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MEDIATING MEMORY

Minimalist Aesthetics and the Memorialization of Cultural Trauma

Russell Rodrigo
PhD, University of Sydney 2009
This dissertation is my original work, and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. Nor does it contain, to the best of my knowledge and belief, any material published or written by another person, except as acknowledged in the text.

RUSSEL RODRIGO
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract 11
Acknowledgements 13
List of Illustrations 14

## INTRODUCTION: THE FEAR OF FORGETTING
- Context 21
- Importance 22
- Limits 22
- Objective 22
- Structure & Overview 23
- Methodology - Research Through Design: Between Theory and Practice 24

## ONE: PLACING MEMORY
- Introduction 29
- The Social Dimension of Memory 30
- The Consensual Past 36
- Shared Memory 42
- The Problematic Past 48
- Summation: The Place of Memory 56

## TWO: PRODUCING MEMORY
- Introduction 61
- Memory and Mnemonic Practice 62
- Acts of Memory 66
- Memorial Architecture and the Dilemma of Representation 73
- The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C. 85
- Summation: The Production of Memory 98

## THREE: CONSUMING MEMORY
- Introduction 103
- Memorial Designers and the Aesthetics of Minimalism 105
- The Viewing Public & the Spectacle of Memory 146
- Summation: The Consumption of Memory 158

## FOUR: EMBODYING MEMORY
- Introduction 163
- Bodily Performance and Memorial Space 165
- Spatializing Bodily Performance 168
- Bodily Performance and Minimalist Aesthetics in Memorial Space 182
- Summation: The Embodiment of Memory 186

## FIVE: DESIGNING MEMORY
- Introduction 191
- Designing Memory: Towards Understanding 192
- Designing Memory: A Conceptual Approach 218
- Summation: The Design of Memory 240

## CONCLUSION: RETHINKING THE SPATIALIZATION OF MEMORY

Endnotes 252
Bibliography 268
Abstract

Our contemporary physical landscapes are filled with representations of the past – objects, places and events that are intended to evoke memory. Monuments, memorials and interpretive sites are being created at an accelerated pace worldwide, an international phenomenon of memorialization which has developed since the 1980s and is unequalled since the decade after the First World War.

The dissertation seeks to question the basis of the way we, as scholars and designers think, if at all, about how memory is spatialized in the design of memorial spaces and how they can be designed as ongoing, meaningful places of engagement in late modernity.

While the incorporation of minimalist aesthetics and design strategies in public memorial design post-Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial have established a range of new relationships between public and private space, personal and collective memory and abstraction and representation, its understanding by memorial designers is overwhelmingly stylistic. Recent memorial responses to culturally traumatic events are concerned predominantly with the aesthetics of physical and symbolic form - the creation of an object in space rather than a concern for the transaction between the individual, the community and the space of memory. Designers approach memorial design from a visual perspective, minimalism understood as a formal language rather than its original conceptual basis as an aesthetics of reception and one of corporeal experience.

Minimalist aesthetics stress a concern with the embodied presence of objects, rather than the objects themselves. The dissertation argues that the aesthetics of minimalism have the potential for mediating memory, to establish the grounding for the communicative and experiential aspects required for effective memorial design. Successful memorial spaces, it is argued, are those that are designed from the basis of bodily and sensory engagement with the memorial space and the events that are represented within it, rather than those that are designed with a focus on the material artefact of memory. The aesthetics of minimalism are key to the potential for memorial spaces to spatialize bodily performance. Minimalism, if understood and employed as an art practice that is more corporeal than visual, has the potential to engage the memorial participant on a sensory, embodied level, rather than simply a visual one. The memorial participant then becomes part of an embodied experience of memory, mediated by architectural form and space.

Through the abstract qualities of the aesthetics of minimalism the memorial participant is invited to subjectize the memorial design, to introduce their own autonomy or identity. Minimalism, as a bodily art practice, has the potential to provoke the self into reflexivity. The ambiguity of minimalist aesthetics calls for self-awareness and performance, transforming the memorial participant from spectator into performer. Within the abstraction of minimalism, it is argued however, that some form of figuration is required in order for an empathic link to be evoked in the memorial participant, for projection and identification to take place.

Through an understanding of the corporeal basis of minimalism, its focus on the sensual and the phenomenal level, memorial design becomes focussed on the exchange between participant and space rather than the making of the material object. Empathic links achieved through figuration are extended through the additive processes of bodily performance in memorial space, processes that spatialize and sustain memory.

Effective memorial design, it is argued, needs to be understood as a balance between abstraction and figuration, between ambiguity and specificity, an ongoing process, constructed and re-constructed through the engagement and participation of the memorial participant in acts of remembrance.
Acknowledgements

To acknowledge is in some way to memorialize. This dissertation represents over fifteen years of thinking and exploring ideas relating to the spatialization of memory in both design and theory. Over that time, many individuals have had a profound influence in the way that I have developed and applied my thinking.

In terms of design, I am grateful to those who have enriched my understanding throughout my architectural studies. Tone Wheeler opened my eyes to the world of architecture and design, his enthusiasm and passion for teaching has profoundly influenced the way I approach and teach design. Chris Matthews grounded my understanding of design in the fundamentals of people and place and I am thankful for his mentorship. Annabel Lahz instilled in me the importance of the architectural idea and the possibilities of form and materiality as expressions of design intent. Neil Durbach introduced me to the pursuit of a critical architecture and the ability to see design as play. To all these practitioners I am indebted to their dedication and passion in the teaching and practice of architecture and design.

In terms of theory, I am grateful to those who have encouraged my interest in the discourse of architecture. Dr Adrian Snodgrass in particular opened the world of philosophy and architectural theory to me, his dedication and enthusiasm instilling an inquiring approach to design and architecture.

At the University of Sydney, I wish to thank my supervisor Dr Glen Hill for his guidance, support and encouragement during the research and presentation of this dissertation. I am particularly grateful for his initial support of my earliest thinking about doctoral research and his insightful feedback, flexibility and responsiveness throughout the development of this dissertation. I am also grateful to Dr Terry Smith, visiting Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney who brought to my attention the work of anthropologist Sherry Ortner and the potential connection in theorizing the spatialization of ritual.

In the production of this document I wish to thank Marietta and Martin Buikema for their graphic design input and Arthur Tsang for his contribution in re-presenting the architectural drawings.

