects outside their normal conditions ‘paradoxically makes inanimate objects “speak” of loss and disruption in everyday life; at the end of their circulation as useful things or possessions, they acquire a new function.’\textsuperscript{84}

Similarly, many of Doris Salcedo’s works, particularly the \textit{Untitled} (1987-2008) series and \textit{La Casa Viuda I} (1992-4), convey comparable themes, featuring clothing and related objects to communicate trauma and absence. This clothing often appears embedded and trapped within disproportionately sized, concrete-filled timber furniture [Fig. 53], such as a lace dress grafted onto the seat of a broken chair, itself affixed to a wooden bureau [Fig. 54]. The affective response to this contrast between the delicately embroidered clothes—almost always a ghostly white—and the dehumanising, engulfing concrete registers as a breath-catching shock in the viewer. While Salcedo asks viewers to acknowledge the


\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 27.
absence of the owners of these clothes, she is in fact asking us to intuit something that is not there, as she has done in many of her works. In doing so, I suggest, these works become memorials to the absent victim, leaving us to feel through the materiality, balancing the implied violence of the mutant furniture and concrete against the hints of human presence in the form of clothing—often a child’s dress, or a fragment such as a zipper [Fig. 55]. In her subtle pairings of fabric with other media, such in the previously mentioned Unland, Salcedo effectively transmits affect both through materiality (timber, cloth, hair, concrete) and process (the meticulous drilling of thousands of holes, macabre grafting of objects).


Figure 54. Doris Salcedo, La Casa Viuda III (detail), 1992-4. Wooden door, wooden chair, clothing, thread, 57.8 x 59.7 x 38.7. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photo: Sylvia Griffin.

While this chapter has acknowledged the inherent qualities of materiality traditionally associated with memorial culture, it has attempted to advocate not only for alternative means of using these materials, but for works employing alternative materials and strategies to express grief and mourning. Several of the artists discussed here deployed thoughtful, often elegiac means to effect commemoration. While the notion of ‘representing absence’ is arguably a vexed one, I propose that these artists have been successful in highlighting absence and all its attendant traumatic implications. Many of my own works have
similarly aimed to evoke affect through materiality. Most of these originated from family possessions with intimate histories, representing past times and standing in for their absent owners. While some—featuring hair, fabric and other materials—have been detailed in this chapter, these and others will be discussed further in Chapter Four, *Intimate Memorials*. Chapter Four will also consider works based on my mother’s monogram and how textiles have been used to communicate mourning, loss, issues regarding identity and the relatively recent advent of the AIDS Memorial within memorial culture.
Memorials and the Place of Names

So much effort put into preserving records of people, and so much effort put into their murder.¹

While Chapter Three dealt with the capacity of various materials used in both traditional and alternative commemoration and their ability to express remembrance, this chapter focuses on the intimate gesture and its relationship to expressing grief and mourning. Personal remembrance takes many forms, with issues relating to identity emerging as a key factor in establishing intimate connections. Coupled with identity is the concept of names, naming rituals and their significance to grieving family members or bearers of testimony. An historical examination of the importance of names, links to Jewish tradition, and the work of contemporary artists is explored here along with the role of ritual.

The urge to gather names in remembrance and commemoration has existed for centuries if not millennia. Most communities, religions, and cultures have their own traditions and permutations in the gathering of names for commemoration. Sociologist Anne Karpf in Chain of Testimony: The Holocaust Researcher as Surrogate Witness refers to Jean Baudrillard in championing the importance of ‘naming’ as an act of memorialising rather than simply being an historical tool.² Karpf quotes Baudrillard on the importance of memory: ‘Forgetting extermination is part of extermination, because it is also the extermination of memory, of history, or the social.’³ Karpf suggests that the gathering of names takes on the semblance of a commemorative book, likening it to a gesture of

² Ibid., 94.
³ In Simulacra and Simulation, Baudrillard looks at the extermination of historical memory, taking the Holocaust as an example. He considers the role of televised media in producing, what he considers to be, artificial memories in place of the original, now inaccessible memory of the event. In mediating such an event - adding soundtracks, editing and so on - media perpetuates the churning out - and fetishising – of what Baudrillard refers to as “cold memory”. In dealing with primary evidence, as Karpf describes the process of gathering names, the researcher is accumulating fact rather than reinterpreting and representing. Simulacra and Simulation, 49-51.
Wiedergutmachung (the German term for reparation or compensation). She also suggests that the act of recovering traces and witnesses to the past can become a ‘small but significant act of resistance’. This is particularly relevant for the Holocaust researcher, keenly aware of the Nazi’s clear intention of removing all traces of their crimes, and leaving no witnesses to their attempted genocide. Within this context, acts of remembering and retrieving material evidence can become, as Karpf notes, ‘endowed with almost prophylactic capacities’ and thus act as a deterrent to ensure such an atrocity never recurs.

It is notable that in Jewish culture the written word and the pursuit of ‘knowledge’ have long been venerated. Indeed, the first form of ‘memorial’ to the Holocaust came as narrative in the form of yizkor bikher, or memorial books, recalling the lives and destruction of European Jewish communities. The preface to one of these books reflects the needs of those who do not have the remains of their loved ones to honour by suggesting: ‘Whenever we pick up the book we feel we are standing next to [the victims’] graves, because even that the murderers denied them.’ It was hoped that in reading these books, the site of reading would in effect become a memorial space. Thus, the first memorial sites to be created by Holocaust survivors were interior spaces - a place held in the mind, or imagined graves - in cathartic response to what has been coined the missing grave syndrome.

Many of the artists discussed in Chapters Two and Three have responded to this ‘missing grave syndrome’, each evoking the victim or the disappeared indexically or ephemerally. While Colombian artist Doris Salcedo's Tenebrae

4 Representing Auschwitz: At the Margins of Testimony.
5 Ibid., 92.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Yizkor bikher are commonly understood, both by scholars and community members, as substitute gravestones for martyrs who never received proper Jewish burial. While the genre reached an unprecedented proliferation in response to the Holocaust, as a creative response to catastrophe, these books have a long history in Jewish literature. The Book of Lamentations has been claimed as the progenitor of Yizker bikher, while massacres in Germany during the Crusades are recorded in Memorbücher of Ashkenazic Jewry while many other occurrences over the centuries have also been noted. The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Yizker-bikher
9 James E. Young, The Changing Shape of Holocaust Memory (NY: The American Jewish Committee, 1995), 4-5.
10 Ibid.
Noviembre 6 and 7 and Acción de Duelo deployed ephemeral means to recall the victims of past political atrocities, these actions – while commemorative – were also largely concerned with rallying the public or the viewer out of what she feared to be inertia or a numbed acceptance of past atrocities.¹¹ Salcedo temporally links the sites of such deaths to these present actions to challenge and confront the memory of the viewer.

Other artists have responded directly to the bookish, iconoclastic side of Jewish tradition. For example, Rachael Whiteread’s Holocaust Memorial (2000) in Judenplatz, Vienna [Fig. 56] and Micha Ullman’s Bibliothek memorial (1995) in Bebelplatz, Berlin [Fig. 57] were based on these notions. While Whiteread’s memorial typically materialises absence in her rendering of the spaces between the inverted books of a library, Ullman’s Bibliothek memorial recalls the location and action of the infamous Nazi book burnings of 10 May 1933 in Berlin. Ullman presents us with a sunken, negative form memorial reminiscent of a pit for burning, into which the viewer peers to discover an underground room of empty bookshelves.¹² Both artists use ‘the book’ emblematically to locate and commemorate the victims. While denoting the importance of words and knowledge to a people, the use of the book in these ways also represents the destruction of European Jewry. Gunter Demnig’s Stumbling Blocks (or Stolperstein) (1993-) [Fig.58] could be considered as yet another version of the restored grave or memorial space – this time marking the place where the victim once lived, rather than the site of death.¹³ As previously noted in Chapter Three, unlike Whiteread and Ullman’s examples, which were subjected to lengthy,
multiple phases of official scrutiny, the *Stumbling Blocks* democratized the process, spreading to other European cities as well as various German locations.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Niven and Paver, *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, 233-41.
Figure 56. Rachel Whiteread, *Holocaust Memorial*, 2000. Concrete. Judenplatz, Vienna. Photo: Sylvia Griffin

In Whose Name?

As previously noted, my initial trip to Hungary in 2012 became the catalyst for this dissertation and accompanying creative work, with my interaction with the Kozma utca Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of Budapest having a profound and continuing effect on my research and artistic output. Particularly notable amidst the many culturally rich examples of graves were the graves of rabbis covered with a profusion of offerings left by their devotees in the form of handwritten letters and prayers, anchored to each grave by memorial stones [Figs. 59 and 60]. As described in Chapter One, the cemetery is also home to the striking Memorial for Jewish Martyrs, commonly known as the Holocaust Memorial, remarkable for the abundance of handwritten names accompanying the several thousand engraved ones on its many marble slabs. While Chapter One focused on the removal of these names and the implications therein, my concern here is more on the meaning of names on a memorial, and the form those names can take. Aware of the tensions between the personal and the public regarding memorials, it was apparent to me that the hand-written additions of loved ones omitted from the official lists demonstrated a feeling of

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15 This cemetery is also known also known as Kozma Street Jewish cemetery or Rakoskereszter cemetery.
intimacy often missing from the lengthy lists of names on most memorials. Arthur C. Danto makes a pertinent point regarding our personal connection to names on a memorial and our relationship to death. He questions the longevity in the meaning of a name if, as he maintains, its meaning is in its denotation. Reflecting on the behaviour of visitors to memorials, Danto surmises that once these bearers of memory (usually family) are no longer alive, the inscribed names risk becoming less meaningful. Thus while the inscribed names remain, they will merely ‘remain powerful as names, and there will only be the idea of death to be moved by.’

Figure 59. Rabbi’s graves, Kozma utca Jewish cemetery, Budapest. Photo: by Sylvia Griffin.

Figure 60. Stones on rabbi’s graves, (detail). Photo: by Sylvia Griffin.

Generally, while the actual marking of monuments and memorials is widely discouraged, offerings of cards, ribbons, flowers, notes and so on are welcomed (that is, they are not removed), as seen in the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, USA. Physical interaction with the names on memorials is also not always discouraged, as Danto intimates when noting that visitors may borrow ladders from the Parks Service to reach the top names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. While this attitude may be becoming more

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16 The act of writing onto the memorial can be viewed as breaking unspoken protocol regarding public (remembrance) behaviours; and the very fact that this writing could be considered as a form of graffiti invites questions around the politics of memory and the role of memorials.

17 Danto, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.”

18 Ibid.
prevalent – or at least more recognised – not many memorial sites tolerate written additions, often negatively equating this with graffiti. It is the sheer volume and element of spontaneity in the action of writing that distinguishes the Budapest Holocaust memorial from many others. Several of the names, written in pencil, inked or painted onto the marble, are accompanied by curious diagrams or encircled inside a love heart producing the affect of very personal, unique forms of graffiti [Fig.61]. These additions also raise questions regarding public forms of expression. Graffiti is often regarded as defacement or civil disobedience – particularly by government bodies, while other parties consider it an acceptable form of expression.¹⁹ The ongoing handwritten, personalised aspects of remembrance such as these dissuade the imminent forgetting of the individual that Danto warned of. Serving as a receptacle for peoples’ expressions of sorrow, tenderness, and a need for remembrance, the Holocaust Memorial retains vitality and relevance.

Figure 61. Holocaust memorial (details), 2012. Marble, ink, pencil, dimensions variable. Kozma utca Jewish cemetery, Budapest. Photos: Sylvia Griffin.

¹⁹ See section on Contested Memory and Names, below, for further discussion regarding graffiti.
Evidence of the apparent erasure or crossing out of names on the marble slabs, piqued my curiosity, as did the layering of other names recalling palimpsests [Fig 62]. This raises questions regarding contested memory and introduces aspects of the psychology of remembering and forgetting within the discourse of trauma and postmemory. This is of particular interest when considered in relation to uniquely individual forms of expression on a monument or memorial, as evident in the Holocaust Memorial. As previously discussed, with the phenomenon of postmemory, this ‘forgetting’ is itself manifested as intergenerational silence – typified by a lack of normal, familial stories habitually and instinctively passed down in everyday life, such as the marriages of family members.²⁰ This then aligns with trauma psychologist Cathy Caruth’s studies on the way traumatic memory manifests in the subject and how it is encoded on the brain differently from ordinary memory. For these people, communication can be affected when a certain part of the brain is suppressed, resulting in an ‘amnesia for the specifics of traumatic experiences but not the feelings associated with

them. In their essay *The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Truth*, psychiatrists and academics Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart explain how this comes about, particularly in children before full brain development is reached. Even in adults, certain hippocampal functions are vulnerable to disruption. Extreme or prolonged stress, in suppressing hippocampal function may create context-free fearful associations leading to the aforementioned form of amnesia. The manner in which the traumatised subject communicates with others, particularly family members, can result in mixed messaging and confusion as evident in my own family dynamics. This theory was borne out for me during this first visit to the Kozma utca Holocaust Memorial: inspired to add the names of my immediate family members murdered in the Holocaust I realised, to my surprise and great disappointment, that I did not actually know my uncle Andor and my mother’s sister Stefania’s married name. My parents, grandmothers and surviving aunt and uncle – caught in their own particular grief – spoke little of these siblings/children; thus I lacked knowledge as basic as a surname.