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Accessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig 2: Aschrott-Brunnen Fountain, Kassel</td>
<td><a href="http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/hoheisel/images/fountaincompleteda.jpg">http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/hoheisel/images/fountaincompleteda.jpg</a></td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 4: Bollard markers at site of student death</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehead/6570178373/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehead/6570178373/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 5: Interior view, ANZAC Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeanett/3550262979/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeanett/3550262979/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 6: National Monument to the Irish Famine, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 7: Detail, Austrian Holocaust Memorial, Vienna</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/john-lee/2272089150/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/john-lee/2272089150/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 8: Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, London</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 9: Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, London</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 15: Detail, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/4499534@N00/417087635/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/4499534@N00/417087635/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 16: Detail, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/4499534@N00/417087635/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/4499534@N00/417087635/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 17: View with Hart figures, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/4499534@N00/219947327/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/4499534@N00/219947327/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 18: Tribute in Light, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/animdure/427452779/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/animdure/427452779/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>29 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 21: Astronauts Memorial, Cape Canaveral</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/elmojo/253427525/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/elmojo/253427525/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 22: Astronauts Memorial, Cape Canaveral</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/moonbo/256872043/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/moonbo/256872043/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 23: Detail, Astronauts Memorial, Cape Canaveral</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/hamilianactor/553890840/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/hamilianactor/553890840/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 24: Detail, Oklahoma City National Memorial, Oklahoma City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/relain/281992984/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/relain/281992984/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 25: Oklahoma City National Memorial, Oklahoma City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/aepe/2313335762/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/aepe/2313335762/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 26: Memory fence, Oklahoma City National Memorial, Oklahoma City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/jessicaberlin/611291196/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/jessicaberlin/611291196/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 27: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 28: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 29: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/jontin/2659840774/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/jontin/2659840774/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 30: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/speakingoffaith/326063932/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/speakingoffaith/326063932/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 31: World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.national911memorial.org/site/PhotoAlbumUser?view=">http://www.national911memorial.org/site/PhotoAlbumUser?view=</a></td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
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<td>Source</td>
<td>Accessed</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 32 Garden of Lights, World Trade Center Site Memorial competition finalist, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fino_mod.html">http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fino_mod.html</a></td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 33 Dual Memory, World Trade Center Site Memorial competition finalist, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fm4_mod.html">http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fm4_mod.html</a></td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 34 Passages of Light: Memorial Cloud, World Trade Center Site Memorial competition finalist, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fm2_mod.html">http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fm2_mod.html</a></td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 35 View from North Tower bedrock, World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://z.about.com/d/architecture/h/o/P/h/memorialwtc_mem_i">http://z.about.com/d/architecture/h/o/P/h/memorialwtc_mem_i</a> Jg.jpg</td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 36 Entry, World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://z.about.com/d/architecture/h/o/K/h/memorialmem_no_trees.jpg">http://z.about.com/d/architecture/h/o/K/h/memorialmem_no_trees.jpg</a></td>
<td>5 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 37 National Police Memorial, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 38 Detail, National Police Memorial, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 39 Detail, Salem Tercentenary Memorial, Salem</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.co/photos/58812543@N00/1640546845/sizes/s/">http://www.flickr.co/photos/58812543@N00/1640546845/sizes/s/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 40 Detail, Civil Rights Memorial, Montgomery</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.co/photos/pullen/212740113/sizes/o/">http://www.flickr.co/photos/pullen/212740113/sizes/o/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 41 NSW Volunteers Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 42 Detail, Edge of the Trees, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 43 Australian War Memorial London</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.co/photos/22955235@N00/1838428144/sizes/o/">http://www.flickr.co/photos/22955235@N00/1838428144/sizes/o/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 44 New England Holocaust Memorial, Boston</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.co/photos/nanneorla/2840387963/sizes/l/">http://www.flickr.co/photos/nanneorla/2840387963/sizes/l/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 45 Plan, Gay and Lesbian Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 46 Elevation, Gay and Lesbian Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 47 Detail, Gay and Lesbian Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 48 Plan, Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial Proposal, Wollongong</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 49 Elevation, Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial Proposal, Wollongong</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 50 Perspective view, Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial Proposal, Wollongong</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.co/photos/22955235@N00/1838428144/sizes/s/">http://www.flickr.co/photos/22955235@N00/1838428144/sizes/s/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 51 Plan, NSW Police Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 52 Elevation, NSW Police Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 53 Detail, NSW Police Memorial, Sydney</td>
<td>Fairfax Photos, Photographer: Robert Pearce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 54 Plan, World Trade Center Site Memorial Proposal, New York City</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 55 Section, World Trade Center Site Memorial Proposal, New York City</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 56 Perspective view, World Trade Center Site Memorial Proposal, New York City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flickr.co/photos/22955235@N00/1838428144/sizes/s/">http://www.flickr.co/photos/22955235@N00/1838428144/sizes/s/</a></td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 57 Plan, National Emergency Services Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 58 Elevation, National Emergency Services Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 59 Perspective view, National Emergency Services Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 60 Plan, National Police Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 61 Elevation, National Police Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 62 Perspective view, National Police Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 63 Plan, Cook 's Landing Site National Monument Proposal, Botany Bay</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 64 Elevation, Cook 's Landing Site National Monument Proposal, Botany Bay</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 65 Perspective view, Cook 's Landing Site National Monument Proposal, Botany Bay</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 66 Perspective view, Cook 's Landing Site National Monument Proposal, Botany Bay</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 67 Plan, Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 68 Section, Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 69 Perspective view, Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 70 Perspective view, Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Proposal, Canberra</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION
THE FEAR OF FORGETTING
When you approach the Vietnam Memorial, you see yourself clearly reflected in the polished surface. It involves you, as the war involved all young Americans, those who fought in it and those who fought against it. You enter the memorial following a path that begins at the point of the V that has fallen over to the right, and descends the shallow, right side up V. First you see your feet only. It is not really you. It is just your feet. Then you descend the gentle slope, and the monument ascends above you, and the names of the dead, written not alphabetically, but in the order that they died, mount, piling up in ever higher columns. You are drawn into the monument, into the war, into a rare, personalized, temporal accounting of death. Suddenly, at about the moment you no longer notice the reflection of your own feet, you see your own face in the monument with the name of a dead soldier written across it, one across your forehead, another across your eyes, cheeks, mouth. This is the moment, often remarked, where many of the visitors to the Vietnam Memorial, even those who are not there to search out the name of someone they loved or knew, break down and cry.1

Dean MacCannell
Context

In 1992, as a third year Architecture student writing on the tourist experience of place in third world countries, I reviewed a short essay by Dean MacCannell in his groundbreaking book in the field of leisure studies, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*. The paper discussed MacCannell’s own reaction on experiencing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington for the first time. The essay, from which the above quote is taken, had a profound influence, awakening in me an understanding of the potential for architecture to be experienced physically and emotionally, for the possibility of healing and catharsis through built space.

I first understood the Vietnam Veterans Memorial therefore through theory, as a social and cultural phenomena rather than as an architectural artefact. This interest led to my first competition winning memorial proposal, the Gay and Lesbian Memorial in Darlinghurst, Sydney and a runner-up proposal for the Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial, Wollongong both in 1994.

In subsequent years I continued to explore my interest in memorial architecture through design competition work and the building of memorial spaces, later developing an ongoing interest in understanding the theoretical implications of how memory is spatialized. These early projects are briefly documented as part of this dissertation (refer Chapter 5) and are both a record of a body of work and a personal narrative of a developing understanding of how memorial spaces can be designed as meaningful places of remembrance in late modernity.

As an educator and designer, I am interested therefore in the space between theory and practice, the potential for the architect, the producer of architecture to lead theoretical inquiry.

In tandem with this personal context, the academic context for the dissertation is the current worldwide phenomenon of memorialization which has developed since the 1980s and is unequalled since the decade after the First World War. Contemporary cultural theorists such as Andreas Huyssen have noted the recent phenomena of the emergence of memory as a key concern in Western societies, asserting that our secular culture is in the grip of a fear of forgetting:

> In an era of ethnic cleansings and refugee crises, mass migrations and global mobility for ever more people, the experience of displacement and relocation, migration and diaspora seems no longer the expectation but the rule...Our discontents rather flow from informational and perceptual overload combined with a cultural acceleration neither our psyche nor our senses are that well equipped to handle. The faster we are pushed into a global future that does not inspire confidence, the stronger we feel the desire to slow down, the more we turn to memory for comfort.  

In an age marked by the rapidity of change, upheaval and violence, societies are increasingly faced with the task of how to represent memories of the past, particularly those which are painful or traumatic.

This dissertation is therefore grounded in a personal context of an architecture centred on bodily experience and in a broader academic context of memory and its representation through built space.
Importance

In late modernity, memory seems to surround us. Throughout the world, communities are increasingly concerned with remembering and documenting their pasts. Acts of memory such as the building of memorials are founded in a desire to honour the past and at the same time establish links with the future.

Memorial spaces are sites where memory is condensed, producing convergences and conflicts in their attempts to define the past in terms of the future. They are both a personal and collective experience and are one of the ways in which individuals transform themselves into a community that feels bound together by a common experience and a common historical framework. It is proof that the past is real, and that the past is still present.

For any society, the construction of memorial spaces are major cultural and political undertakings. They are potential sources of cultural healing as well as potential sites of cultural contestation. The research comes at a critical moment in the long history of memorialisation and memorial design in the West. Not since the aftermath of the carnage of the First World War has the question of appropriate memorialisation been so prominent in the Western psyche. Debate about a memorial on the World Trade Center site, for example, began within days of the tragedy. The public and private need to memorialize has never been stronger.

In an age of a ‘memory boom’, of heightened memory production and consumption, there appears to be an inverse relationship between the extent of memorialisation of the past and its reflection and study. Within this context therefore, there exists a limited understanding of how memorial spaces can be designed and experienced as ongoing, meaningful places of engagement in late modernity.

Limits

In this dissertation, contemporary memorial spaces are defined as those officially sanctioned, permanent public spaces built since the 1970s that deal with aspects of cultural trauma. The dissertation does not concern itself with sites of personal trauma such as cemeteries and roadside memorials or temporary forms of public memorialisation.

Objective

The key objective of this dissertation is to examine the potential for the making of meaningful places of remembrance in the context of late modernity, a period dominated by a memory boom in Western culture, a visually dominant culture and an escalating experience of culturally traumatic events.

The dissertation therefore aims to question the way we as both scholars and designers think, if at all, about how memory is spatialized in the design of memorial spaces. Through this examination, the dissertation aims to develop a conceptual approach to the design of memorial spaces that provides the potential for responding to new ways in which the past can be invoked and sustained meaningfully in built form.
Structure & Overview

The dissertation is cross-disciplinary, linking together a number of disparate areas in order to re-conceptualise the way in which memory is spatialised. As such, the dissertation is structured as a narrative with the review of literature embedded in the text.

The basis of the work derives from studies of social memory processes, particularly the work of Maurice Halbwachs and Paul Connerton; studies of the communicative aspects of contemporary memorial design, particularly the work of Jeffrey Karl Ochsner and studies of ritual and ritualization processes, particularly the work of Catherine Bell and Sherry Ortner.

Chapter One, “Placing Memory” examines key questions that underpin the dissertation including the nature of public and private memory and its relationship to collective and national identity and contemporary responses and representations of memory, particularly those relating to problematic pasts.

Chapter Two, “Producing Memory” examines the complex interplay of political, personal, cultural and aesthetic forces involved in the production of memorial objects and the emergence of minimalist design strategies as a means of mediating public and private memory.

Chapter Three, “Consuming Memory” defines the visual nature of memory in late modernity and its implications in terms of the consumers of memory - the designers of memory spaces and the viewing public.

Chapter Four, “Embodying Memory” focuses on the importance of bodily performance in the creation and sustaining of cultural memory and the potential for rethinking the spatialization of memory through an understanding of lived, or embodied experience.

Chapter Five, “Designing Memory” is a personal record of and reflection on memorial design investigations and synthesizes the key themes of the preceding chapters through the process of design inquiry.

Finally, the concluding chapter, “Rethinking the Spatialization of Memory” provides a summation and a rethinking of the spatialization of memory in terms of the aesthetics of minimalism and the potential for bodily performance and engagement in memorial space.

The dissertation is punctuated by a series of case studies which are used to contextualise or reinforce ideas. At the beginning of each chapter, the perspective of design is introduced through the words of a designer, in relation to a key case study that focuses on the themes to be explored in that chapter. Elsewhere in the dissertation, case studies are deliberately inserted into the flow of the argument to reinforce ideas from the perspective of real or imagined design responses.
Methodology - Research Through Design: Between Theory and Practice

In Design Research, Peter Downton argues "design is a way of inquiring, a way of producing knowing and knowledge" i.e., the transmission of knowledge through designed objects constitutes research. Downton argues that design processes use knowledge, while at the same time producing personal knowing and collective knowledge. It is different, not inferior to knowledge produced by the sciences. What makes it different is that it is embodied in the process of designing itself, making it difficult to examine other than through the self reflection of designers:

Research through designing uses the knowing of doing to achieve productive outcomes which in turn indicate the knowing and knowledge used in their production. The initially individual knowledge is propagated through a process of being used by others and then being seen and used anew. Once in the world of things and ideas, a design can be seen as a repository of knowledge and interrogated to reveal the knowledge its designers have both intentionally and unintentionally embodied there.

Downton identifies three basic types of design research:

- Research for design – those activities or projects that inform or support design or the activity of designing.
- Research about design – analysing the nature of design through epistemological or pedagogical inquiry.
- Research through design – where design itself is utilized as the research practice, forming both means & outcomes.

In the discipline of architecture, research through design is the most complex and least attempted form of design research. Theoretical inquiry can be developed from a purely critical perspective, a position of neutral observation and maximum distance. Theoretical inquiry can also be developed from the perspective of the architect, a position of active involvement and minimum distance. The research methodology of this dissertation is grounded in this latter approach, which is situated between theory and practice.

In being situated between theory and practice, the dissertation integrates theoretical and design investigations in both process and product. In terms of process, the theoretical component is developed and used as a framework for testing through the author's own design investigations. Theory is discussed in terms of design, using case studies to introduce and situate ideas. The design component is developed by undertaking design through the framework of the developed theory component. In terms of product, the dissertation is presented as a product of design that emphasises the integration of theory and practice.
the fear of forgetting
PLACING MEMORY
I have designed the new fountain as a mirror image of the old one, sunk beneath the old place in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens so that such things never happen again.

That's why I rebuilt the fountain sculpture as a hollow concrete form after the old plans and for a few weeks displayed it as a resurrected shape at City Hall Square before sinking it, mirror-like, 12 metres deep into the ground water.

Horst Hoheisel
Introduction

In 1984 the city of Kassel invited proposals from artists to revive one of its historical monuments, the Aschrott-Brunnen fountain, destroyed during the Nazi reign.

The original Aschrott-Brunnen fountain was constructed in 1908 in Kassel's City Hall Square as a twelve metre high neo-Gothic pyramid fountain, surrounded by a circular reflecting pool. The fountain was funded by a Jewish entrepreneur from Kassel, Sigmund Aschrott. When the Nazi regime came to power in the 1930s however, the fountain was condemned as the 'Jews fountain' and demolished in 1939, leaving an empty space in the middle of the square. In the 1960s the space was reconstructed as a fountain, without the original pyramid. By this time, however, few of its citizens could recall the origins of the fountain. In 1984, in the context of a national confrontation of the Nazi past in Germany, the 'Society for the Rescue of Historical Monuments' recommended that the fountain and its history be reinstated in some form.

Rather than propose a reconstruction or a preservation of its archaeological remains, the winner of the competition, Horst Hoheisel proposed a 'negative form' response to the reconstruction of the monument. The negative form of the absent fountain is transformed into a phantom form buried in the ground on its original site, a mirror image sunk below the square. Hoheisel proposed to remember an absence by literally giving absence form. For the artist, reconstruction of the fountain was seen as an encouragement to public forgetting, a removal of the burden to always remember.

In Kassel's City Hall Square on the site of the fountain is located a bronze plaque with an image of the fountain and text describing what had been there and the circumstances of its loss. Approaching the fountain site, the sound of gushing water grows in intensity. Standing at the site of the memorial, the underground fountain can be viewed through an iron grate and thick glass windows:

With the running water...our thoughts can be drawn into the depths of history, and there perhaps we will encounter feelings of loss, of a disturbed place, of loss form. The sunken fountain is not the memorial at all...it is only history turned into a pedestal, an invitation to passersby who stand upon it to search for the memorial in their own heads. For only there is the memorial to be found.

This chapter, "Placing Memory" defines the context of this dissertation. Hoheisel's design for the Aschrott-Brunnen fountain brings into focus key questions that underpin this dissertation: the nature of public and private memory and its relationship to collective and national identity and contemporary responses and representations of memory, particularly those relating to problematic pasts.
The Social Dimension of Memory

The term 'memory' refers to a wide range of cognitive skills by which we are able to retain and recall information and reconstruct past experiences in a present context. Memory is an elusive concept because it refers to a diverse range of phenomena. In some ways, defining what memory is not is an easier task. For example, as we are able to recall experiences from the past, memory is different to perception. Similarly, as we are able to recall events that were actually experienced, memory is also different to imagination.

'Memory' is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* as "the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information", "a person or thing remembered" or "the length of time over which people's memory extends." In common usage, 'memory' is understood as the facility to remember as well as the mental construct of what is remembered. In Western society, memories are often framed in terms of possessions – we keep, hold or lose memories as if they are part of us.

Historically, memory as a concept, while varying significantly from antiquity to the Middle Ages and early Renaissance periods, is generally understood to be an active process of collection and recollection and the basis of knowledge and understanding. Aristotle’s *On Memory and Recollection*, for example, suggests that all memories have a visual or associative aspect which enables us to recall them. In the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, memory training became central to monastic teaching and the sharing and maintenance of collective wisdom.

Across a number of disciplines ranging from psychology, psychiatry, philosophy and sociology, memory is described in many, often overlapping and contradictory ways. Attempting to craft a single definition of memory is ultimately an elusive task, given the multitude of these starting points.

While the focus of this dissertation is an understanding of the social dimension of memory, it is important to acknowledge at the outset the contribution of other disciplines to our understanding of memory. The description of memory as it relates to medical disciplines, for example, recognise it as an aspect of human behaviour that is both mental and physical. Here memory is often described as it relates to neural networks, the way we learn through experience or our ability to exhibit behaviour related to previous treatment or behaviour. In scientific disciplines, memory is often related to the characteristics of programmable machines such as computers, where data is stored and can be retrieved when required.

The key to an understanding of memory and the focus of this dissertation is however, the consideration of its social, rather than its neuro-psychological dimension.

Sociologist Paul Connerton provides an initial useful and straightforward starting point in understanding the social dimension of memory, distinguishing between three distinct classes of memory claim - personal, cognitive and habit memory.

For Connerton, personal memory claims refer to the remembering of one's own personal experiences. Also referred to as 'conscious' memory, 'autobiographical' memory, 'recollective' memory, 'episodic' memory or 'direct' memory in other accounts, this form of memory can be described as remembering who and what. Personal memory therefore refers to events that are remembered in the context of personal emotions and bodily involvement and is located in and refers to an individual's past.
These memory claims figure significantly in our self descriptions because our past history is an important source of our conception of ourselves; our self knowledge, our conception of our own character and potentialities, is to a large extent determined by the way in which we view our own past actions.

Cognitive memory is described by Connerton as the remembering of knowledge about the world. Referred to as ‘propositional memory’ or ‘semantic memory’ in other accounts, this form of memory can be described as remembering that. We therefore use cognitive memory to remember a diverse range of facts from the meaning of words, the layout of our homes, truths about the world, to scientific formulae and equations. Unlike personal memory however, cognitive memory does not require any knowledge of the context of learning in order to be able to store and recover it:

What this type of remembering requires is, not that the object of memory be something that is past, but that the person who remembers that thing must have met, experienced or learned from it in the past.

Connerton’s third distinct form of memory claim, habit memory, refers to our remembering of and ability to reproduce certain bodily actions or performances – for example, how to ride a bicycle or how to drive a car. This form of memory, described as ‘procedural’ memory in other accounts, can be described as remembering how.

Mary Warnock condenses Connerton’s categorisations of memory into a simple dual account of ‘habit’ memory and ‘conscious’ memory. Here conscious memory encompasses Connerton’s personal and cognitive forms of memory. More importantly, however, Warnock argues that these two fundamental forms of memory, habit and conscious, are not mutually exclusive but in a fluid continuum:

It is oversimple to think of memory as one ‘faculty’ which can be explained by one account. But it is not much better to think of it as two faculties. It is better to think of it as a continuum, at one end of which is the mysterious phenomenon of consciousness. Somewhere along the line animals must begin to know what they are doing in remembering. There is a distinction to be drawn at the edges of the continuum between habit memory and conscious memory. But neither is irrelevant to the other.