This experience lead to the creation of several artworks, each exploring the evocative potential of names; the first work was a frottage responding to the experience at Kozma utca cemetery and the urge to retrieve and repatriate a trace of shared history. The four-metre long graphite frottage on Japanese paper gathered names of victims from various sections of the memorial, moving and repositioning the paper to form an unbroken pattern down the scroll [Fig. 63].

The visceral experience of collecting negative traces of names was intensified as these names came to co-exist with the cracks from the marble, all the more exaggerated as the graphite conjured their presence. These cracks became a prominent and evocative feature of the scroll [Fig. 63]. This ‘collecting’ process, that necessitated close physical proximity, intense engagement and exertion, proved to be a profoundly moving experience; and symbolically, the

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23 As a mark of respect to the victims listed on the memorial and their families, a conscious decision was made to trace only partial names, revealing enough to make obvious family annihilation.
cracks felt a particularly apt feature.24

Figure 63. Sylvia Griffin, *Scroll, Holocaust memorial* (details), 2012. Paper, graphite, timber, 400 x 70cm. Photo: Sylvia Griffin

Architect and academic Eyal Weizman writes of the potency of a crack, of its potential to gradually shear, expand and tear ‘...along the line of least resistance’, despite its seemly static state.25 Cracks, as described by Weizman, register evolving contradictions between the inertia of a structure and the ‘constantly transforming field of forces operating around and within it.’26

24 The process also recalled for me Mieke Bal’s description of Doris Salcedo’s method of working over extant material things to make them sites of grief, often turning everyday items into memorials – “rub[bing] the past into the present object and in doing so …block[ing] the process of forgetting”. *Doris Salcedo: Shibboleth*, 44
26 Ibid.
also have connotations of instability, fault lines and places of weakness; we refer to people and things losing control, or being overlooked and ‘falling between the cracks’.27 The play between negative and positive space – what lies within the crack, physically and metaphorically - or what materially defines the crack, are intriguing aspects. All these aspects feed into the affect of the interaction I felt with the memorial.

In addition to the frottage made from the Budapest Holocaust Memorial photographic documentation of several panels of the handwritten additions was also undertaken. In this way I was able to explore the interplay between the two indexical features - that is, the handwriting on the memorial and the negative, indexical trace embodied in the frottage. Another artwork was created by animating the photographs of the handwritten elements from the memorial into a video projection. Projected onto a wall, this scrolls upwards to suggest an endless roll call of names of the dead and was accompanied by the original frottage scroll.28 (That Which Remains (2012) predates this PhD but is included here as the first iteration of a series of artworks that continued into my candidature.)

The desire to address my frustration over my missing family history led to a variety of actions that also informed my artwork. On ascertaining the family name of my aunt and uncle from my cousin (who was orphaned at age six during the Holocaust), I planned to contact Yad Vashem, the World Center for Holocaust Research, Documentation, Education and Commemoration. My intention was to add the names of these uncles and aunt to Yad Vashem’s database as part of their ongoing Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project.29

28 This work was also a finalist in the 2013 Blake Prize for Religious Art. That Which Remains, both in combination and with the video and scroll employed separately, underwent various iterations between 2013-2014.
29 The Jewish organisation Yad Vashem in Israel has, since 1955, fulfilled its mandate to preserve the memory of Holocaust victims by the collection of names, considering this to be ‘the ultimate representation of a person’s identity’. Yad Vashem considers that in the act of gathering pages of testimony, the memory of Jews murdered in the Holocaust will be preserved and regards these names as a public commemoration.
Prior to registering, I searched the database of Shoah Victim’s Names and was surprised to find several entries for each of these relatives – albeit with multiple variations of their names, dates of birth, dates of death, status and so on. The accuracy and level of information for any given victim’s fate is evidently dependent on the information source. These sources range from friends and survivor relatives to official documents such as - in my family’s case - the List of murdered Jews from Hungary, Budapest; a list found in Nevek (Names) - Victims of Hungarian Labour Battalions; and a Card File of Hungarian Jews who perished, prepared by the Hungarian branch of the World Jewish Congress 1945-1946 [Fig.64]. Each source is granted equal validity - that is, all information is accepted without verification. In accepting and scanning pages of testimony from relatives, friends and acquaintances, as well as retrieving information from archives and other sources, Yad Vashem clearly acknowledges ‘the Names Database is a work in progress and may contain errors that will be corrected in the future’.30

Thus, disparities due to the vagaries of memory or conflicting documentation made this search for my relatives a frustrating and painstaking exercise. It necessitated all variations of spellings relating to my relatives to be checked, for example: Weiss, Weist, Weisz, Veis (for Stefania’s maiden name and my maternal uncle Tibor’s name); and Karman, Kerman (for Andor and Stefania’s married name); Rottersmann, Rottersman (my grandmother’s maiden name – used for verification in the records) and so forth. Similarly, dates of birth, dates of death and status or cause of death varied significantly. What did emerge from my search of the database was verification that my aunt and uncle, Andor and Stefania Karman, were murdered towards the very end of the war, and that my uncle Tibor Weiss died in Russia as part of a forced labour battalion. What also emerged from this research, apart from an overwhelming sense of sadness and

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30 Ibid.

for Jewish people and all mankind. As the survivor generation ages and dies, Yad Vashem is concerned that millions of victims remain unidentified and has placed an urgent call to families and communities to assist in the recovery of these names. Yad Vashem, "The Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project: Why Collect Names," Yad Vashem, http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/names/why_collect_names… http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=en.
incredulity at the sheer volume of names, was the realisation that I was the sole member of my surviving family in possession of this information. While my mother and aunt had been told by witnesses of their sister and brother-in-law’s forcible removal from their hiding place by the Hungarian Arrow Cross (commonly known as Hungarian Nazis), their fate and that of their brother remained unknown.
The video work *No, No, No* (2016) [Fig. 65], was my response to the frustrations and grief I encountered, both in my attempts to add my family’s names to the Holocaust Memorial in Budapest and in the process of sifting through scores of names in the Yad Vashem Names Database. It reflects the unreliability and
instability of memory that in turn betrays the individual’s identity; imprecision such as the misspelling of a name can bury a person’s history or fate for decades or interminably. Even within the immediate family these anomalies persist; for example, while I spell my mother’s maiden name Weiss (as it appears on my birth certificate), my sister spells it Weisz. The title of the video is also indicative of my frustrated response to my siblings as we contest each other’s versions of a shared history, struggling to align our remembrances of our parent’s wartime stories and experiences. In No, No, No (2016) my hand writes each variation of my mother’s name – as searched in the Yad Vashem Names Database – on marble, recalling the experience of writing on the Holocaust memorial - then crosses each in turn out. The gesture of ruling out a name, repeated as it’s looped over and over, speaks not only of erasure and loss, but also of my anger.  

Figure 65. Sylvia Griffin, No, No, No. 2016. Video still.

The newly discovered fate of my family weighed heavily on me, prompting me to recall writer and academic Anne Karpf’s elucidations regarding the burden of

31 While similar in title to Bruce Nauman’s video work No, No, No!, this work is not intended to bear any relationship to Nauman’s. However, the fact that both could be seen as demonstrating frustration amongst their themes is a welcome coincidence.
responsibility on the researcher as secondary witness. While Karpf mainly addresses the challenges facing the historian as researcher of the Holocaust, I would argue that these challenges apply equally – if not more so – to those directly related to survivors or victims. In uncovering the records outlining the fates of my aunt and uncles I became, as Karpf writes, ‘not only a secondary witness but in some sense also a surrogate one, charged with speaking on behalf of those who no longer can’. The experience also reflects historian and academic Dominick LaCapra’s deliberations on the power of original documents and their capacity to stand in for the victim. LaCapra quotes academic Raul Hilberg (1926-2007), considered an archetypal ‘rational’ historian, who explains his fascination with original documents:

…when I hold a document in my hand, particularly if it’s an original document, then I hold something which is actually some-thing that the original bureaucrat held in his hand. It’s an artefact. It’s a leftover. It’s the only leftover there is. The dead are not around.

While Karpf and LaCapra are specifically referring to the power of the original document and, presumably, the affective potency in the tactility of handling, the experience of researching these scanned documents on-line was nonetheless an intensely meaningful experience. The feelings of loss conjured from these ‘traces, leftovers, remnants’ and all that they represent were, in this case, unhindered by the screen interface. In grappling with how to relay this new-found knowledge to other family members, particularly my cousin, I was mindful of the sensitivities involved in such transactions. Despite the interceding decades, such information is still traumatically loaded and potentially confronting, as Karpf’s earlier comments allude to. Karpf also discusses the poignant duality of Holocaust testimony, of how each time we handle these material stand-ins for a victim, it reinforces our awareness of the horrific circumstances and the lack of humanity that befell the subject. As Karpf notes, ‘testimony is always in dialogue with silence and absence…’, offering an

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32 Representing Auschwitz: At the Margins of Testimony. 85-103.
33 Ibid., 87.
34 Ibid., 91-92.
35 Ibid., 92.
intriguing challenge for the artist.\textsuperscript{36} For the artist to bring the archive alive – to represent a life rather than a mere statistic by material means can be a powerful, dynamic means of communication. This is demonstrated by the work of several of the artists discussed in this thesis, as well as in several of my own works.

I returned to the Holocaust Memorial in Kozma utca Jewish cemetery in June, 2015, with the intention of adding my family’s names to the others on the memorial. As outlined in Chapter One, I was dismayed to discover that several clean, freshly engraved marble slabs had replaced most of the original ones. This action prompted questions regarding the official motives for enacting these changes. Were the additions of handwritten names regarded as unsightly? Was this a form of censorship? Answers to these questions are, unfortunately, difficult to find with unresponsive officialdom and a lack of journal articles, news stories, or even online commentary available. While anecdotal evidence suggests that several relatives of the deceased buried in Kozma utca Jewish cemetery are distressed at the state of neglect afflicting many graves, the handwritten additions garner wide publicity - via word of mouth and various media - as an attraction worth visiting.\textsuperscript{37} If the desire was to officially integrate the hand-written names with the engraved ones, one would hope that the preservation of the original slabs – in some form - would be a primary consideration. With the lack of any visible or written evidence to the contrary, it would seem that this has not been considered. The popularity and unique characters of the handwritten additions contributed to the memorial’s vitality and distinctiveness. By removing the precise characteristics that countered the propensity of such memorials to alienate their audience, it was risking doing exactly that.

For me, and possibly for many who have contributed names to the memorial over time, the gesture of adding these names fulfilled a range of objectives. The act of writing a name recalls that person, honours their memory and reaches

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} This anecdotal evidence is in the form of comments left on various Jewish heritage websites, the website of the cemetery itself, and by comments made to me personally by local residents and my family.
across time. The action of writing leaves a trace unique to the writer and has the capacity to embody an act of reparation. The institutionally sanctioned erasure of these additions has meant, I realise, that the photographic documentation I possess from my 2012 visit is now an historical document. Determined to restart a new wave of personal interventions with the memorial, I located an appropriate slab and recorded myself adding the names of my uncles and aunt to the marble. (Fig. 66, Fig. 67). This action of inscribing the names of my missing relatives provided me with a new means of connecting and being present with the dead in a manner that would not be possible with the official mode of permanent engraving. My profound hope is that others follow this lead, form new memorial rituals and continue to mourn their missing, reclaiming the memorial.

These temporal issues are discussed in Chapter Two
Contested Memory and Name

Several of the memorials, monuments and artworks discussed in this paper invite questions regarding remembrance and the ownership of memory. Whether violently intense or intensely personal, the representation of those to be commemorated and mourned is invariably political. Much has been written on the politics of who is commemorated and how this is achieved, with questions raised over not only the identity of the victims of oppression, but also how the oppressors themselves are represented. As detailed in Chapter One - using the example of the Budapest Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation to examine the conflicting interests of the various parties involved in the planning process - vested interests can derail original intentions. The fact that the only Hungarian memorial specifically for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust is sited on the outskirts of Budapest (at the Kozma utca Jewish cemetery) reflects the ruling Communist party’s priorities at that time.39

In addition to the *Holocaust Memorial* in Budapest, *The Shoah Memorial* in Paris also includes lists of names of Holocaust victims that have been variously erased, scribbled out or written over. Most viewers would be inclined to question an obvious sign of the disappearance of a name from a memorial however within the context of attempted genocide, the literal ‘disappearance’ of the victim’s identity – through their name - from memorials designed to commemorate them is both intriguing and perplexing. On arrival to Paris’ *Shoah Memorial*, an external Wall of Names engraved with the names of 76,000 Jews deported from France under Nazism, greets the visitor. The *Shoah Memorial* website states its intention as follows: ‘This wall restores an identity to children, women and men that the Nazis tried to eradicate from the face of the earth. Their names etched in stone perpetuate their memory.’ On witnessing the apparent removal of several of these ‘identities’ – neatly plastered over on the marble commemoration wall - I sought answers [Fig. 68]. With no written explanation provided, I approached staff who seemed surprised by my enquiry and vague in their responses. Unable to confirm the nature of the problem or future outcomes, one could only speculate on the causes for removal – were names misspelt, dates inaccurate, or had graffiti been added needing redress?