Many other categorisations of memory occur across psychology, psychiatry, philosophy and sociology. John Bodnar, for example, distinguishes ‘official’, or national memory from ‘popular’ memory. Edward S. Casey distinguishes between ‘body memory’, the process of remembering places, events and people through the lived body and ‘place memory’, the ability of places to concretise the past in a way that they can be brought to life through our remembering of them.

The key distinguishing factor, in the accounts of memory in the two key areas relevant to this dissertation, philosophy and the cognitive sciences however, is the difference between two opposing ways of bringing the past into the present – acting out and remembering. Early memory theorists conclude that to ‘remember’ in a cognitive sense is of central importance to philosophical discourse. In Matter and Memory, for example, Henri Bergson argues that the term ‘memory’ was not a singular concept but is composed of two different types of memory, ‘habit’ memory and ‘pure’ memory. Bergson defines habit memory as relating to the repetition of specific automatic behaviours while pure memory relates to unconscious personal memories. Remembering is seen as a combination of both forms of memory, acting together:

The past survives under two distinct forms: first, in motor mechanisms; secondly, in independent recollections.
Early accounts of memory suggested recollection was an essentially solitary act. These accounts of memory focus on its acquisition, retention and retrieval as an individually focussed experience. More recent accounts of memory have argued against this individual focus, theorising that all memory is social memory - acquired, retained and recalled within a social context. Otherwise referred to as 'collective' memory, an understanding of this social ontology of memory is central to this dissertation.

Collective Memory

As an object of scholarly thought, the notion of memory as a social rather than a neuro-psychological construct is a recent phenomenon, emerging only in the early twentieth century. The most notable early use of the term is in the 1925 work *The Social Frameworks of Memory* by Maurice Halbwachs.

While Sigmund Freud argued that the unconscious mind of the individual acted as a repository for all past experiences, Halbwachs rejects this account of memory and argues that individuals only remember within a group context, that memory is socially constructed. Halbwachs is critical of the focus on the individual in accounts of memory in psychology of the time and, rather than referring to memory traces in the individual, refers to 'social frameworks of memory' as the mechanism used in acts of recall:

> There is no point in seeking where they are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any given time give me the means to reconstruct them...  

In a later work, *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs re-theorised memory not as a repository of personal experience but a collective, social phenomenon:

> Yet it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. 

Memory is thus seen as constructed rather than organic, as a social phenomenon rather than an individual physiological one. Memories that are formed, retained or articulated by an individual are seen as always within a socially constructed framework. In direct opposition to the Freudian account of memory, Halbwachs argued that individuals can only remember in a coherent manner within existing social or group contexts.

For Halbwachs, collective memory is not some indescribable form of group remembering but a socially constructed artefact. As such, different groups will favour different memories, therefore producing different modes of behaviour and interaction. Memory is therefore seen as only functioning in a collective context and capable of being evoked through objects or practices, from the informal, such as the objects and practices of everyday activities like dining, to the more formalised objects and practices evident in the establishment of monuments and memorial days. The group therefore 'falls into' their memories, the objects that come to represent these memories determining their ideas and actions. All groups within a society will construct their own memories based on class, gender, family, industry, history and other distinctions. Additionally, individuals may subscribe to the collective memories of multiple groups. Since different groups will construct different memories, there will inevitably be multiple collective memories within a society.

Ultimately however, while collective memory is sustained within groups of people, it is the individuals as group members who remember:

> What makes recent memories hang together is not that they are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people with whom we have a relation at this moment,
or with whom we have had a relation on the preceding day or days. To recall them it is hence sufficient that we place ourselves in the perspective of this group, that we adopt its interests and follow the slant of its reflections. 16

In elaborating his concept of collective memory, Halbwachs distinguishes between historical memory, that is, memory that is represented through physical records such as text and photographs and autobiographical memory which is alive and capable of being enacted through various forms of commemoration. Autobiographical memory is memory of events that have been personally experienced and is therefore central to an understanding of the notion of collective memory. For Halbwachs, distinctions felt between generations, for example, are the result of different constructions of the present. National or societal memory is seen as a reconstruction of the past, selectively constructed through the lens of the present. Collective memory is thus the reconstruction of the past in the context of our experience and understanding of the present. For Halbwachs, memory is not a purely individual construct, it is mediated and constructed by social arrangements. Memories that are formed, kept and connected are always a function of socially constructed forms and relations.

Memory therefore transforms public events into specific individual experiences. People recall momentous events in terms of their own lives. Significant historical events are thus remembered in the context of individual histories. Events such as the assassination of U.S. President Kennedy, the first landing on the moon, the death of Princess Diana and the September 11 terrorist attacks, for example, are usually recalled within a personal context. However, because personal memory is inherently contestable, other people's memories are needed to substantiate our own:

Sharing and validating memories sharpens them and promotes their recall: events we alone know about are less certainly, less easily evoked. In the process of knitting our discontinuous recollections into narratives, we revise personal components to fit the collectively remembered past, and gradually cease to distinguish between them. 17

Collective memory is therefore grounded in social experience, a socially constructed, articulated and maintained view of the past as seen by individuals belonging to a group, based on a sense of shared identity and experience. Collective memory is therefore not simply a collection of individual memories. Collective memory is always a mediated memory, a product of the interplay of past and present, public and private experiences conveyed through practices and media that transfer as well as transform memory.

Little attention was paid to the notion of collective memory outside clinical or psychological theory until the 1970s when a great resurgence of interest in autobiographical literature, genealogy and museology occurred. Described by writers such as Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins as the 'memory boom', a number of concurrent cultural phenomena have converged to create the current interest in collective memory including the fin de siecle effect, the postmodern questioning of the truth of official history and the rapid development of communications and information technologies. 18

Memory not History

Since the 1970s therefore, memory as a formal discourse has increasingly emerged as a key concern in Western thought. Part of this project has been the response to the contested role of history as the definitive source of the story of humankind. Official historical accounts have increasingly been understood as a version of the past authorised by hegemonic power, history as written by those that rule. As argued by Kerwin Lee Klein in On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse, social memory, once regarded as an unreliable form of communal remembering is increasingly seen as an alternative to the official voice of history, recognising other viewpoints and ways of knowing:
It is no accident that our sudden fascination with memory goes hand in hand with postmodern reckonings of history as the marching black boot of historical consciousness as an oppressive fiction. Memory can come to the fore in an age of historiographic crisis precisely because it figures as a therapeutic alternative to historical discourse. 19

History is also differentiated from memory because of its collective nature. Whereas the past that is recalled by an individual is partly the result of others’ recollections, it is essentially personal. Historical knowledge on the other hand is a group activity which is collectively produced and disseminated. Both are however, contestable in terms of whether they can ever represent true accounts of events.

Early memory theorists such as Halbwachs regarded history and historiography as dead memory, an attempt to represent a past with which society has no real, organic connection. In The Collective Memory, for example, Halbwachs contrasts the collective aspects of social memory with the singular record of history:

History can be represented as the universal memory of the human species. But there is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited by space and time. The totality of past events can be put together in a single record only by separating them from the memory of the groups who preserved them and by severing the bonds that held them close to the psychological life of the social milieus where they occurred, while retaining only the group’s chronological and spatial outline of them. 20

As historiography has developed in the late twentieth century, its focus has broadened to take into account the dimensions of the social and the cultural. More recent theorists such as Pierre Nora extend and refine Halbwachs’ distinction between collective memory and history, arguing that where the definitive voice of history seeks for “the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer” 21, the alternative voice of memory “remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering.” 22

Nora, reinvigorating Halbwach’s work on collective memory, provides one of the most sustained explorations of the relationship of history and memory in recent Western thought. In Between History and Memory: Les Lieux de Memoire, Nora draws a clear distinction between the age of memory which has now passed and the age of history which we are currently experiencing. Prior to the nineteenth century, Nora argues that memory was so much an aspect of everyday life that its existence did not require acknowledgement. Institutions such as the church and the state were the only part of society that required memory to be formalised. Ordinary people regarded the past as part of their present and felt no need to record or give permanence to it as we do now.

In contrast, modern Western memory, Nora argues, is located at physical sites such as monuments, museums and libraries as opposed to bodily gestures which were important means of experiencing and transmitting memories in pre-modern non-Western societies. Nora locates modern memory as a collection of sites, which concentrate and fix memory in a range of mediums that stand in external relation to the body, arguing that in contemporary society there is a proliferation of sites of memory (les lieux de memoire) because there are no longer real environments of memory:

The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs – hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past. 23
Nora suggests that memory and history are fundamentally in opposition. While memory is constantly evolving, impacted on by the processes of remembering and forgetting and open to manipulation and appropriation, history is merely the past re-presented. The evolving, multi-valent temporality of memory connects societies with their past more completely than the linear trajectory of modern historical consciousness. For Nora, history is how modern societies marked by continual change organize the past, whereas memory is an active connection between the past and the present:

...memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective and plural, and yet individual...
Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. 24

Nora argues that the current epoch is characterised by an "acceleration of history" 25, where there is an increasingly hurried slippage into a historical past that is no longer connected to the present:

...producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past. Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders – these are the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity. 26

When a society stops experiencing memory organically therefore, it begins to construct memory, creating physical signs of it such as monuments, memorials and museums. The increasing proliferation of the physical signs of memory marks the death of a more spontaneous social memory that existed in the pre-modern. Nora sees a 'deritualization' in our contemporary world, a society that is ‘...deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past.’ 27 Les lieux de memoire “mark the rituals of a society without ritual.” 28 For Nora, memory “is constantly on our lips...because it no longer exists.” 29

Similarly, in Twilight Memories, Andreas Huyssen notes the simultaneous paradoxical postmodern phenomenon of the resurgence of interest in museums and memorialization and the loss of history and historical consciousness.30 Huyssen argues that Western society is in the grip of a ‘fear of forgetting’, seeing the return to memory as a stand against obsolescence and disappearance, to counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the shrinking of space and time through mass media and technology. Here the return to memory and the past represents a direct contrast with the privileging of the future characterised by modernity. While the time consciousness of modernity in the West sought to secure the future, the time consciousness of the late twentieth century attempts to take responsibility for the past.

Huyssen argues that the memory boom is not simply attributable to the fin de siecle syndrome but rather a crisis in the structure of the temporality of modernity. The return to memory is an attempt to slow the process of information flow, "to resist the dissolution of time in the synchronicity of the archive, to recover a mode of contemplation outside the universe of simulation and fast-speed information and cable networks, to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity, and information overload." 31

This fear of forgetting is, however, also a fear of its opposite, the fear of remembering. Individuals and groups construct the past through the negotiation of active and passive processes of remembering and forgetting in order to reach consensual notions of the past.
The Consensual Past

Remembering and Forgetting

Our understanding and awareness of the past is a function of memory, dependent on how and to what extent the past is consciously remembered. This understanding of the processes of remembering and forgetting is relatively recent. Freud's theory of mental processes first questioned the widely held understanding that physical objects can act as analogues of memory, effectively inverting the Aristotelian model of memory. In this earlier model of memory, memory loss takes place over time as a result of natural processes of attrition. Freud argued that forgetting was an active force and was often "intentional and desired" rather than natural and involuntary.

Memory however, does not conserve the past. The past as we understand it is always a product of the present. History is continually being reshaped and rewritten to serve our current needs. Historian David Lowenthal argues that the past is continually in the service of the present and regards the greatest benefit of the past is to "render the present familiar," past experience giving us the context for meaning in the present. Lowenthal sees the past as a foreign country, a collective omnipresent, particularly in its most tangible forms of historic preservation and mimicry. In late modernity however, the past is evoked as an artefact of the present, serving today's need for individual expression, national ideals and consumerism:

It is no longer the presence of the past that speaks to us, but its pastness. Now a foreign country with a booming tourist trade, the past has undergone the usual consequences of popularity. The more it is appreciated for its own sake, the less real or relevant it becomes. No longer revered or feared, the past is swallowed up by the ever-expanding present; we enlarge our sense of the contemporary at the expense of realizing its connection with the past.

Like history, collective memory is always open to revision and re-remembering. Jonathan Crewe states this most aptly when describing memory as "more akin to a collective fiction than to a neurological imprint of events or experiences." The remembered past is therefore never fixed, recollections are changeable. Some events gain in significance over time while others lose their importance. Past events are reinterpreted in the light of later events and our present needs and are constantly reworked, discarded and reignited. Forgetting allows us to categorise memories. Jan Assmann refers to the notion of 'structural amnesia' to describe the process whereby parts of the past are forgotten, when they are no longer in a meaningful relationship with the present.

Similarly, Owen J. Dwyer refers to the concept of 'symbolic accretion' to describe a process in which memorial agents attempt to promote specific meanings within a site, while denying others – the term calls attention to the struggle between remembering and forgetting on a cultural level:

Symbolic accretion formalizes memory inasmuch as it calls attention to some portion of the narratives associated with a place.

In order to remember therefore, we need to forget. According to Casey, in any act of remembering there is always a reciprocal act of forgetting, or the extinguishing of memory:

But no one to my knowledge has looked into just how 'social amnesia' enters into genuinely interpersonal memory: how in order to remember together, we must first forget together. To commemorate a war such as the Civil War or Vietnam is at the same time not to remember its many horrors, its unspeakable and even unthinkable mutilations and agonies. For an individual to recall the horrors is to undermine participation in the public event of commemoration.
Memory remains a contested terrain where claims to the truth are made from different groups representing differing world views and experience. This contestation may appear at a number of levels, from the local to the national and even global. What appears as official memory produced by the dominant group is always open to contestation through ‘counter-memory’, or alternative versions of the past that are built on differing world views. Memory therefore also needs to be considered from the viewpoint of the marginalized – those memories that are potentially challenging or destructive to dominant viewpoints.

In Memory, History, Forgetting, Paul Ricoeur focuses on the ethics of memory, how we remember or forget pasts that are problematic or traumatic. History, it is argued begins with individual testimony:

> We must not forget that everything starts not from the archives, but from testimony, and that, whatever may be our lack of confidence in principle in such testimony, we have nothing better than testimony, in the final analysis, to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past, which someone attests having witnessed in person...  

Ricoeur argues that processes of forgetting are integral to processes of remembering:

> Seeing one thing is not seeing another. Recounting one drama is forgetting another.  

Focussing on the ethics of remembering and forgetting, Ricoeur distinguishes between forgiving, where memories of a wrong doing are acknowledged but can still be recalled, and total forgetting. Similarly, Avishai Margalit in The Ethics of Memory, distinguishes forgiving as the blotting out of a wrong doing and forgetting as the covering up of the wrong doing. The relationship between remembering and forgetting and particularly the distinction between forgetting and forgiving is important in the context of this dissertation, particularly in relation to the memorialisation of problematic pasts.

Adrian Forty identifies four principal categories through which objects accelerate the process of forgetting – separation, tension, exclusion and iconoclasm. As a property common to most memorial artefacts, separation delineates what is to be remembered, and consequently what is to be forgotten. Memorial objects formalise what is to be officially remembered and separate out what is to be forgotten. The tension created between remembering and forgetting is dramatised through the creation of memorial artefacts. Always in act of remembering there is the underlying tension created by what has been recognised as official memory and what has not. Exclusion is also a key feature of memorial artefacts – certain things are permitted to be remembered and through exclusion other things are forgotten. Finally, iconoclasm, or the physical destruction of buildings or monuments, is identified by Rorty as the most conventional way of accelerating the process of forgetting.

Philosopher Michel de Certeau argues that physical artefacts cannot be relied upon to prolong the processes of remembering, that memory “is a sort of an anti-museum: it is not localizable.” For de Certeau, memory is “outside itself” and when it becomes associated with physical artefacts, it begins to decay. Memorial artefacts therefore, by prescribing what is to be remembered, are what lead to forgetting.

It could be argued therefore that officially sanctioned memory sites such as museums, monuments and memorials discourage real engagement with the past and in fact induce forgetting rather than remembering. This suspicion of officially sanctioned forms of memory such as monuments has developed over the last century as historians and the survivors of traumatic events have argued that instead of encouraging remembering, monuments and memorials in fact encourage forgetting. Instead of bringing the past into the present, they further isolate it, displacing it from the now.
The interlinked processes of memory creation and memory erasure highlight the fact that collective memory itself is subject to the processes of collective remembering and collective forgetting. This may seem to again highlight the traditional difference between history as an objective account of the past and memory as a subjective, potentially unreliable record of past events. However, what is important about collective memory is not that it purports to be truthful or accurate but rather that it establishes constancy in the transmission of cultural values and ideals, or cultural memory.

Individual memory of the past is therefore mediated by cultural memory. The past is always understood in terms of the present, remembering positioned at the intersection with contemporary responses to historical events.

Cultural Memory

Critics of Halbwachs' conception of collective memory argue it suggests a collective consciousness disconnected from individual thought processes, as if individuals are behaving under the overpowering will of a collective consciousness. Collective memory while having the potential to transmit the importance of historical events to future generations, is seen as strongly biased towards the present, tending to concern itself with events that occur during the lifetimes of its producers and consumers.