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This incident was reminiscent of the aforementioned Budapest Holocaust memorial, where the governing institution evidently decided to replace the original, marble slabs with new ones. Regardless of whether this course of action was done from a sense of duty to include new names, or as an aesthetic decision, in replacing and evidently discarding the handwritten additions the monument’s integrity as a communal touchstone has been drastically altered. As discussed in Chapter One, state or institutionally sanctioned monuments and memorials, in having certain expectations or meanings ascribed to them, risk concretising particular interpretations or histories. In the case of the Paris Wall of Names and also the Holocaust Memorial, the imperatives of the state/institution appear to have over-ridden those of the active user. This failure to acknowledge the potential for ongoing relevance as new generations bring their own memories and perspectives to bear deprive the memorial the
opportunity to – as James E Young argues - take on a life of its own, perpetually changing meaning and significance over time.\textsuperscript{41}

In another example, Dutch-born artist Lika Mutal’s \textit{Ojo que llora} (\textit{The Eye That Cries}) (2007) in Lima, Peru, demonstrates how a monument that has been transformed and reinvigorated by public actions in the face of political turbulence has been endowed with an unique form of cultural capital.\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ojo que llora} comprises 32,000 stones – each painted with the name, age and year of death or disappearance – for the thousands in Peru’s internal wars (1980-2000). The stones of these victims are arranged in a river-like pathway spiralling to a central stone obelisk featuring an ‘eye’ fountain which ‘sheds tears’ for the dead [Fig. 69].\textsuperscript{43} In concept and design, \textit{Ojo que llora} acts as a performative memorial site - requiring the visitor to slowly wind their way through the names to reach the central fountain - engaging the visitor on an experiential, emotional rather than intellectual level.\textsuperscript{44} However it has become a lightning rod for expressing the crosscurrents of Peru’s past and present political unrest, which has on several occasions materialised as attacks coinciding with various periods of political volatility. An example of this was in 2007 when supporters of Alberto Fujimora, the former president of Peru, defaced the memorial smashing the ‘eye’ in retaliation for his extradition to face various charges corruption, abuse of power and human rights violation [Fig. 70].\textsuperscript{45} \textsuperscript{46}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{41} Young, \textit{The Texture of Memory}, 3. \\
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 161. \\
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 169. \\
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 161-78. \\
\textsuperscript{46} In another smaller, more personal act related to Fujimora’s extradition, those stones commemorating the 1992 disappearance of nine students and their professor, had been quietly defaced. Their names, doggedly sought out from amongst the thousands of stones, were struck-out with a green marker in a more targeted but equally aggressive manner to the larger, more public act of the indiscriminate violence aimed at the monument. \textit{Curating Difficult Knowledge}, 161-62.
\end{flushleft}
Family members of the victims have continued to re-inscribe and repair the vandalised memorials to their loved ones, while volunteers have been repainting those stones where names have faded in a natural form of erasure, re-affirming Peruvians’ commitment to remember. The act of striking out specific names on the monument suggests an intention to erase particular victims and events; which by inference asks similar questions of other memorial sites included in this thesis.47 Similarly, one of the intentions of No,No,No was to address similar issues. These acts of defacement imply a kind of intimidation and ‘silencing’, carrying an implicit threat to those with opinions or beliefs different to those held by the protagonist – and by extension, a threat to those who mourn for the victims of associated violence.

The use of the term ‘graffiti’ – as used in relation to interventions in the case of Ojo que llora, above, and as civil disobedience in cases such as writing on the Budapest Holocaust memorial and the Gerz’s Harburg Monument against Fascism – has complex nuances. The violent intentions of the graffiti unleashed on Ojo que llora, accompanied as it was by targeted destruction, differs markedly to the graffiti encouraged and endorsed by Gerz and Shalev-Gerz for the Harburg

47 These include the Holocaust memorial of Budapest, Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s graffiti-covered, disappearing Harburg Monument Against Fascism, and to a lesser extent the Shoah memorial in Paris.
Monument Against Fascism. Conceived as an artistic action in addition to being a commissioned monument, the public was invited to participate by engraving their names in the lead-covered surface of the monument ‘as a gesture both against fascism, war and violence, and for peace and human rights’.\(^4\) The ensuing addition of both inane and fascistic iconography – including swastikas and neo-Nazi signs – scribbles and crossing out of names and signatures led to wide public condemnation of the memorial by those who regarded it as unsightly and a magnet for antisocial behaviour.\(^4\) Although stung by the backlash, the Gerz’s defended the more ‘antisocial’ graffiti additions, defending the right to free expression. As James Young quotes Gerz, ‘a swastika is also a signature...Why not give that phenomenon [graffiti] free rein and allow the monument to document the social temperament that way?’\(^5\) Young notes that in inviting its own violation, the Harburg Monument Against Fascism ‘humbled itself in the eyes of the beholders accustomed to maintaining a respectful, decorous distance’. He continues, claiming that it ‘forced viewers to desanctify the memorial, demystify it, and become its equal.’\(^5\)

I contend that this view supports my position on the Budapest Holocaust Memorial. While physical visitor interaction was never invited, the action of adding the names of loved ones to the memorial similarly broke down those barriers that unintentionally keep viewers at arms length from monuments and memorials. Given the rise of extreme right-wing politics in Hungary, it is remarkable that no untoward or negative graffiti is in evidence on the Holocaust memorial, apart from the few names inexplicably scribbled out or written over. This is all the more notable considering the extraordinary lengths the vandals went to in locating and desecrating Ojo que llora.\(^5\) Paradoxically, in attempting to suppress dialogue about the past, these acts – as demonstrated with the defacement of Ojo que llora - serve to generate more public awareness and discussion, and thus promote

\(^4\) Niven and Paver, *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, 139.
\(^5\) Ibid., 134.
\(^5\) *Ojo que llora* is located in an outlying suburb of Lima.
remembrance. The ensuing public outcry, scholarly debates and government involvement open debate on memory, interpretation and victimhood. The continued violence enacted metaphorically against victims through attacks and defacement of the Ojo que llora has served to make it the visible presence of the past – and a conduit for ongoing conflict – for the national and world stage to see. This has been made possible, in part, by the lack of official interference due to its relative independence.

Monuments have long been subject to the polemics echoed in philosopher Robert Musil’s (1880-1942) oft-quoted refrain: ‘There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument’; or, worse still – to paraphrase Andreas Huyssen - that they risk becoming ‘just another testimony to forgetting’, or to preserving fading memory as myth or cliché. The tendency of governments to appropriate ‘memory’ to drive their own heroic narratives - as demonstrated by Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation and Ojo que llora - defies the very closure that these narratives would impose, thereby encouraging open public engagement with the past. Governments and institutions, often assuming the role of custodians of official memory, oversee the passage of history into ‘institutionalized memory’ requiring that certain forgetting is sanctioned and certain memories are disallowed. Rather than serving as a cohesive and instructive healing field built around public consensus, it has become a disconnected and fragmented battleground.

I would advocate for monuments such as Ojo que llora and the Holocaust Memorial to be regarded as performative memorial sites, where the constant

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54 *Ojo que llora* is privately funded by citizens and non-government organisations, with limited government support in the form of statements issued by select government figures. *Curating Difficult Knowledge*, 168.
55 Murray, “Collective Memory in Place: The Voortrekker Monument and the Hector Pieterson Memorial,” 4-5.
58 See Chapter One, which refers to the controversial *Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation* in Freedom Square, Budapest.
cycle of defacement, graffiti and re-inscription reflects the inevitable changes and contrasts of a nation’s politics and history while reflecting the past’s ongoing legacies. Most of the artists involved in these memorial projects may not have anticipated the range of responses to their works, but accepted and encouraged the need to express several ‘truths’. While the Gerz’s *Harburg Monument Against Fascism* attracted graffiti of an unexpected nature, they resisted the call to remove the offending additions, opting instead to represent all views rather than a select, curated few. The presence of graffiti in such sites is a powerful statement against indifference to the past event and its marker. I would argue for the acceptance of many of these events as a form of counter-memory; the expression of a different narrative that can transform so-called ‘defacement’ into another form of writing. In this way monuments and memorials are able to remain relevant, vital and alive.⁶⁰

**Identity and the Personal Voice**

Implicit within memorial culture is the connection between names, naming and identity. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, names - whether engraved, written or even spoken – are a way of humanising loss or trauma and reasserting the identity of the deceased or missing person. The complexities and nuances surrounding the subject of identity with regard to monuments and memorials are vast and varied. As demonstrated by Lika Mutal’s *Ojo que Ilora* and the *Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation*, politics and deeply felt allegiances often escalate into violence. What are often lost in the grand memorial gestures are the individual voices of those most affected. The struggle for these voices to be heard above often bland or manipulative political posturing is evident in many of the previously noted examples and gestures. This is demonstrated in cases such as the individual voices represented by the counter memorials demonstrating against *Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation*, or the spontaneous memorials, photographs, lists of missing and many other actions that followed the destruction of the Twin Towers, World Trade Centre, New York.

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For many artists, myself included, the small personal gesture is a means of expressing grief and mourning whilst still engaging with the wider community and discourse of memorial culture. Mary O'Neill references Sigmund Freud in referring to the 'grief work' of several artists, the contexts in which they were made, and the rituals created by artists as responses to lack of appropriate grieving behaviours (such as with AIDS deaths or infant deaths). The majority of those who have died of AIDS have been cremated and their ashes scattered, thus leaving no physical trace or headstone to mark their lives. Therefore, the quilts instigated by the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt project may be the sole marker of their names and testament to their lives. Conceived in 1987 as a social response to the AIDS epidemic in America, this project demonstrates a sophisticated set of rituals and alternatives to the usual conventions of naming [Fig.71]. Having names sewn onto fabric rather than etched into stone summons many of the connotations of memorial materiality as argued in Chapter Three. Unlike traditional granite or marble, with their illusory promise of permanence, cloth frays, fades, and deteriorates over time. This inherent fragility with its constant need for repair, speaks about all our lives, not just the 'material' life.

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61 This term is used to describe the obsessive remembering that is part of the mourning process and 'labour of love' involved in stitching and repairing – this most traditional work of women. Referring to the work Strange Fruit for David by Zoe Leonard, O'Neill describes Leonard’s futile attempt to 'repair' the skins of eaten fruit with wire, zips and thread. (Im)Permanence: Cultures in/out of Time, 93. In recounting the poignancy and sense of powerlessness and distress conveyed by these acts, O’Neill could equally be describing the work of Salcedo.


64 Hawkins, “The Art of Memory and the Names Project Aids Quilt,” 765.
While vast in size – and ever-growing - the quilt operates as a portable monument to the victims of AIDS-related illnesses. Made up of ‘blocks’ comprising eight three-by-six-foot panels stitched together, the panels emphasise naming individuals within a collective context and the ongoing contribution of patches to the quilts reminds us of the cumulative devastation of the AIDS crisis. The process involved in making these panels also highlights the relationship between public and private aspects of ‘grief work’. Reflecting this, the video Sadness, by Sydney artist William Yang interweaves stories of his various friends affected by the AIDS epidemic of the 1980’s with other stories related to his Chinese family’s experiences in Australia. One particular story involves his friend and fellow artist Peter Kingston and “Scotty”, their mutual friend who died from AIDS-related complications. Yang describes Kingston’s dedication in elaborately hand-stitching a quilt in Scotty’s memory, even re-stitching other friends’ contributions that he had considered to be below par. Yang describes being ‘stunned by the labour of love and the depth of sadness’ in Kingston’s actions. Peter Kingston’s example typifies the love, dedication, sadness and often anger behind the generation of AIDS quilts.

These quilts involve a complex retinue of memorial actions: the artist/maker creates a sewn work (either alone or in collaboration with others) within the

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confines of the studio/workspace. The binding together of these individual works to form a larger quilt takes this essentially private act of mourning from the studio into the public arena, where these individual pieces en masse gain political agency in expressing the grief of an entire community. The ceremonial display of the quilt is key to its existence and an excellent example of a different mode of mourning. Following a somber and elaborate unfolding ceremony (also shown in *Sadness*) in which volunteers, dressed in white, raise each folded block up to waist height, turning clockwise as they unfold and set down each section [Fig. 72].

Community and civic leaders, friends, family and volunteers then each read out loud the names of their own deceased family, friends or lovers in the manner of a roll call of the dead. As academic Marita Sturken suggests, this act - within the controversial context of an epidemic such as AIDS – can be regarded as an act of both defiance and affirmation.

As a giant living, growing and evolving monument its contrast to the mostly staid traditional stone and bronze monuments of Washington, DC is clear. Visitors to the AIDS quilt often bring flowers and talismans as one would at a cemetery, thus treating the quilt as a surrogate for the bodies of the AIDS dead in much the same way as the previously discussed ‘missing graves’ syndrome.

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68 Sturken, "Conversation with the Dead: Bearing Witness in the Aids Memorial Quilt," 70.
70 Hawkins, "The Art of Memory and the Names Project Aids Quilt," 74.
In cases of death resulting from state-sanctioned murder, such as the ‘disappeared’ of Chile or the Holocaust, ritual may take on particular significance when there is no corpse. O’Neill refers to such deaths as ‘offending deaths’, deaths occurring outside the expected time and sequence of generations.\textsuperscript{71} For the second or subsequent generations temporally removed from these ‘offending deaths’ what often remains are the stories passed down and the material evidence left behind. This evidence may take many forms: family photographs, letters, family recipes, clothes and textiles. In the absence of a human voice these objects may often ‘speak’ in its place. Such objects also have the capacity to bridge these temporal gaps. For Doris Salcedo, who responds to violent events with relative immediacy, objects belonging to or closely associated with victims - such as a woman’s dress in \textit{Untitled}, 1995 [Fig 73], or the viscerally compelling shoes of \textit{Atribilarios} (1992-94) [Fig 74] – are deployed to insinuate the absence of a body and imply the associated trauma.

\textsuperscript{71} (Im)Permanence: Cultures in/out of Time.
Second generational artists such as Kathy Temin and myself, whilst sharing similar familial circumstances and histories, have chosen quite different artistic means to express such influence. The impact of distance is also a significant factor for both Temin and I, contributing to our sense of identity. The experience of undertaking research in Hungary, Berlin and elsewhere has, whilst informing and enriching my work, also reinforced my feelings of physical disconnection from my family’s cultural home and history. I imagine that Temin may have experienced a similar reaction after attending the Adult March of the Living.\(^{72}\) This distance, both generationally and physically, has afforded us each a different perspective to work from, situating us as what I have termed ‘intimate outsiders’. Temin has noted that had she been able to access the great artworks in America, or been raised near Auschwitz or Nuremberg, her work would probably have been completely different. She believes that her geographical isolation in Australia has made her perception ‘both more curious and altered’.\(^{73}\)

\(^{72}\) While commenting that as an artist she has been ‘consistently engaged with private and collective memory through popular culture, suburbia, fan clubs and art history’, it is clear that her participation in an Adult March of the Living piqued and influenced further investigation into her background history. The march, a pilgrimage to the Holocaust memorial sites and concentration camps of Eastern Europe, offered the children of Holocaust survivors the opportunity to mark the memory of their families. “Kathy Temin: Three Indoor Monuments,” 29; and “Kathy Temin: Forest of Memories,” 11.

\(^{73}\) “Kathy Temin: Three Indoor Monuments,” 35.
While Temin’s works were discussed in Chapter Three with regards to their materiality, they are also examined here for their relationship to family history and for significance to ritual. My own work expresses this need to examine my position in my family’s history as well as the disjuncture between my parent’s European life and their ‘new’ life in Australia, with all the associated implications of dislocation and ‘otherness’. It also addresses the ensuing nameless, unacknowledged sadness that seemed to permeate my childhood and then my artwork, as expressed in the Preface of this thesis. As film critic and academic Freda Freiberg remarks, survivors embody ‘the dark thread connecting past and present’.

This thread, I believe, could be extended to the children of survivors. While I often imply personal connections through my work – with references to names and the use of personal items - Temin’s ‘monument’ series of works may appear on first viewing less personal, with thematic references only decipherable through her use of titles. Temin’s interest in the power of titles is revealed in her recounting of her interest in the directness of Frank Stella’s geometric abstraction which turned to fascination on discovering that one of his titles, Arbeit Mach frei (Work will set you free), referred to the ironwork lettering above the entrance to Auschwitz. Motivated by her initial response of discomfort, she investigated the disjuncture between this and similar works and titles, exploring this quality in her own work. Some of these works, with titles such as My Monument: Black Cube [Fig. 75] or Indoor Monument: Soft-Display deploy anthropomorphism or oblique references to her own family history – whether recognisably or not.

Temin’s Indoor Monument: Hard Dis-play, for example, features a tight cluster of large, soft, furry black forms in a forest-like arrangement. Unlike the solid and solemn commemorative forms we have come to associate with monuments, the only indication of Indoor Monument’s commemorative intent is, like Stella’s, contained in the title.

While the influence of the Holocaust may not have been as pervasive during Temin’s upbringing as it was for myself and others – she has spoken of the

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75 “Kathy Temin: Three Indoor Monuments,” 32-33.
presence of family photographs around the house but of little conversation regarding the Holocaust – this absence of information is a typical condition of postmemory. This subconscious adoption of the burden of memory, as noted in previous chapters regarding postmemory, where one effectively fills in the blanks for oneself, is typical to the condition of postmemory. After discovering more of her family history after her father’s death, Temin acknowledged the influence that this history had on her personally and how it has manifested in her work. While the wealth of material regarding postmemory discourse has proved to be a revelatory experience for me personally and strongly influenced the work I produce, I suspect Temin has been similarly affected, particularly after participating in the Adult March of the Living.

Many of the works in her monument series reflect Temin’s recollections of the concentration camps she visited during this pilgrimage. She has spoken of being struck by the feeling of being physically small within the vast spaces of the concentration camps she visited, while also being cognisant of the surrounding beauty of the tree-lined countryside and the ironic juxtaposition therein. This is reflected in *My Monument: White Forest*, [Fig. 76]. With its cushiony, synthetic, white fur trees encouraging visitor interaction, Temin has described it as a memorial garden and an attempt to address and translate the feelings she had in these Eastern European memorial sites. Other works carry references to Jewish rituals: while *Indoor Monument: Soft-Display* [Fig. 77] may reflect Temin’s homage to minimalism, it is also reminiscent of rows of memorial plaques commemorating the dead. Notable, as curator Sue Cramer points out, is ‘the lack of any names on the plaques [that speak] as strongly as the presence of the plaques themselves, their soft, suggestive shapes substituting for unnamed lives.’ On the floor, a low wooden stool and table reference the Jewish ritual whereby mourners sit on low stools for seven days as an expression of grief. As Cramer suggests, even without an awareness of this Jewish ritual, the presence of these objects suggests the absence of those who

76 Ibid., 29.
77 Smith, Cramer, and Evans, *Kathy Temin*, 33.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 35-36.
might use them.\textsuperscript{80} These conceptual references to absence through the implication of mourning objects and suggestions of mourning rituals are heightened by Temin’s use – or lack of – colour.\textsuperscript{81} Temin has stated that the use of white provides her with a freedom ‘to work with forms in a non-narrative way’, in a sense stripping objects of colour to not only set them apart from ‘picture-book prettiness’, but to symbolise absence, in the manner of a monument or memorial.\textsuperscript{82} Conversely, Temin’s deployment of black synthetic fur in My Monument: Black Garden, Indoor Monument: Hard Dis-play and Black Cube offers overtones of mourning and a foreboding sense of discomfort, particularly when confronted by towering dimensions and claustrophobic arrangements.

The subtlety of Temin’s references to trauma, absence or the Holocaust reflect her admission that, for her, the process of remembrance has been internalised rather than being a considered act.\textsuperscript{83} Temin has harnessed this sense of being dwarfed by both nature and a physical environment - still resonant with hostile, traumatic associations – translating it into sculptural work that requires the viewer to \textit{experience}, not just see them. It is also interesting to note Temin’s description of trees as ‘…metaphors for something else’. While Cramer suggests that this ‘something else’ is hard to articulate or verbalise, I would suggest that rather than attempting to articulate these feelings verbally a visceral awareness may be more conducive.\textsuperscript{84} Alternatively, it is this role that ephemeral works have the potential to perform so well. Temin has also stated her understanding of monuments as making specific references to that which is absent and that a work of art has potential similarities while ‘paying homage to the memory of something’. This is similar to the approach I have adopted in my own work.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} The deployment of white strips forms of their usual narratives and may suggest a bleaching of memory and, as Cramer proposes, is reminiscent of filmic devices where fading to white signifies death and endings. I would further propose that this absence of names serves to universalise these particular forms of death or, as curator Natalie King suggests, this bleaching of colour symbolises ‘a more specific kind relating to monuments, which by their very nature refer to the absence of the person(s) or event(s) being memorialised.’ ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} “Kathy Temin: Three Indoor Monuments,” 29.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Kathy Temin}, 33.
\textsuperscript{85} “Kathy Temin: Three Indoor Monuments,” 29.
Figure 75. Kathy Temin, *My Monument: Black Cube*, 2009. Synthetic fur and filling, wood, steel, overall dimensions 355 x 370 x 370cm.

Figure 76. Kathy Temin, *White Forest*, 2008. Synthetic fur and filling, MDF, paint, overall dimensions variable.

Monograms, Identity and Dowry

‘Studying the material object offers ways in which to perceive connections between ourselves and the people of the past, as well as to access the contexts that produced the object, contexts that the object continues to recall.’

The many examples of mourning and commemoration referred to in this thesis suggest that, as familial connections are a primary driver for expressing grief, smaller, more intimate forms of commemoration warrant consideration. This is often evident in the grouping of etched names or by the personal nature of offerings left at memorial sites. My own work, as distinct from Kathy Temin’s approach, often references or utilises objects directly related to family, many of which feature writing or lettering alluding to identity. The gaps in my family history, such as the variations in the spelling of my mother’s maiden name that led to the work No, No, No, present potentially rich artistic possibilities. They offer an opportunity to express absence, mortality and longing – as well as the temporal peculiarities of memory – through creative practice and to question and challenge both the artist and the viewer.

My mother, who died over thirty years ago, left me with a sizable quantity of her dowry linen. My interest in this linen as a signifier of affect and the transference of memory, and thus as a type of memorial, is based on connections to family history and my ongoing visual arts practise. This linen was an integral part of our family life and informed my earliest childhood memories. I have previously written of this linen not only with regards to my personal attachment to it, but also within other contexts. These include the social history and traditions of dowry textiles and needlework; an examination of household rituals; and the broader realm of female agency and material culture. The testimonial capacities and influence that this dowry linen has had on my practice were also examined. The focus here is on the capacity of this linen to characterise loss,

\[\text{86} \quad \text{Susan Frye, Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England} \quad \text{(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 29.}\]

\[\text{87} \quad \text{Sylvia Griffin, “Dowry Linen and the Intimate Outsider: Visual Arts as a Bridge to Matrilineage,” Women’s History 2, no. 1 (2015). This article was also the subject of an ARC Centre of Excellence conference}\]
grief, mourning and identity followed by discussion of the artwork inspired by this dowry linen, *Hand in Hand*.

My mother, born Eva Weiss, was the youngest of four children in an upper-middleclass Hungarian Jewish family living in urban Budapest. Her monogram ‘WE’ (Weiss Eva) adorns almost every piece of her dowry linen in the form of either separate or intertwined initials, decorated or undecorated, in drawn thread work or other forms of embroidery [Fig.78] and [Fig.79]. These distinctive monograms constitute the clearest and most personal indication of her ownership of these objects and thus her identity.

Figure 78. Sylvia Griffin, *Monogram Drawings*, 2013. Pencil, sketchbook, 180x210mm. Photo: Sylvia Griffin.


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Historian Laurel T Ulrich has described other familial traditions, particularly those focused on cultivating and maintaining associations across generations, and refers to eighteenth century practices involving names in the transmission of ‘inalienable possessions’. Ulrich, while pointing out that it was not strictly necessary to mark one’s objects, nonetheless maintains that marking them (in this case with the giver’s initials), like the naming of children, tightened connections. For example, in eighteenth century naming practices brothers and sisters, by naming their children after each other, would give heightened significance to the relationship between a woman and her namesakes helping to ensure continued transference through the matriarchal line. In this light, my mother’s initials - within the traditions of dowry - suggest a naming ritual linking her family of origin to her future married life. I regard this act as an attempt to bridge two worlds - while the purpose of dowry was primarily regarded as preparing for future married life, the monogram retains my mother’s ‘original’ identity and in turn speaks of my matrilineal connections, which in turn strengthen and ensure family connections.

For the second generation of trauma survivors such as myself, these family connections are somewhat tenuous and items such as dowry linen can take on a heightened significance by standing in for the absent owner. I also regard my mother’s dowry linen as primary material evidence of her European life and as a link to family members I never knew – therefore, I approach my mother’s dowry linen as testimonial objects for my work. Karpf and LaCapra’s earlier references to the power of first-hand handling of original objects and the potent affect of tactility can equally be applied here. Those same feelings of loss conjured by ‘traces, leftovers, and remnants’, apply to many personal objects, well-

88 ‘Inalienable possessions’, as described by Annette Weiner in Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving are those that are imbued with affective qualities tying them to the one family group or particular set of owners through time. In the act of naming, these objects are less likely to be of value to anyone outside the family or descent group thus ensuring historical continuity within.
maintained or otherwise. In addition, I venture to propose that the performative aspects of an artistic practice (such as attention to detail and repetitive actions) are a sympathetic counterpoint to the embodied rituals in the making and use of dowry linen. Paul Connerton alludes to such practices with his references to conveying and sustaining recollected knowledge and images from the past by ritual-like performances.

Many aspects of the memorial and monument works involving textiles discussed here and in Chapter Three have inevitable affiliations with sewing and craft. This, in turn, raises questions regarding gendered memory work and ‘gendered care’. The notion of ‘gendered care’ and the agency of women coming together has, in relatively recent times, been expanded to include the lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender (LBGT) community. This has been illustrated earlier regarding the adoption of the quilt – the traditional domain of women, particularly in North America – by the gay community via the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt project. As has been noted:

'It is not surprising that a quilt motif was adopted by Cleve Jones, a founder of the NAMES Project, as the artistic medium for a monument to commemorate those who have died of AIDS-related illnesses. Throughout history quilts have served as metaphors for community and 'integration, inclusiveness, [and] the breaking down of barriers'.'