Susan Sontag, for example, argues against the notion of a collective memory by highlighting the privileging of events mediated by culture:

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as collective memory – part of the same family of spurious notions as collective guilt. But there is collective instruction. All memory is individual, irreproducible – it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds. Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings. 46

Hence, since the 1980s there has been a gradual shift away from the notion of collective memory to that of cultural memory. The notion of cultural memory has displaced the discourses of individual and collective memory studies and acknowledges that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual and collective one. Marita Sturken defines cultural memory as “memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning.” 47 Assman elaborates Halbwach’s collective memory concept by defining notions of communicative and cultural memory. The former describes everyday communications about the meaning of the past with a limited temporal dimension of eighty to one hundred years. Cultural memory on the other hand “comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self image.” 48

Cultural memory therefore refers to practices of remembrance which are created, stored and maintained by the communities and cultures in which they are exist. Memory is therefore not understood as something we simply accrue but rather as something that we consciously produce:

Memory is not something we have, but something we produce as individuals sharing a culture. Memory is, then, the mutually constitutive interaction between the past and the present, shared as culture but acted out by each of us as an individual. 49
The notion of cultural memory acknowledges that cultures continuously reform and reproduce themselves. Cultural memory is therefore, unlike collective memory, not the result of chance accretion, but rather the result of cultural agency. In this process of cultural transformation, understandings of the past are also transformed:

The interaction between present and past that is the stuff of cultural memory is...the product of collective agency rather than the result of psychic or historical accident. 50

The ways that societies construct and maintain themselves has inherently to do with what they recognise and sustain as significant, the ways they demarcate what is shared and what is private. The notion of cultural memory is therefore central to this dissertation. The creation of memorial artefacts reflect the dynamics of cultural memory where the processes of remembering and forgetting are not reliant on official or individual acts but are “negotiated in the interplay between social and individual organization of memory.” 51

The process of cultural memorialisation, or the construction of cultural memory is an activity that occurs in the present that modifies and represents the past even as it continues to influence the future. The ways in which cultural memory reconstructs and shapes our understanding of the past is evident in the memorialisation of the events of May 4, 1970 at Kent State University, Ohio.
The May 4, 1970 Memorial

Fig 3. Kent State May 4 1970 Memorial, Ohio

Fig 4. Bollard markers at site of student death
On May 4, 1970, troops of the Ohio National Guard confronted students on the Kent State University campus protesting against a number of causes, including the recent American invasion of Cambodia and the presence of the National Guard on the campus itself. The National Guard had been ordered to the campus a few days earlier in response to growing unrest and the destruction of campus and community property following the announcement of the escalation of the Vietnam War by President Nixon on April 30.

By noon on May 4, the confrontation between the National Guard and the students began to escalate beyond control. Many of the students present were simply bystanders or passers-by during the midday lunch break. At 12.24, following the use of tear gas, the National Guard fired into the crowd killing four students and wounding nine others. Following the shootings, universities, colleges and high schools across America closed as a result of a strike of eight million students.

While the sequence of events of May 4 is broadly agreed upon by its participants, the meaning and memory of these events has been bitterly contested and never agreed on. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, calls were made by groups and individuals to memorialise the events of May 4, while others strongly believed that the events should not be memorialised at all.

The key issue that complicated attempts at official memorialisation was the intended portrayal of the students themselves:

By what terms should the students who were killed and wounded that day be described? Were they innocent victims or perhaps even heroes or martyrs? If they were to be remembered, were they in some extended (or not so extended) sense 'war dead'? Or, as some argued, were they simply criminals?

In 1986, following many years of debate over the future of the site of the shootings as well as the need for official memorialisation, Kent State University conducted a national design competition for the construction of a memorial to the events of May 4. The competition guidelines expressed a need to reflect on the tragic events as well as its greater meaning for society.

The winning proposal by Bruno Ast was dedicated in 1990 with much controversy, having been reduced in size by 93% and losing most of its power and significance. As a result of pressure from the American Legion, the memorial no longer would commemorate those who lost their lives on May 4 but simply memorialize the 'events of May, 1970.'

The constructed design is in the form of a small plaza on a wooded hilltop adjacent to a walkway in the centre of the campus. The plaza is in fact not the site of the shootings and cannot even be viewed from the site where the students were killed. A long struggle to mark the site of the shootings resulted in 1999 in the construction of four bollard markers noting the names of the deceased. No explanation is provided on the site of the main memorial to the events of May 4, nor the names of those killed or wounded. The words "Inspire, Learn, Reflect" were deemed by the University to be a sufficient meaning for the memorial.

In the design of the Kent State Memorial, the events of May are therefore remembered in a context of future student learning and recovery, the morality and meaning of that day is left unaddressed, deliberately erased through the long process of official memory making. The name of the official memorial, 'The May 4, 1970 Memorial' is a telling indicator of the contested meanings of the event, reducing its commemoration to a signification of date only.
Shared Memory

Memory and Identity

What a culture decides is worthy of remembrance and what can be forgotten is invariably linked to issues of power, as played out in race, class and gender differences, to name a few. Shared memory is therefore inextricably bound to issues of identity, both individual and collective.

Remembering, whether in a personal or communal context, is a social practice that is grounded in the shared cultural values through which identity, both private and public is produced. Ways of remembering and applying significance to these memories are therefore seen to be created and shared by group identities such as race, gender, family and social class - individual remembrance being inseparable from group remembrance. Cultural memory as a social construct is therefore based on a shared sense of experience and identity.

Memory is arguably the central medium by which identities are formed and maintained. Early accounts of collective memory also note its connection with the equally elusive and interlinked concept of identity. Like memory, contemporary identity theorists recognise that identities are ongoing processes rather than end products. The notion of memory depends on the notion of identity and vice versa. Our understanding of the past, of what is remembered is also a function of a sense of personal and community identity. Individual or group identity is sustained by the act of remembering and what is remembered, and conversely what is forgotten, is a factor of assumed identity. Identity and memory are also changeable and subjective, both are processes or practices, not properties. The way individuals see themselves as a member of a particular group depends on their own interpretation of history:

The parallel lives of these two terms alert us to the fact that the notion of identity depends on the idea of memory, and vice versa. The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity. We need to be reminded that memories and identities are not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective. Memories help us make sense of the world we live in; and ‘memory work’ is, like any other kind of physical or mental labour, embedded in complex class, gender and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end.

Identity is forged by an understanding of history and therefore by the notion of remembrance and commemoration. As Halbwachs noted:

We preserve memories of each epoch of our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of identity is perpetuated.

Each of us carries with us a range of identities from the personal to the cultural and even identities within identities that define us through group, professional and social affiliations, to name but a few. In a given context, one or more of these identities will be more prominent. Identities, like memories are a function of a social context.
Personal Memory/Personal Identity

The understanding that memory is central to development of the self and the forging of individual identity is a late eighteenth century understanding. Memory is generally understood to be essential to a sense of being and is critical to an individual's understanding of themselves as a social being. Personal identity is also a particularly distinguishing feature of modernity and its emphasis on the individual over the communal:

Casting members as individuals is the trade mark of modern society. That casting, however, was not a one-off act: it is an activity re-enacted daily. Modern society exists in its incessant activity of 'individualizing' as much as the activities of individuals consist in the daily reshaping and renegotiating of the network of mutual entanglements called 'society'.

In recent decades this quest for individualization has been reflected in areas such as genealogical research, the quest for one's origins and identity:

The passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its own identity through the revitalization of its own history. The task of remembering makes everyone his own historian. The demand for history has thus largely overflowed the circle of professional historians. Those who have long been marginalized in traditional history are not the only ones haunted by the need to recover their buried pasts. Following the example of ethnic groups and social minorities, every established group, intellectual or not, learned or not, has felt the need to go in search of its origins and identity.

Both memory and identity are representations of individual reality, changeable, subjective and socially constructed. Identity tends to be future orientated, based on shared experience and memory. As individuals in contemporary society we all enter into a diverse range of situations from work, home and play with their own diverse and distinct histories and memories. It follows that we also negotiate multiple identities within our lives.

Individual memory is a factor of personal identity and vice versa. Because identity is a social construct, it follows that memory is also a social construct. Identities and memories are always a factor of particular interests, subjective positions, class and gender difference. They are ultimately highly selective and are constructed to sustain particular social and power relationships. John Mack notes that the relationship between the production of cultural objects and the production of memory is tied up with the fundamental human questions of a sense of being and belonging, of identity and relationships and community and posterity:

For individuals, as for communities, it may be said that memory is identity. At the very least it is an essential part of it. To lose your memory is, quite literally, no longer to know who you are...

Death plays a significant role in the shaping of identity and therefore in the shaping memory. Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey note that in terms of self identity, memories of the dead "are as much a bulwark against the terror of the forgettable self as an inescapable aftermath of lives which have come to an end." The process of marking death through commemoration helps to establish and maintain identity and those places that commemorate the dead establish and maintain community and national identity:

Indeed, we witness death acting as a deep incentive to remember and the process of dying can give licence to intense phases of memory making with all of its attendant material complexity – from the disposal of the corpse to the repeated act of returning to the graveside with flowers.

Personal memory and personal identity are therefore intertwined with the cultural dimension. How we define ourselves as individuals is much the result of how our memories and identities are culturally defined and maintained in material objects such as museums, archives, monuments and memorials.
Cultural Memory/Cultural Identity

Memory is critical to individual, social, and cultural identity. As individuals and as communities, how we remember defines us in the present. The past is therefore needed in order to construct individual and collective identities, to anchor us in the present and help define our futures. Modern nation-states will often seek to establish a consensual view of the past through the establishment of monuments, myths, customs, celebrations and anniversaries, thereby defining and delimiting individual perceptions of the past.