Meanwhile, Connerton proposes that in being under-represented or, indeed, ignored in most recorded history, women turned to needlework (in this case quilting) to create what he terms ‘an art of memory’. He continues, suggesting that in North America it has been a distinctively ‘female form of Historiography’. Connerton balances this with the historical usage of cloth as a signifier of mourning (a torn piece of cloth symbolising the torn fabric of life in Jewish tradition, or the use of banners during the plague in Europe). Quilts in
the North American tradition have frequently been discussed as prime examples of domestic material artefacts retained by families and passed down in matrilineage. Similarly, dowry textiles can be considered as ‘inalienable wealth’ as both are positioned as special objects and family mementos often commemorating important events. While it has been said that quilts bridge the transition between childhood and adult life, dowry linen similarly enacts a transition for a young woman preparing to leave her family for married life.\textsuperscript{96} The intergenerational exchange of each of these goods ensures that familial links are also passed on.\textsuperscript{97} In her book \textit{Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England}, Frye notes that while the creation of textiles, including those intended for dowry, has been practised cross-culturally for millennia, they additionally served as a means for women to exchange stories through weaving or embroidering cloth. She observes that from medieval to eighteenth century England, thousands of women created designs and narratives in cloth. She asserts that women’s embroidered work, and to a less obvious extent ‘the knots and patterns of sewing, weaving, and knitting’, placed these women’s lives within the narratives of ‘fertility and continuity’.\textsuperscript{98}

Hand in Hand

While the significance of my mother’s dowry linen and the relevance of her monogram have already been detailed, what follows is a description of a work I made based on this linen and an explanation of its relevance. In addition to regarding my mother’s dowry linen as primary material evidence of her European life and as a link to unknown family members, the fact that my mother lived through the trauma of the Holocaust during World War II adds deeper meaning to her linen for me. Had she simply left Hungary of her own volition to seek a new life in Australia, her dowry textiles would undoubtedly still carry resonances of her past European life and arouse my interest. But the overlay of a traumatic past involving persecution, personal hardship and loss of close

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Frye, \textit{Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England}, 14. \textit{See also} Chapter 3 in Rozika Parker, \textit{The Subversive Stitch} in which Parker outlines the historical complexities between the Church, women, morality and embroidery in the chapter “Fertility, Chastity and Power”.
\end{flushright}
family members adds a layer of meaning and vulnerability not easily articulated. For me, this difficult history is carried within this dowry linen. My mother’s linen could be seen as both an indexical trace and material proof of her former existence. This can be witnessed both in her monogram, also a marker of her identity, in the stains resulting from years of usage and storage, and even in the crease marks where this linen had been ironed and folded. Traces such as these, while acting as reminders, also offer the capacity to connect existentially to another person in another time. Ulrich’s references to the utilisation of material goods to ‘…create a world of meanings and ultimately transmit (her) history’ resonated strongly for me, while remarks on material goods being ‘crucial props in unobserved, intimate rituals’ brought to mind the ancient and comforting Jewish custom of laying a stone on a grave.99

Figure 80. Pillowcase, 2013. Cotton, 50x62cms. Photo: Sylvia Griffin.

The inspiration for this particular work was a small pillowcase measuring approximately 50 x 62cms. The cotton fabric, originally pale yellow in colour, bears my mother’s maiden name initials - WE for Weiss Eva (or Eva Weiss) – in open work embroidery [Fig. 80]. The interpretation of this embroidered work was installed in the gallery space over several days onto a timber base support draped with one of my own bed sheets and on top of this an off-white damask tablecloth from my mother’s dowry. These layers carried the vestiges of everyday life such as coffee, wax and bloodstains. I embraced these indexical markers of domesticity as an integral part of the work. The embroidered pattern of the pillowcase was transferred and translated onto the draped support using small quartz stones, a process which I likened to a careful ‘reading’ of the textile. Thus, the entire installation period was spent with folded pillowcase in hand, counting each stitch row by row, gathering the required number of stones and placing them in a corresponding grid-like pattern. In transcribing my mother’s monogram from a pillowcase using one quartz stone for each open-work stitch, the monogram became almost exactly four times the size of the original textile with a final dimension of 200 x 248cms [Fig.81]. The quartz stones referenced the aforementioned Jewish tradition of leaving a stone or pebble on a person’s grave as a sign of respect to the dead and marking a visitor’s presence. This act also engages the individual in a ritual which simultaneously provides a physical means of expressing emotions as well as spiritual needs – a ritualistic process directly related to the making of this work.
While *Hand in Hand* paradoxically combined the traditional memorial materiality of stone with the intimacy of cloth, it provided further challenges in its contradictory use of scale and material stability. While the scale of the work and stones translate the delicacy of the embroidered cotton into a weighty, grounded object, the stones are nonetheless vulnerable in their unattached state and therefore unstable. *Hand in Hand* presents a challenge in bringing the personal and the feminine into the public arena whilst maintaining an intimate connection to the delicate original. Temporal signs such as the deterioration and heavy staining of the original dowry fabric disappeared in this new incarnation, revealing only the marks on the damask support. The title of the work, *Hand in Hand*, intimates female labour and embodied experience in the work process, as well as contiguity of past and present. The ritualistic handling of each stone recalls and connects handiwork, domesticity and mourning rituals.\(^{100}\)

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\(^{100}\) The process of conceiving this piece and realising it as a physically demanding and psychologically affective experience led to further academic engagement which in turn, has influenced this doctoral work. I applied and was accepted to present a paper at the ARC Centre for Excellence for the History of Emotions conference “Emotion, Ritual and Power in Europe: 1200 to Present”. My paper *Dowry Linen: A Personal Interpretation Through A Visual Art Practice* was presented at the University of Adelaide in February, 2014 and led to an invitation to submit an article, based on the paper, but substantially developed, to the peer-reviewed UK based journal *Women's History*. The article was published in Volume 2, Issue 1, Spring, 2105 edition of the journal. (Appendix A).
Unravelling

The video work and installation *Unknitting/Rewind* (2016) [Fig. 82] continues my investigation regarding possessions that belonged to my mother that I regard as testimonial objects. *Unknitting/Rewind* involves the unraveling of a cardigan that my mother knitted for my older sister approximately fifty-five years ago and was subsequently worn by myself before being passed down to my daughter. I consequently regard this cardigan as a treasured testament to our shared

Figure 82: Sylvia Griffin. *Unknitting/Rewind*, 2016. Cinematography by Kuba Dorabialski, 9min. Video stills.
matrilineal history and as a link to my mother. The decision to unpick this cardigan was made partly from my desire to ‘unravel’ a history but also to reconnect with my mother by literally retracing her creative process, albeit in reverse. Whilst identifying acts of sewing in recalling a particularly female cultural tradition in Chapter Three, I would proffer that the same could be applied to knitting and that the embodied engagement I experienced in the unraveling process (and subsequent reknitting) similarly recalls the comfort of a ‘common language’.

I was mindful of artist Ann Hamilton’s allusions to labour as a way of ‘knowing’, and how the rhythm of her hands in making (in her case, sewing) recalled and reinforced distinct bodily memories reconnecting her to her grandmother. It was then somewhat ironic that for me, the experience proved to be one of sheer frustration. As is evident in the video, the unraveling – which, unedited, lasted a total of five hours – was torturously slow and emotionally challenging. In truth, it accurately reflected the ambivalent relationship I had had with my mother that has been evident - to some degree - in most of the work I have made with regards to her. This experience need not be perceived as negative: in my need to create artwork in mourning for my mother – more than thirty years since her death - this artwork connected and resonated for me in a viscerally powerful way. In reknitting the cardigan, I mapped and followed the same pattern as my mother’s, deliberately allowing the wool to retain the fifty-five years of memory that translated into the finished and highly imperfect product.

I regard *Unknitting/Rewind* as a transitional piece - it is the first artwork which has engaged with a past, intimate history to create new memories from old and to be passed on to future, female generations. While previous artworks including *Hand in Hand*, *Marking Time*, *Coloured Threads* and several others paid homage to family connections, *Unknitting/Rewind* looks to the future, despite being an intimate work of mourning.

While exploring more personal, intimate expressions of remembrance such as *Unknitting/Rewind*, this chapter also examined the role of the written word and

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101 Wallach, "A Conversation with Ann Hamilton in Ohio."
the gathering of names. This was demonstrated in performative aspects involving direct actions or interactions with monuments or memorials; public gestures such as writing on a memorial or the ceremonial unfurling of a AIDS quilt and various artworks drawing on notions of identity. Intimate gestures, such as the handling of stones or connecting with missed loved ones through the action of sewing were offered as examples of ways to provide solace to the individual and possibly connect him or her within a community. My own work and that of other artists demonstrated these aspects, bringing together common themes through various means – both directly and indirectly using personal possessions, intimate gestures or aspects of social and familial history.
CONCLUSION

The research for this thesis originated with my questioning of the effectiveness of the traditional role of monuments and memorials in providing solace to those mourning loved ones, to victims of collective trauma, and in unifying a community. Following a number of historians and philosophers, I questioned whether these forms of remembrance and commemoration met the needs of their intended audience, and considered whether alternative forms of memorialisation could impart a more meaningful experience. These questions were initially motivated by my own personal and familial experiences of postmemory trauma, and an awareness of alternative ways of expressing grief and remembrance through artistic expression. As a practicing artist I was particularly aware of the affective potential of various materialities and methodologies within contemporary art practice. I considered that these provided opportunities towards helping to deal with death, express grief and approach mourning in a meaningful way, whilst also connecting with a broader memorial culture.

Testing this proposition required an examination of how traditional modes of commemoration worked, who they served and how successfully they did so. The various overlapping and often confusing terminologies within both traditional and alternative forms of memorialising required clarification. This included the key terms monuments and memorials, through to anti-memorials, counter-memorials, actions, ephemeral works and so forth. The Introduction and Chapter One dealt with these issues at length, with the need for a more embracing, participatory form of commemoration beginning to emerge. Implicit in any discussion or plans concerning memorialising were concerns regarding the Fascistic tendencies of monumentality – with reference to Speer and the fears therein – as addressed in Chapter One. While the meanings and nuances of the various forms of ephemeral and alternative art forms were discussed throughout this paper, Chapter One introduced case studies demonstrating the changing face of memorialisation. This was evident in the subtle deviations from tradition deployed in Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the angry remonstrations
against the *Memorial to the Victims of German Occupation* in the form of spontaneous memorials, and the handwritten additions of omitted names from the *Holocaust memorial* in Budapest. These examples were just a few of many encountered in my research that demonstrated the need for active, inclusive means to approach the memorial experience. As James E Young warned - citing a raft of like-minded historians and philosophers – the propensity of monuments to bury events under a static façade risked displacing memory, feeding into the broader discourse of ‘forgetting’.¹ This ‘forgetting’ relies on the notion that by giving memory a monumental form, we divest ourselves of the obligation to remember. Furthermore, as Pierre Nora similarly observed, the self-contained and detached nature of the memorial operation from our daily lives, whilst relying on the physical form of the memorial to do the work for us – enables us to forget until we feel obliged to remember.²

The role of contemporary art in supporting a more inclusive, meaningful memorial experience by way of ephemeral and alternative means was discussed in Chapter Two. The implicitly political nature of the actions and anti-memorials considered here, often involved temporal aspects to activate memory by recalling or referencing past conflicts or traumatic events. The intention of this was primarily to engage victims of traumatic events or witnesses to them. It was found that these victims – or their remaining family members - had fallen into states of hopelessness or traumatised inertia, particularly in situations where on-going, often decades-long violence persisted. Contemporary artists, particularly those from South America and others from post-Holocaust Europe, demonstrated ways of responding to events specific to their regions, whether current (for example, South America’s internal wars) or historic, but of ongoing significance (such as the reverberations from the Holocaust). Jill Bennett offers the example of Colombian artist Doris Salcedo who, in aspiring to mediate the traumatic experience of others, ‘attempts to eradicate the distance between herself and her subjects, which is reflected in the temporal immediacy of much

¹ Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 4-6.
² Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Memoire.”
of her work where she brings the past into the present, in effect, folding time.\textsuperscript{3}

Bennett’s observations follow those of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serres. Deleuze and Serres relate this non-linearity of time in facilitating an understanding of the way that the work of these artists harnessed memory to bring past events to the present - “crumpling” or “folding” time, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Throughout this paper, temporary or ephemeral works evoked - and often provoked - its audience to remember and to feel. The artists featured in this paper, such as Salcedo, Oscar Munoz, Jochen Gerz and others, often utilised methods and materials counter to traditional monumentality. In this way, most hoped to instigate an ongoing, open-ended reevaluation of the past, instead of the historical closure implied by traditional memorials.\textsuperscript{4} This potential for various materialities to capture and successfully transmit affect and allow meaningful engagement for both artist and audience was the focus of Chapter Three. The works of Australian artist Kathy Temin and myself were amongst several examined for their various approaches to materiality. While my work explored a range of materials and issues related to temporality, Temin approached monumentality and memorialising under layers of soft, furry textiles - typical of her approach. The value in holding remembrance in one’s mind after an event – whether it be from an action, like those staged by Salcedo, or an artwork destined to change state or disappear altogether – is one of the fundamental questions posed by this paper. Also evident was the need for personal engagement, as well as active participation – for both artist and onlooker - in the various examples of commemoration discussed. This was evident in Doris Salcedo’s staging of Accion de Duelo (Act of Mourning) (2007) that drew a spontaneous response from hundreds of onlookers in central Bogota. In offering the opportunity to participate in the lighting of several thousands of candles, Salcedo drew ordinary citizens into an act of willful remembrance commemorating a recent politically motivated atrocity. The earlier anti-memorial

\textsuperscript{3} Bennett, “Dis/Identification: Art, Affect, and the "Bad Death": Strategies for Communicating the Sense of Memory of Loss,” 346.

\textsuperscript{4} Cole, “At the Site of State Violence: Doris Salcedo’s and Julieta Hanono’s Memorial Aesthetics,” 55.
work of artists Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz also challenged inert memory, staging actions and inviting participation with works that aimed to elicit responses and further questions. Their work Harburg Monument Against Fascism (1986) disappeared into the ground at a rate determined by the spread of signatures, comments and graffiti covering its exposed surfaces. Horst Hoheisel’s unconventional views regarding anti-materiality and his belief that memorials exist in the mind of the beholder rather than being contained in the physical manifestation, strengthened the case for ephemeral commemoration.\(^5\)

James Young’s provocative statement in Chapter Three, that ‘only an unfinished memorial process can guarantee the life of the memory. Better a thousand years of Holocaust memorial competition than any single “final solution” to Germany’s memorial problem’ perfectly encapsulates this position.\(^6\)

One of the conundrums arising from this paper is the frequent references found in various sources to ‘representing absence’, which begs the question: can absence be represented? While several artists in this paper, including myself, use a variety of materials to express absence and loss, other strategies have been deployed to similarly express, materialise or experience notions of loss, mourning or trauma. In Chapter Four, I argued for the recognition of names as a form of identity or in advocating for the dead or missing, and establishing binding links. I regard this as a form of filling in the void left by absence.

Similarly, the immersive process of making art could be viewed as a means for engaging with feelings of loss, absence, and trauma - rather than actually representing these concepts.

The potential to engage with and convey the affect of absence, trauma and grief through artistic means – as discussed throughout this thesis – can be realised through the process of handling and making as well as through materiality. I contend that embodied processes, conceptually and/or physically, often play an integral role for the artist engaging with alternative forms of memorialising, and I

\(^6\) Young, “Horst Hoheisel’s Counter-Memory of the Holocaust: The End of the Monument”.

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have endeavoured to demonstrate this. Embodied processes have been essential to my practice, including the artworks for this PhD – right from literal acts such as taking graphite rubbings from a Holocaust memorial, to the importance of touch and handling; the laying out of thousands of pebbles, sewing with strands of hair; or in the material, alchemical transformation that occurs in the metal foundry. The embedding of ritual in making may assist and enable the artist to realise their vision and promote a sense of comfort or solace that the artwork may then communicate to an audience. While Doris Salcedo has spoken of internalising the grief of others – of becoming a kind of mediator or secondary witness, transferring this grief into her work - my experience has been more directly related to inherited (or postmemory) familial trauma. Similarly to Salcedo - but unlike Temin - I have chosen to utilise intimate objects to express grief and to ‘connect’ with lost family members and community. Some rituals, such as laying a stone on a person’s grave as an indication of your presence, is one example of a ritual of remembrance and connection. Author Ellen Handler Spitz links this to the leaving of stones and notes on the ancient graves of Rabbis, the Wailing Wall and other ceremonies with extensive histories.8

Performatively, the making of work employing these rituals and others referred to in this paper, such as lighting candles, can evoke bodily memories and create a contemplative space for the artist for the duration of the construction or performance. In the making of my own works, including Coloured Threads, Hand in Hand, and Marking Time, the intimacy of handling each stone can recall familial connections. It also recalls the intimacy of holding the textile referent, bringing it into contact with skin. Aspects of setting out the stones again references the concept of bodily ‘habits’ as described by Paul Connerton, where he refers to ‘a knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body, and in the cultivation of habit it is in our body which ‘understands’”9.

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9 Connerton, How Societies Remember.
In the course of this project, I have become aware of the personal transformation that I have experienced – and continue to express. I have explored a range of materialities, drawn on theory, and critically engaged with a range of artists dealing with similar subject matter. My aim – and my challenge – has been to communicate the complex issues regarding alternative forms of commemoration, together with an experience of solace, to a wider audience through my art. I have argued for the place of the smaller, more intimate gesture within memorial culture, utilising familial objects to speak of loss. During the course of this project my creative work has undergone its own transformation both materially – with the introduction of metal in the bronze works *Shifting Sands* (2014) and the more recent *Unspoken* (2016) – to theoretically with *Unknitting/Rewind* (2016).10 In this work, the process of physically and emotionally ‘unravelling’ a textile object made by my mother, resulted in *Unknitting/Rewind* becoming a work to address the future, rather than only paying homage to the past.

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10 *Unspoken* is a work in progress where the inside of my mouth is cast in bronze. While this process solidifies or materialises my ‘scream’, it concurrently typifies and represents the silence so familiar to the victim of trauma or the carrier of postmemory, such as myself.

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Anonymous diary entry in response to *Hair Rabbits* in the show *Doing Time*, Verge Gallery, Sydney


Murray, Martin J. "Collective Memory in Place: The Voortrekker Monument and the Hector Pieterson Memorial." Chap. 4 In *Commemorating and Forgetting*: 176


*Time and History in Deleuze and Serres*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012. PDF.


Appendix A:


"Textiles are produced by situated and active social beings. As products of our material culture, textiles reflect cultural identity, social values, group organization, social status, gender relations, and artistic creativity."¹

This paper is a development of my interest in dowry linen, both for its connections to my family history and for its significance to my current visual arts practice. It is informed by several traditions of dowry textiles and needlework. It involves an examination of household rituals within the broader realm of material culture. This paper is also motivated by the desire to examine the implications – particularly the emotional implications – of household rituals, how they relate to their European origins and the significance of familial relationships to memory, ritual and identity. I am particularly interested in what it means when these objects are transformed by the passage of time, and shifts in place and context, as in my case. Furthermore, this paper will address the implications of transforming an essentially private custom/tradition into the public domain via artistic interpretation.

This investigation into the ability of familial objects to convey emotional resonances is motivated by the personal experience of being a first generation Australian raised by Jewish Hungarian parents born in early twentieth century Europe. In making the decision to leave their European homeland as Holocaust survivors and compelled to choose between significant items to take with them, my mother’s dowry linen accompanied my family on their migration to Australia. This raises questions for me regarding the role these objects played in my mother’s new life: did they enact a symbolic attachment to her family and homeland? Did they affirm her identity within her new surroundings? As a first generation Australian how did this affect my perception of my parents’ ability to

¹ Effstratia Antoniou Katahan, "Stories of an Immigrant Greek Woman: My Mother's Dowry Textiles" (University of Alberta (Canada), 1997), 1.
cope in a foreign environment? And what constitutes my own attachment to my mother’s linen?

It is not my intention with this paper to give a detailed history or social analysis of the multifarious practices and rituals involving dowry. In applying and melding elements of social history, trauma studies and autobiography, my objective is to contextualise this research within the framework of my own creative practice. As a practicing visual artist my work has increasingly explored the complex relationship between art and trauma, examining the universal notions of memory and collective grief from a personal perspective. My aim here is to gain an understanding of the role of dowry textiles and an insight into some of the societal expectations, practices and meanings ascribed to dowry linen in Europe historically and up to the time when my mother was a young woman in the 1930s. Equipped with this information, my intent is to then establish the emotional significance this collection of textiles had for my mother, particularly within the context of diasporic homemaking, and how this connects with me emotionally, familially and translates artistically.

My mother died twenty-eight years ago and I now possess a sizable quantity of her dowry linen. My questions about this linen and research relating to it are constrained by several gaps in knowledge. With the passing of more than a quarter of a century as well as lost opportunities to glean anecdotal background information, some historical and personal knowledge inevitably remains unknown, either through death, neglect or the inability to articulate traumatic memories. As Holocaust survivors my parents, like many victims of significant cultural trauma were, to some degree silenced by their traumatic history and experiences. Migrating across the world to a foreign country where they did not even speak the language would, I imagine, further compound their feelings of “otherness”. This pattern is consistent with much of the research and literature in the field by various trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Marianne Hirsch, Brett Ashley Kaplan and Anne Whitehead to name but a few.2345 The passing on

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of these often unarticulated emotions to subsequent generations is commonly referred to as postmemory or described as second generational trauma. Elsewhere in my paper I discuss the idea that postmemory could be regarded as another familial ritual, whereby sublimated emotions exert tenuous power relations within the family unit. These silences may runs so deep that they censor stories of how family life was conducted, how belongings were acquired and many other aspects of domestic life and the home.

What remains are the stories that are passed down to us and the material evidence left behind. This material evidence may take many forms: family photographs, letters, family recipes, clothes and textiles. In the absence of a human voice these objects may often “speak” in its place. I have chosen to focus on my mother’s dowry linen as it was an integral part of our family life and informed my earliest childhood memories. What these memories, gaps in knowledge and silences reveal in themselves may yield interesting information, supplemented by my research. I have used this information to inform my art practice. My aim is to challenge the viewer, both with the diversity of my materials and in the emotions they convey, to elicit new meanings and to explore how these items connect me to my mother and matrilineage.

I begin with an outline on the history of dowry linen, inheritance patterns and the role of textiles in European society with the aim of contextualising my mother’s own textile endowment. This history will necessarily also encompass gender relations, power structures and issues around the formation of identity and home. I will then address and contrast female cultural traditions contemporaneous to those of my mother, diasporic homemaking practices; then

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6 ‘Postmemory’ is the term coined by theorist Marianne Hirsch and now integrated into trauma discourse to describe the effects of a second generation’s experience of their parents’ trauma.
will detail my artistic response to the often problematic combination of ritual, family and identity.

**History and context**

The creation of textiles, including those intended for dowry, has been practised for millennia, covering all social classes worldwide. Historian Susan Frye notes in her book *Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England* that traditionally women exchanged stories through weaving or embroidering cloth. She observes that from medieval to eighteenth century England, thousands of women created designs and narratives in cloth. She asserts that women’s embroidered work, and to a less obvious extent “the knots and patterns of sewing, weaving, and knitting”, placed these women’s lives within the narratives of ‘fertility and continuity’.

This production of needlework was clearly encouraged by the patriarchy as a means of exerting order and control over women. Frye quotes Spanish humanist and philosopher Juan Luis Vives writing in *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1529). Here Vives declares the practice of needlework to be an “appropriate activity of women” of all classes, being carried out in safe domestic confines, conforming to his supposition of domestic security. Art historian Roszika Parker discerns a paradox between the way embroidery and needlework generally served to indoctrinate femininity and passivity into women whilst covertly offering them a means to negotiate this very femininity by using stitches to create meanings of their own.

Through the centuries the value and meaning attached to the production of women’s needlework extended to ensuring the health and wellbeing of household members and the contribution to the household ‘store’. In many European societies, the production of dowry linen often fell to girls and young

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7 Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 14. See also Chapter 3 in Rozika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch* in which Parker outlines the historical complexities between the Church, women, morality and embroidery in the chapter “Fertility, Chastity and Power”.

8 Ibid., 6.

women who would toil diligently for years to accumulate a household store of items for their trousseau which would, upon marriage, furnish a future home. This household store, in turn, demonstrated social rank and household sufficiency.\textsuperscript{10}

Furthermore, these textiles played a crucial role in the lives of women with regard to marriage, inheritance and property law with further ramifications both economically and socially. A common example of this is to be found in anthropologist Annette Weiner’s study of English property law which clearly favoured the patriline. Men inherited ‘real’ property (land and/or house/s), and women only the use of land until death when it reverted to a male heir. Under this law, textiles and dowry linen along with cupboards, chests and various other household items, regarded as ‘personalty’ or ‘moveables’, formed part of the core property that a woman was entitled to. Daughters only received land if there was no personalty to inherit – and this land was always of significantly less value.\textsuperscript{11} This patriarchal apportioning of ‘real’ property effectively worked towards securing male wealth. Historian Laurel T. Ulrich points out that in such a system women themselves could be seen as movables, “changing their names and presumably their identities as they moved (between) male-headed households”.\textsuperscript{12}

‘Identity’ as a term is employed by Frye to denote “an ever-becoming sense of stable ‘self’ that individual subjects attempted to generate through their relations to space, time and discourse.”\textsuperscript{13} Frye notes that through this expression, even in the most modest or domestic everyday action, identity is aligned with agency. She proposes that it was through verbal and visual texts and objects that early modern woman asserted and explored her identity.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 9, 11.
This understanding of female identity leads me to consider the means by which early modern woman asserted and preserved her identity within a heavily gender-biased system. The personalty or moveables she was entitled to was one of the few things a woman had the power to retain, control and determine the fate of within the confines of marriage and inheritance, and thus assert her identity. Within this context, my mother’s dowry linen could be considered as personalty or moveables – although the beautiful, clearly embroidered initials on each piece affirmed lineage and independent identity as she entered into married life.

My mother’s monogrammed linen invites comparison with Ulrich’s case study of Hannah Barnard’s cupboard. This cupboard, an example of an English Hadley chest dating from 1680s to 1730s, was unusual for the manner in which the (female) owner’s name was emblazoned on the front of the chest. While most Hadley chests were marked with initials or partial names, Hannah Barnard’s cupboard featured her full name in highly decorative bold letters. Whilst serendipitously recalling her grandmother’s name and thus reinforcing familial alliance, it also served to mark the cupboard as being less portable, less exchangeable. Thus it became an inalienable possession, aligning it with female lineage. In her concept of ‘keeping while giving’, Annette Weiner refers to gifts that are inscribed with the giver’s identity in some way. Such an exchange of material objects as gifts carries “symbolic value that verifies relatedness, knowledge, and links between the past and the present”. Quoting Weiner, Ulrich argues for the importance of cultivating and maintaining associations across generations.