In order for a community to shape itself as a strong and coherent entity, objects and rituals are required to recall those things that are important to its sense of itself. Individuals and events that have shaped a society and the values that a society wishes to evoke to determine its future are re-constructed through commemorative forms that reinforce a sense of shared identity through a continuity between the past, present and the future:

In a social context, shared memory promotes coherent communities. In the modern world the estimable aims of modern multi-culturalism are confronted by divergent, potentially fracturing, assertions of separate memory until common cause produces common remembrance. Wars, and the commemoration of those who fell in them, are amongst the most dramatic contributors to sustained common cause. Remembrance days, the creation of memorials, the wearing of signs of remembrance fabricate a common narrative of the past. Without the construction of such common remembrance, past events often have no clearly recognized closure. 6 3

Shared memory is a defining characteristic of small groups that have common relationships, such as families. Shared memory is also a defining characteristic of larger groups such as cultures and societies. At the same time, shared memory is ultimately tied up with the equally elusive concept of shared identity – personal, social and cultural. As Gillis has noted, the parallel constructs of memory and identity “are not things we think about, but things we think with.” 6 4

The construction of a national memory is a function primarily of a nation’s ability to evoke myths and heroes, the sustaining of ritualistic performances such as memorial days and the creation of built forms of archival memory such as museums and monuments. All these forms of evoking the past create a symbolic stage for a national narrative, establishing a sense of a shared history and heritage and the continuity of shared values between the past and the present.

When social and political change inevitably happens in a society, collective remembering and forgetting needs to be renegotiated and transformed to suit the present. In a changing political climate, therefore, existing forms of collective memory may fall into decline or become open to re-interpretation or new forms may emerge and take the place of the old.

The demarcation of time and space is a particularly important aspect of the construction of a national identity and memory. State memory of important historical events may be evoked through a variety of commemorative sites, some temporal such as memorial days or some spatial such as the actual site of the event or a monument erected to commemorate that event. Narratives and ritual performances constructed around these commemorative forms further reinforce the significance of these events in the national psyche and shape the way that we remember particular events:
The clash for symbolic ownership of our battlefields, for example, is part of an ongoing and fundamental debate about national identity – the adequacy and boundaries of the nation’s master narrative – a narrative rooted in commemorative space, celebrated in ritual, and supported and defended by the dominant culture, which has selected certain places as essential power points of national identity. 65

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson cites changing conceptions of time as a key factor in the shaping of communities in terms of the nation-state. 66 Collective memory is implicit in the notion of changing perceptions of time, as it correspondingly involves a community’s changing perception of their pasts and its connection to the present and the future. For Anderson, ‘nations’ come into being when identifiable communities are able to produce a story of their pasts, based on acts of both memorialising and forgetting. Anderson argues that modern nations are ‘imagined communities’ – in seeking to imagine a community, representation comes into play. Multiple commemorative forms such as anniversaries, monuments and texts lay the framework for a sense of a shared history and future and thereby forge a sense of continuity between the past and the present.

A sense of individual and national identity is therefore constructed through memory and vice versa. For individuals and societies, the self is a “projection forward of remembered experience into present time.” 67 Whether a particular event is remembered is a factor of whether a group exists that considers it a significant component of its identity. Memory sites are, in their essence sites of struggle over collective identity.

Wulf Kansteiner also makes the connection between memory studies and identity politics, arguing that throughout history, crises in memory have tended to coincide with crises in identity. Contributing factors to the ‘memory boom’ such as postcolonial and post Cold war ethnic conflicts, for example, are instances when “memory is valorised where identity is problematized.” 68

The ongoing memorialisation of the Anzac legend as a founding myth in Australian culture, for example, is indicative of the ongoing crisis in Australian identity itself.
Anzac Memorial, Sydney

Fig 5. Interior view, Anzac Memorial, Sydney
The Anzac myth is a key element in Australian national identity and memorials that represent this past contribute significantly to its ongoing place in the Australian psyche.

Anzac Day, April 25, begins now as it has for sixty years all over Australia in locations which display local variations on the theme of dawn and Anzac in a range of memorial forms. Participants gather from 4:30 am, close to the time when the first of the Anzacs landed at Gallipoli, to six o’clock or later when first light appears. In Sydney, the Anzac Memorial is deserted at dawn but is the site for a late morning service, following the Anzac Day march.

The debate over what would constitute an Anzac Memorial for Sydney continued over ten years, from 1918 until 1928. The arguments hinged primarily on the function of the building itself – either as a headquarters building for the Returned Services League or as a commemoration of the fallen. Finally, in 1928 the trustees of the Anzac Memorial resolved that it should be commemorative rather than utilitarian in function. The trustees considered at least ten sites throughout the city before selecting Hyde Park South, a public reserve since the earliest days of the colony of NSW.

In 1929, the NSW Parliament agreed to the site for the Anzac Memorial and an international competition open to British subjects in Australia and Australians overseas was launched. The winner, announced in July 1930, was a young Sydney architect, C. Bruce Delit. Delit’s design was intentionally unclassical, although in its stripped back Art Deco forms recalled forms from antiquity, including the Mesopotamian ziggurat. Delit successfully adapted a style that was becoming familiar in commercial buildings and theatres to one that was specific to the role of commemoration. Conventional classical motifs were however employed within the building, such as the internal Roman style hall and dome. The only words in the memorial other than the place names of battles are found at the base of the central sculpture – ‘Let silent contemplation be your suffering’.

Delit’s original design for the memorial was rejected as it was not considered sufficiently edifying to represent the birth of a nation, the key master narrative of the Anzac myth. This design proposed a naked woman semi-crucified on a crosspost with the broken bodies of four dead soldiers lying beneath her. The original design was rejected, because in Michael Rowland’s words the “birth of the nation as a literal description of male death was incompatible with its idealization in martyrdom and the regenerative aspects of sacrifice.” The design was replaced by a naked male lying on a shield, supported by three clothed women representing the sacrifice of the living mourners - mother, sister, and wife.

The Anzac Memorial and its Lake of Remembrance were dedicated on November 24, 1934 and represented the state’s official commemoration of its people’s participation in the Great War. The sacrifice of the following generation was added to existing state memorials in Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart through additions such as forecourts, eternal flames and plaques. In Sydney, the Anzac Memorial was left untouched.

The Anzac Memorial, as a traditional monument should have little relevance in an age influenced by the modernist and post modernist critiques of the traditional monument, and by what Maya Lin calls ‘anti-monuments’, places that “set a stage for experience....(not) stages where you act out, but rather places where something happens within the viewer.” But the Anzac Memorial confounds expectations. Eighty years after the First World War, it remains a place of remembrance for descendants of the dead and a significant monument in the city fabric, marking both sacrifice and cultural identity.

Rowlands argues that “the celebration of the Anzacs reverses the ignominious creation of Australian identity in colonial serfdom as a penal colony.” As built memory, the valorization of the Anzac foundation myth in the Anzac Memorial continues to highlight the ongoing dilemma of Australian national identity.
The Problematic Past

Trauma & Traumatic Memory

In some cases memory and hence selfhood, both individual and national, can be distorted through the effects of trauma. The experience and recollection of a problematic past, such as the Anzac myth, for example, is capable of creating a defining sense of a community. While cultural identity may be forged through the framework of celebration and achievement, it may equally be forged through the experience of crisis and trauma.

The word “trauma” is originally a Greek word meaning wound. Until the late nineteenth century, trauma referred exclusively to physical injury. In the 1870’s, the idea of psychological trauma began to emerge. In contemporary medical and psychiatric literature therefore, trauma is understood to refer to a wound inflicted on the mind rather than the body. Trauma breaks “the mind’s experience of time, self and the world” and the experience of the traumatic event is manifested in real time in the form of dreams or flashbacks. An event is therefore traumatic, not necessarily because it is of a violent nature but rather because it cannot be processed by the individual’s understanding of their world. Trauma therefore, is a block to understanding.

Ruth Leys argues that trauma is the result of the dissociation of the mind caused by the emotions of terror or surprise, resulting in an inability of the psyche to register the event and its wound:

As a result, the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, she is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories. The experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present.

Jenny Edkins argues that traumatic memory is different from other types of memory in that no interpretation of the events is able to be formed. The failure to attribute meaning to the events remembered, forces them to be re-lived time and again. Trauma is not experienced at the time of the event, rather returning in the form of flashbacks or re-enactments. Edkins defines trauma as an event marked by extreme physical force and violence, a breach in the experience of the linearity of time.

Maria Tumarkin notes the overuse of the words trauma and traumatic in contemporary language. Rather than being used as a synonym to describe events that are emotionally stressful or unpleasant, Tumarkin suggests that the word ‘overwhelming’ comes closest to describing its real meaning:

A traumatised person cannot take in or fully comprehend what has happened to them or what they have happened to witness. They are overwhelmed by a traumatic event. So much so that the ways in which they usually experience the world and make sense of their own place in it are effectively shattered.

Above all therefore, traumatic memories perpetuate a “loss of control” and are “intrusive, triggered by things reminiscent of the traumatic event and carrying a strong, sometimes overwhelming, emotional charge.”