Quilts in the American tradition have frequently been discussed as prime examples of domestic material artefacts that are retained by family and commonly passed down in matrilineage. Similarly, dowry textiles can be considered as ‘inalienable wealth’; both dowry linen and quilts are positioned as

16 Ibid., 255.
among the special objects and family mementos which often commemorate important events. While it has been said that quilts “bridge the transition between childhood and adult life”, dowry linen similarly enacts a transition for a young woman preparing to leave her family for married life. The intergenerational exchange of each of these goods ensures that familial links are also passed on.\(^{18}\)

The social role of material objects and the flow of meanings and obligations between maker, giver, custodian and recipient are illustrated in a case study by historian Amanda Vickery. Her subject, Englishwoman Elizabeth Shackleton (1726-81), formed strong and demonstrable attachments to her domestic material possessions. With the aid of rare and detailed surviving accounts, Vickery demonstrates the important role these items played as both personal possessions and as a form of currency in household relationships. She refers to Shackleton imbuing her things with a personal life which began once they were acquired and entered the household. In describing Shackleton’s role in supervising and carefully monitoring what went where, what was to be stored, repaired, repurposed or gifted to staff, Vickery illustrates how housekeeping provided Elizabeth Shackleton with an esteemed role and a gratifying means of comparison with other women.\(^{19}\)

Another more recent example of dowry linen as a social indicator is evidenced in Effstratia Antoniou Katahan’s thesis *Stories of an Immigrant Greek Woman: My Mother’s Dowry Textiles.*\(^{20}\) This study details the cultural rituals of early to mid twentieth century rural Greek women who, from childhood, produced dowry linen and textiles in preparation for family life. A ritual of gift exchange also involved the bride-to-be preparing textiles as gifts for the groom’s family, and the groom’s mother in turn providing her son with textiles for the bride’s family.\(^{21}\) Katahan makes reference to a 1991 study of the women of Kutch, India who spent the

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\(^{20}\) Katahan, "Stories of an Immigrant Greek Woman: My Mother's Dowry Textiles."

majority of their spare time embroidering dowry textiles for their daughters. Young girls actively participated in this culture from an early age, producing, accumulating and distributing dowry to female relatives. Katahan quotes Vickie C. Elson who suggests that these practices “give proof to the girl of her value to her family” and provide her with the wherewithall to live up to future marital expectations.22

Katahan likens the values of this Kutch study to those in rural Greece. The size and quality of a Greek woman’s dowry traditionally demonstrated the bride’s worth while conjointly acting as a vehicle to reflect the reputation and the prestige of the bride’s family.23 Katahan further links the quality of, and dedication to, the production of dowry linen not only to a woman’s standing amid her community and other Greek women but to the calibre of suitor she could potentially attract.24

Perhaps one of the less commonly observed aspects of needlework and dowry preparation historically is that, rather than oppressing women’s identities, in many instances this work helped to forge them. Frye observes that embroidery as a form of “women’s textualities” was deployed by women from 1540-1700 to express themselves and in turn redefine the feminine.25 These “textualities” offered a view of the creators’ identities within the context of intellectual, familial, religious and historical traditions, even as they redefined themselves via those traditions.26 Indeed, as Jane Schneider & Annette Weiner observe in Cloth and Human Experience, the extraordinary range and inherent possibilities of cloth give “an almost limitless potential for communication”.27

In many of the references and case studies referred to above dowry linen was produced by either the family of the intended recipient, by the recipient or a combination of both. The following section of this paper will look specifically at

22 Ibid. 57.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Frye uses the term “women’s textualities” to encompass writing, painting and embroidery in this period 1540-1700.
my mother’s dowry linen – an example of linen produced on commission outside the family. I intend to establish whether the dynamics of identity, intimacy and agency equally apply to commissioned dowry linen, or whether they change according to the place of production. I also wish to consider the emotional implications of my mother’s own linen not only for her but for me as the bearer of her memory.

**My mother’s dowry linen**

“Studying the material object offers ways in which to perceive connections between ourselves and the people of the past, as well as to access the contexts that produced the object, contexts that the object continues to recall”

I have very little information on the background to my own family’s dowry linen - including its production, the value placed upon it by my mother, her mother and her grandmother or other household members. Where other writers on cultural processes and rituals draw on personal accounts and documented evidence, I am primarily working with large gaps in knowledge and background history. Very little appears to have been written on Hungarian marriage customs, and even less on ones involving Jewish marriages. I do know that my mother and her sisters all received dowry linen and that it was not produced by any family member or household staff. I have anecdotal information from my stepmother to indicate that the procurement and production of dowry linen would be arranged by her mother upon a young girl reaching the age of approximately 14 years. The women of the family (mothers and perhaps aunts and grandmothers) would discuss details such as projected household needs, quantities, fabrics, colours, and styles and sizes of monograms and initials. The work would then be consigned to an outside source to complete.

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29 The book *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to Long-Term Development (1300-1900)* by Sabean et al.; "Seasonality of Marriages in Hungary from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century." in *Journal of Family History* and others while referencing Hungarian marriage customs and practices were of little relevance to this paper.
30 My step-mother, Eva Laszlo, is the same age and from the same Hungarian social class as my mother.
Choices made in the production of the linen such as colour and quality of fabric further distinguish a family’s dowry linen. In the absence of other information, I can compare my step-mother’s linen, made entirely of pink cotton – ordered from Switzerland – with my mother’s which is mostly cream, with a few pale yellow pieces. The distinctive monograms on my mother’s dowry linen constitute the clearest and most personal indication of her ownership of these objects, and her identity. These monograms, all featuring my mother’s family name, suggest a naming ritual linking her family of origin to her future married life in much the same way as the lettering on Hannah Barnard’s cupboard, discussed earlier. This is also analogous to what Susan Frye describes as the memorialisation of a transition in life. Discussing a 1557 painting, Alice Barnham and her Sons Martin and Steven (artist unknown), Frye comments on the appearance of a first-person text in the painting denoting the subject’s changed status to wife and mother. This inscription reads: “I was borne the 30 September / On a Sunday 1523. Tornid / fro that I was unto that / ye se A. Dni 1557.” Frye paraphrases the latter part as: “Turned from what I was into what you see in this picture in 1557” which emphasises personal change, particularly in the first person use of “I”. Frye suggests that the painting is directed to the subject’s own family in the desire to memorialise the transition and preserve and recall her former state. I see my mother’s monogrammed dowry linen as performing the same function.

My mother’s monograms not only mark her linen as inalienable possessions, but also serve to strengthen family ties. As Ulrich notes, while it was not strictly necessary to mark one’s objects, the marking of them, like the naming of

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31 According to my step-mother, her mother and aunt selected a pink cotton for her dowry linen, which was ordered from Switzerland. The seamstress who completed the items was a friend (or distant relative) of the family.


33 As with Hannah Barnard’s cupboard, marked possessions regarded as ‘inalienable’ are those which may still come to be given away or sold but retain a link to the giver or original owner.
children secured connections. It also strengthened the chances of this inalienable wealth staying within the family to be passed down in matrilineage.\(^{34}\)

My mother, born Eva Weiss, was the youngest of four children in an upper-middleclass Hungarian Jewish family living in urban Budapest. Her monogram “WE” (Weiss Eva) adorns almost every piece of her dowry linen in the form of either separate or intertwined initials, decorated or undecorated, in open work or other more conventional forms of embroidery. My family research unexpectedly located several variations in the spelling of her family name, including Weis and Weisz. I have adopted the spelling ‘Weiss’ - as it appears on my birth certificate - for my creative work and for this paper.

I am intrigued and simultaneously frustrated by the gaps of knowledge within my own family history. I regard my mother’s dowry linen as the primary material evidence of her European life and as a link to family members I never knew. Theorist Marianne Hirsch is one person who has done significant work in this area. Describing the materiality of charred photographic images from an exhibition, she argues that they exceed their representational attributes in favour of testimonial and social value. She comments on their capacity to become documents of everyday life, “bearing witness to acts of embodied communal exchange in which they played a significant material role”. They also can allude

to the qualities of familial and communal lives.\textsuperscript{35} Similarly, I am approaching my mother’s dowry linen as testimonial objects for my work.

I am concurrently mindful of the pitfalls in making assumptions based on my own emotional attachment to my mother’s dowry linen. I am aware of the possibility that my mother may not have shared the values I have attached to them. This was made clear to me in a conversation with my stepmother. Where I expected her to be attached to her dowry linen as a precious link to her mother and former family life, she claimed to place no value on it at all. In fact she never used this linen in her transnational homes - instead keeping it neatly folded away in a cupboard.\textsuperscript{36} A traumatic past, particularly one such as my step-mother endured, involving imprisonment, catastrophic loss of family and possessions, displacement and migration, manifests in unforeseen ways. By contrast, my mother used all her dowry linen. I can attest to this as I have strong and emotionally resonant memories of household rituals involving this linen enacted between the three generations of women in my childhood home.

The gaps in my family history such as the variations in the spelling of my mother’s maiden name, present potentially rich artistic possibilities. They offer an opportunity to express absence, mortality and longing – as well as the temporal peculiarities of memory – through creative practice, and to question and challenge both the artist and the viewer. Additionally, I venture to propose that the performative aspects of an artistic practice (such as attention to detail and repetitive actions) are a sympathetic counterpoint to the embodied rituals in the making and use of dowry linen. Sociologist Paul Connerton alludes to such practices with his references to conveying and sustaining recollected knowledge and images from the past by ritual-like performances.\textsuperscript{37} He argues that commemorative ceremonies “prove to be commemorative only in so far as they

\textsuperscript{35} Hirsch, The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust, 240.
\textsuperscript{36} The term ‘transnational home/s’ is used in this paper to denote the migration and resettlement across national borders of migrants - particularly the dispossessed and displaced as described by Blunt & Dowling in their book “Home” (see footnote 35).
are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms”.38

In How Societies Remember Connerton links these performative aspects with habit, describing an embodied process in which our hands and body gain a kind of knowledge and a remembering. He uses the example of a typist who, through practise, acquires a conditioned reflex, coming to know where each key on the typewriter is in the same way that he or she knows where one of their limbs are.39 Creatively, within this context, the line between ritual and habit can blur; for example, in the making of an artwork repeated actions may become meditative, or recall other cultural or religious practices for the artist/maker. In this way the process may become more closely aligned to ritual rather than mere habit.

Indeed, the embodied attachment one may feel for objects reappears in Katahan’s description of the bond some rural Greek women had with the dowry textiles they produced, citing the case of one woman who felt that her professionally embroidered wedding chemise was not really ‘hers’.40 She kept it wrapped separately to avoid it touching the chemises she had embroidered herself that were packed in the same trunk.41 While my mother may not have physically invested the same time and labour in the production of her own dowry linen, I suspect that she still formed a significant attachment with its links to family, home and memory.

Material objects with close connections to the past or to former homes also possess potential to be emotional triggers. Hirsch refers to objects as triggers for own emotional projections, drawing on Aleida Assman who writes of the ‘return journey’ or the reunification with something left behind as having the effect of a reconnection of severed parts (as in the classical Greek legal concept

38 Ibid. 5.
39 Connerton, How Societies Remember, 94-5.
40 Katahan cites this case via L. Welters 1988.
of the *symbolon*).\(^{42}\) If this happens, the object may “release latent, repressed, or dissociated memories – memories that, metaphorically speaking, remained behind, concealed within the object. Objects and places, therefore, Assmann argues, can function as triggers of remembrance that connect us, bodily and thus also emotionally, with the object world we inhabit.”\(^ {43}\)

**From dowry to homemaking**

As one of three sisters each exploring their different perspectives of growing up with immigrant parents, psychotherapist Binnie Klein challenges the commonly accepted concept of home as a place. She instead considers the sense of safety often ascribed to a place as pertaining to “a collection of objects, feelings, bodies”. She describes certain objects as being catalysts or memory triggers to reassuring times past, both physically recalling loved ones and to memories of the past. In this way, she suggests that “home” becomes a “floating anchor” rather than place.\(^ {44}\)

The notion of objects as emotional triggers interests me in considering the emotional links of dowry linen to family, home and tradition, particularly with regard to my mother’s emigration. The choice to include her bulky dowry linen in the allowable luggage when leaving her homeland, is evidence of the personal value my mother ascribed to these items. I also believe that this linen would have been a means of naturalising a new and at times bewildering environment by bringing the familiar from her “old” world into the “new”. Referring to the significance of diasporic objects as emotional signifiers in Italian migration, Ilaria Vanni uses the term ‘home’ and its opposite ‘unhomely’ to denote the emplacement and enactment of multiple geographies. She uses ‘unhomely’ as a translation from the Italian ‘spaesati’ which, while literally translating as ‘without a village’ or ‘without a country’, also alludes to the loss of familiar things and

\(^{42}\) The *symbolon*, a symbolic object was broken in half on the drawing up of a legal contract. Each party was given one half and on bringing the two halves together again at a later date, the contract could be ratified.


surroundings, “being or feeling lost, having lost one’s bearings, being displaced, being confused, being out of place”.  

Vanni’s reflections on the Italian diaspora and the importance of personal objects can be applied to the broader migrant experience and the relevance of objects such as dowry linen. Relevant too are Vanni’s references to anthropologist and historian Ernesto De Martino who theorised that the loss of familiar things, such as practices, words, habits led to a loss of the “common lifeworld”. The symbolic attachments to this ‘common lifeworld’ after leaving a homeland can be materialised through the diasporic practices of homemaking. Geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling see homemaking practices as a means to manifest material and imagined transnational geographies of home on a domestic scale. They propose that transnational homes can be viewed as performative spaces in that both personal and cultural connections to previous or imagined homes can be embodied, enacted and reimagined within a new space. As an example of this need to feel ‘at home’ Blunt and Dowling refer to Moroccan women bringing those objects which represented ‘home’ to them into their ‘other home’ in Italy. Through these objects or commodities the women affirm their Muslim and Moroccan identities contextually alongside ones which display what they have become.

For the second generation, these transcultural objects can provide a link to another more mysterious home. As Katahan comments, her mother’s dowry linen became the means by which she was transported to another time and place which she [Katahan] would otherwise be denied the opportunity to know or experience directly. She remarks on the ability of the textiles, when considered alongside her mother’s stories, to assist her in experiencing her mother as a youth and young adult. While I did not have the opportunity to experience such stories, the linen represents a haptic link to early family life resonant with

48 Blunt, Home, 199-205.
feelings of security and warmth. I have many early childhood memories of drifting to sleep with the raised stitching from a monogram under the skin of my fingers.

Hand in Hand

Katahan acknowledges that, similarly to me, being a first generation child of European parentage, the physical distance between the old country and new can be used as an analogy to measure the cultural differences between herself and her mother. She comments on the difficulty of being a product of two cultural worlds and considers that her understanding of her mother’s dowry linen has served as a cultural bridge between these worlds.\(^{50}\)

As a practicing artist, I am particularly aware of the ability of art to offer a means of consolation and emotional resolution. To this end, I have regarded my mother’s dowry linen as a cultural bridge to the past. I am also mindful of the difficult emotions associated with these two cultural worlds. Just as my step-mother kept her dowry linen close to her but packed away untouched, so did my mother’s dowry linen remain with me, untouched for twenty-five years.\(^{51}\)

Earlier research which had led me into the discourse on postmemory redirected my focus to my family history and moved me to address my feelings of loss through a re-examination of family material in my possession. The fact that my mother lived through the trauma of the Holocaust during World War II adds deeper meaning to her linen for me. Had she simply left Hungary of her own volition to seek a new life in Australia, her dowry textiles would undoubtedly still carry resonances her past European life and arouse my interest. But the overlay of a traumatic past involving persecution, personal hardship and loss of close family members adds a layer of meaning and vulnerability not easily articulated. For me, this difficult history is carried in my mother’s dowry linen.

\(^{50}\) Katahan, “Stories of an Immigrant Greek Woman: My Mother’s Dowry Textiles,” 33.

\(^{51}\) Higgs & Radosh quote Schneider and Weiner in Cloth and Human Experience who refer to this as “hoarding and storage” in the context of ‘treasure to be saved’ rather than for capital or for display’. Higgs and Radosh, “Quilts: Moral Economics and Matrilineages,” 65.
The familiarity of, and memories triggered by, these dowry textiles parallel what Hirsch has identified as an object’s capacity to convey a ‘souvenir’ relationship to the past. Hirsch writes: “souvenirs authenticate the past; they trigger memories and connect them indexically to a particular place and time. They can also help to recall shared experiences…” 52 The semiotic concept of the index provided the ideal philosophical framework from which to consider these materials. 53 Indexically, my mother’s linen could be seen as both a trace and material proof of her former existence. This can be witnessed both in her monogram, also a marker of her identity, and in the stains remaining from years of usage and storage and even in the crease marks where this linen had been ironed and folded. Traces such as these, while acting as reminders, also offer the capacity to existentially to another person in another time.

Elsewhere, Hirsch refers to a passage in Jewish author Lily Brett’s book Too Many Men where the semi-autobiographical daughter character brings her grandmother’s tea service back to her home in New York promising to reconnect “some of the disparate parts of her life, to find continuity with a severed past – not to bring it into the present”. 54 In a similar vein, my predominant response to my family’s dowry linen, photographs and other objects was the need to honour and protect precious memories and connect to my mother’s European past. As a contemporary artist, I desire to express often difficult and emotive themes in a non-didactic, abstract manner. This particularly applies to much of my current work which refers to my family’s Holocaust experience. Highly mediated art, or didactic, representational work, as art theorist Janet Wolff has cautioned, performs the ‘making sense’ for the viewer in lieu of actively engaging them. 55

53 The index is one of the triumvirates of signs, alongside the icon and the symbol, developed by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. While the icon resembles or imitates its object (for example, a portrait or diagram), and the symbol has an independent connection to its denoted object (such as words, names or mnemonics), the index maintains an existential relationship to its object, a ‘having-been-thereness’ of that which is signified (such as the smoke of a fire).
Like many artists, I see my role as one to provoke, challenge and engage the viewer.

The first artwork I created utilising my family linen was *Keepsakes* (2012). This installation consisted of six pairs of wax blocks placed on six timber shelves, each lit from behind. Wax was employed for its resonances of degradability and references to sealing and preserving. The dowry textiles used in *Keepsakes* included two monograms - one from a pillowcase and one from a damask napkin, a fabric button band, and a lacy doily. The monograms were set into the wax and the wax was then carved to enable illumination of the buried embroidered text. The button band – a fabric strip used to secure the openings of pillowcases or doona covers was loosely tied in a knot to resemble an umbilical cord. Lastly, the doily was utilised twice – embedded in a wax block and pressed into the surface of another block leaving a raised imprint. This imprint acted as an indexical void recalling the absent object.

Since 2013 my work has focused increasingly on written forms of inscription and the relevance of names in memorialisation. This entailed further investigation into my mother’s monograms. In my desire to contribute a new voice in working with dowry textiles, I chose to utilise stone as a less predictable material option. Stone appealed for several reasons: it is hard wearing and long lasting; it has a traditional use in memorialisation and most importantly for me is its association
with the Jewish tradition of leaving a stone or pebble on a person’s grave. This ritual of paying respect to the dead and marking a visitor’s presence seemed particularly relevant to my ambitions. This act engages us in a ritual which simultaneously provides a physical means of expressing our emotions as well as our spiritual needs.

Traditional methods such as chiseling and engraving various forms of stone were trialed then discarded after experimentation in favour of individual quartz stones. In transcribing my mother’s monogram from a pillowcase using one quartz stones for each open-work stitch, the monogram became almost exactly four times the size of the original textile. Despite this change in scale and materiality, the work maintained a connection to the original by retaining a delicate filigree-like quality. A stop-motion video was also created capturing the natural light from a window of my studio raking across the surface of the work. This video suggested temporality in both the material impermanence of the work as well as in the passing of time.

Sylvia Griffin. Monogram in stone, 2013
The rationale behind the next piece, *Hand in Hand*, was to create a major work as part of a conference with the theme ‘Space, Place and Country’.\(^{56}\) In referencing my mother’s dowry, I sought to pay homage to my parents, their former world and the dislocation they experienced. I was keen to examine the concept of transnational homemaking and the role that familiar objects play in acclimatising to a new environment. I also wanted to explore through visual means what happens when a ritual within the home is transported to foreign environs.

The inspiration for the work was a small pillowcase measuring approximately 50 x 62cms. The cotton fabric, originally pale yellow in colour, bears my mother’s maiden name initials - WE for Weiss Eva (or Eva Weiss) – in open work embroidery.

![Original pillowcase from Eva Weiss](image)

It was installed in the gallery over several days onto a timber support draped with an off-white damask tablecloth from my mother’s dowry over the top of one of my own bed sheets. These layers carried the vestiges of everyday life such as coffee, wax and blood stains. I embraced these indexical markers of

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\(^{56}\) This exhibition was part of the Graduate School Conference ‘Critical Thinking: Research + Art + Culture’ 11-27 September 2013 at Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney University.
domesticity as an integral part of the work. Translating and transferring the embroidered pattern onto the draped support required a process which I likened to a careful “reading” of the textile. Thus, the entire installation period was spent with folded pillowcase in hand, counting each stitch row by row, gathering the required number of stones and placing them in a corresponding grid-like pattern. The long and painstaking process often brought to mind the process of needlework and was so inherently performative that I filmed several hours of this installation process.

At times contemplative, at other times challenging, the physicality of the process – loss of feeling in the fingertips lasting several days, the challenge of kneeling for hours at a time hunched over the work, and lapses in concentration leading to errors in the “reading” of pattern – paralleled, I imagined, those experienced by the needleworkers of the original pieces. I often found myself needing to relinquish my sense of control as the need for compromises arose, such as running out of a particular sized stone, necessitating adjusting the “reading” of
the textile and thus my expectations. This too was consistent with the original textile’s history: close observation of what initially appeared to be near-perfect symmetry in the embroidery actually revealed several imperfections. Whether these deviations discovered in the original were simply mistakes or shortcuts taken by the embroiderer, I can never be certain, but it did assist me in reconciling the difficulties I experienced in my own piece.

Temporal signs such as the deterioration and heavy staining of the original dowry fabric disappeared in this new incarnation, revealing only the marks on the damask support. The title of the work, *Hand in Hand*, intimates female labour and embodied experience in the work process, as well as contiguity of past and present. The ritualistic handling of each stone recalls and connects handwork, domesticity and mourning rituals. The concentration and time necessitated in realising *Hand in Hand*, as perhaps with dowry embroidery, is a simultaneously contemplative and cathartic experience allowing me to share a story in a similar manner to that shared by my mother’s dowry linen.
In reinterpreting the form and function of the original dowry textile as a work of art several major other differences can be observed. Firstly, the scale and materials used challenge the delicacy of the embroidered cotton, translating it into a weighty, grounded object. This carries a further contradiction with the realisation that each stone sits unattached on the base, vulnerable and unstable. Furthermore, if embroidered stitches can be considered miniature in form, as I perceive they can be, then Hirsch’s theory linking miniaturisation to confinement and power should also be noted. Susan Stewart is cited for her view that the miniature is a “metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject” while the gigantic is a metaphor for “the abstract authority of the state and the collective, public life” in her work On Longing.\(^5\) Hand in Hand presents a challenge to this proposition by bringing the personal and the feminine into the public arena whilst maintaining an intimate connection to the delicate original.

**Conclusion**

The artwork Hand in Hand provided me with a means of linking together my various areas of research inspired by my mother’s dowry linen. My intention was to represent loss and absence whilst contextualising the meaning I had ascribed to this linen within the discourses of dowry rituals, matrilineage and homemaking. I also aspired to bring contemporary relevance to an ancient custom which I consider maintains emotional resonance and relevance.

Laurel T. Ulrich, Susan Frye, Higgs & Radosh and Annette Weiner introduced me to the intricacies of practices around material culture, family and inheritance. While Blunt & Dowling, Bordo, Klein & Silverman provided insight into notions of home and displacement, others such as Effstratia A. Katahan and Ilaria Vanni demonstrated contemporary examples through illuminating case studies. The common strand evident in much of this literature was the often tenuous place of women in male dominated societies and the role that textiles and other domestic items played in countering this, often covertly, and usually with lasting results in the form of material evidence to be passed down in matrilineage.

This research has not only informed and assisted my understanding of my own family history, but has also deepened my understanding of the broader implications of dowry, homemaking and a particularly female tradition. Although underpinned by this perspective, the physical process of installing *Hand in Hand* brought new and unexpected emotional aspects to the fore. For example, at times physical discomfort and problems with materials generated feelings of anger and resentment; while the gesture of laying out the stones surprised me with the ritualistic feel and tenderness inherent in the action. Ulrich’s references to the utilisation of material goods to “…create a world of meanings and ultimately transmit (her) history” resonated strongly for me, while remarks on material goods being “crucial props in unobserved, intimate rituals” brought to mind the ancient and comforting Jewish custom of laying a stone on a grave.\(^2\)

On embarking on this project my intention was to pay homage to my mother, our shared Jewish history, her survival and the trauma endured during the war and subsequent relocation in difficult circumstances. My mother’s dowry linen not only provided me with a haptic link to her European life that I felt an intimate outsider to, but it came to represent our common lineage. In the practice of visual art I found a strong and poignant means of expressing my own sorrow and loss for not only my family history but for the relationship I had with my mother. To me this is a powerful and important role that art can play - by referencing a custom and rendering it in physically and materially diverse ways, the viewer is invited to reflect on the nature of ritualistic processes, while the artist is challenged to create, communicate and respond to the interconnected aspects of these rituals and offer a fresh means of engaging emotionally. The combination of all these factors has enriched my artistic practice, assisting me in expressing the embodied processes inherent in needlework and the rituals of homemaking in an artistic mode.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix B:
Catalogue of Works completed during candidature


Sylvia Griffin, 2015.  
*Coloured Threads (boxed)*, Perspex, duraclear photograph.  
Dimensions:  
Verge Gallery, Sydney.  
Photo: Marty Lochmann  
Photography.

Sylvia Griffin, 2014.  
*Naming Absence*, paper, graphite, timber, video projection.  
Dimensions: 46 cm wide, length variable.  
Dominik Mersch Gallery, Sydney.  
Photo: Sylvia Griffin.
Sylvia Griffin, 2015. 

Sylvia Griffin, 2015. 
Sylvia Griffin, 2016.
No, No, No, Video on iPad mini.
Dominik Mersch Gallery,
Sydney.
Photo: Sylvia Griffin.

Sylvia Griffin, 2016.
Absent Presence, projection
Dimensions: Variable.
AirSpace Projects, Sydney.

Sylvia Griffin, 2016.
*Soot* (detail), marble, candle soot.
Dimensions: overall variable, each tile 10 x 10 x 2cm.
Photo: Sylvia Griffin.

Sylvia Griffin, 2016.
*Unknitting/Rewind*, video still.
Cinematographer: Kuba Dorabialski.
Appendix C:
Catalogue of Works in examination exhibition


Sylvia Griffin, 2016. 
*Dust*, Digital photograph on rag paper, glass, timber frame. 
Dimensions: 103 x 103cm. 
Photo: Ian Hobbs.

Sylvia Griffin, 2016. 
Crack (Absent Presence), 
Digital photograph, dibond. 
Dimensions: 53 x 80cm. 
Photo: Ian Hobbs.

Video of this exhibition: [https://vimeo.com/195708149](https://vimeo.com/195708149)