Generally speaking, those who experience the after effects of a traumatic event do not experience time in a linear way but rather in a type of time loop. When an event cannot be processed at the time of its happening, its full affect may not be felt until many years have passed. Remembering a traumatic event from the past can therefore be more traumatic than experiencing the original event. Recalling a traumatic event involves a re-living in some form, of that event:
There is, in each survivor an imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one’s story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself.  

In Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, it is argued that the happening of trauma exceeds the capacity of the individual to register it and understand it. If trauma is understood as never fully present, it can never become part of the past. Caruth’s work points to the question whether a traumatic experience can be become present and thereby eventually become part of the past and consigned to memory:  

The pathology consists, rather, solely in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event.  

The key issue in relation to traumatic experience therefore is the notion of unclaimed experience. Experiences that are unclaimed are forgotten and the trauma waits under the surface until it is reclaimed. To reclaim traumatic experience is to remember it, hold and to make it wholly a part of one’s memory. To reclaim trauma, therefore is to make it one’s own again to recognise it as experience that happened to oneself and not to someone else.

It is understood now that traumatic events have the ability to change the way in which sufferers experience time. Events following a traumatic event rarely appear to flow from the past to the now in a logical sequence but appear non-linear and illusory:

Post-traumatic stress disorder, the most commonly diagnosed condition in survivors of trauma, is in fact a disorder of time. It is defined primarily by the way in which peoples’ past invades their present through flashbacks, intrusive thoughts and compulsive re-enactments. Traumatic experiences, it seems, rupture time – make time stop, go backwards or lose any meaning.  

Unlike narrative memories, traumatic memories are more dependent on sensory representations, occurring in many cases as full sensory replay, as bodily experiences of smell, sound and touch.

When survivors speak of traumatic experiences, they are bearing witness to events and acknowledging their own suffering. Susan J. Brison cites psychoanalyst Doris Laub who notes that to bear witness to trauma is a process that includes the listener, involving the externalisation of the event, the process of articulation and transfer of the event to another outside oneself and a return to oneself:

The act of bearing witness to the trauma facilitates this shift, not only by transforming traumatic memory into a coherent narrative that can be integrated into the survivor’s sense of self and view of the world, but also by reintegrating the survivor into a community, re-establishing connections essential to selfhood.

Processes of memorialisation are a bearing of witness to traumatic events. Edkins argues that this bearing witness however, needs to preserve the power of trauma. For this to occur, some non-linearity of time needs to be preserved:

I argue that the process of re-inscription into linear narratives, whilst possibly necessary for some points of view – it is argued that telling the story alleviates traumatic stress, for example – is a process that generally depoliticises, and that there is an alternative, that of encircling the
trauma...The reinstallation of time as linear and the narrating of events as history are central to the process of re-inscription. However, there are forms of memory and memorialisation (perhaps more aptly called 'not forgetting' rather than remembering) that do not produce a linear narrative, but rather retain another notion of temporality. These are ways of encircling the real. 82

Effective processes of the memorialisation of trauma, it is argued, need to avoid the recasting of events into a linear narrative but rather 'encircle trauma', reclaiming its power and allowing it not to be just remembered, but never forgotten.

Cultural Trauma & Postmemory

Individual memory can be unreliable, affected by forgetting and denial as well as trauma. A society's memories can be just as unstable and affected by the same processes. Both are subject to overt and covert reconstruction.

Like memory, trauma demonstrates both individual and collective parameters. In the same way an individual can describe being traumatised by an event or experience, collectives may also be traumatised by such experiences. Nations, for example, may experience trauma when a political regime falls. Organisations may be similarly traumatised by the loss of a leader. While trauma is generally understood as an individual experience, there is general consensus in the field of trauma studies that it also applies on a collective level. Kai T. Erickson, for example, argues that collective trauma can be conceived as "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality." 83

Several scholars, however, have differentiated individual and collective trauma, seeing collective trauma as primarily a cultural process, mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the notion of collective identity. Erikson, for example, argues that trauma has a "social dimension" 84, that communities can be damaged in the same way as individuals through trauma or at the least create a group culture or ethos that is collectively more than the sum of the individual wounds that make it up.

Brison argues that all memory of trauma is cultural memory in the sense that firstly, traumatic events are experienced in a cultural context, even when experienced alone and secondly, the way in which traumatic events are remembered depends not only on how they are experienced but also whether they are perceived by others, whether directly or indirectly:

The traumatic event is experienced as culturally embedded (or framed), is remembered as such (in both traumatic and narrative memory), and is shaped and reshaped in memory over time according, at least in part, to how others in the survivor's culture respond. 85

In *Trauma and Cultural Identity* Jeffrey C. Alexander defines collective trauma as 'cultural' trauma, occurring "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways." 86 Like Brison, Alexander argues that trauma is a social construction, that it is not the event in itself that is traumatic but the cultural representation and attribution of it that is:
First and foremost, we maintain that events do not, in and of themselves, create collective trauma. Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution. Meanings and not events therefore, are what produces the effects of collective trauma. Cultural trauma is transmitted through cultural agents such as the mass media and cultural institutions which define the nature of the trauma, its relationship with members of the society (who may only have experienced it indirectly) and assign responsibility. Built forms of traumatic pasts such as monuments and memorials are key representations of cultural trauma. To be incorporated as memory, traumatic events need to be narrativized. Cultural artefacts, from literature, art, film and architecture have the power to narrativize traumatic events and act as mediators between those affected by trauma and the reader or viewer:

The recipients of the account perform an act of memory that is potentially healing, as it calls for political and cultural solidarity in recognizing the traumatized party’s predicament. This act is potentially healing because it generates narratives that ‘make sense’. Events may be ascribed as traumatic before, during or after the event. In some cases, events may not need to occur at all. Only through the imaginative process of representation are people provided with the sense of a particular experience, such as trauma. Built representations of cultural trauma become critical therefore in the ‘imagined communities’ of Benedict Anderson’s nation states:

The notion of cultural trauma implies that direct experience is not a necessary condition for the appearance of trauma. It is in time-delayed and negotiated recollection that cultural trauma is experienced, a process that places representation in a key role.

Marianne Hirsch provides an interesting development of theories of cultural trauma in her studies of the effects on the children of Holocaust survivors, referring to “aesthetic strategies of tragic identification, projection, and mourning that specifically characterize the second-generation memory of the Holocaust.” Hirsch’s notion of ‘postmemory’ describes the experience of individuals who develop in a context dominated by pre-birth narratives where memories are not connected to an object or a source, but are mediated by the imagination of traumatic events:

I use the term postmemory to describe the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they ‘remember’ only as stories and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right. The term is meant to convey its temporal and qualitative difference from survivor memory, its secondary or second-generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its belatedness. Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through projection, investment and creation.

Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation children of survivors of cultural trauma with the experiences of their parents, a form of memory marked by displacement and secondhandness whereby personal memory is overlayed and subsumed by cultural memory. These experiences are ‘remembered’ through stories and images experienced in an individual’s development and constitute memories in their own right because of their power and magnitude:
...postmemory is not an identity position, but a space of remembrance, more broadly available through cultural and public, and not merely individual and personal, acts of remembrance, identification, and projection. It is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences – and thus also the memories – of others as one’s own, or, more precisely, as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one’s own life-story.  

In her examination of iconic Holocaust photography, Hirsch notes that postmemory is powerful because its relationship to traumatic events is not through direct recollection but mediated through “projection, investment, and creation.” While these images may regarded as well-repeated images of the Holocaust that create distance and non-identification, contrarily, they can also be seen as a means of retraumatization, of “making distant viewers into surrogate victims who, having seen the images so often, have adopted them into their own narratives and memories, and thus have become all the more vulnerable to their effects...”

Postmemory is linked to identity and the adoption of memories that are significant to a group, a “retroactive witnessing by adoption.” Hirsch defines postmemory as a process of the transmission of cultural trauma, specifically through familial inheritance. If trauma is marked by belated recognition, through its after-effects, then by extension it is understandable that it may be transmitted across generations:

Perhaps it is only in subsequent generations that trauma can be witnessed and worked through, by those who were not there to live but who received its effects, belatedly, through the narratives, actions and symptoms of the previous generation.

This description of the ways in which individuals can be affected by a past that they have not directly experienced but which have subconsciously been transferred to them, may arguably be extended to traumatic events experienced at a larger collective level, particularly through the media as in the example of the terrorist attacks of September 11. By representing memories for future generations, memorial spaces are effectively constructing and propagating postmemory and the formulation of new cultural identities. Similarly, visitation to memorial sites may be motivated by the need to access and assimilate postmemory.

Periods of cultural crisis and trauma therefore, whether directly experienced or not, often result in the formation of new identities:

Cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people who have achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a group or have been directly experienced by any or all.

Narratives of cultural trauma have been highly useful in the creation of national identities and founding myths. Dora Apel, for example, argues that postmemory of the Holocaust has become a critical factor in the “struggle to reinvent Jewish identity”, particularly in a period where Jewish identity is becoming blurred due to intermarriage and cultural assimilation.

The narratives of cultural trauma may take multiple forms. In his discussion of the creation of the Oklahoma City National Memorial, Edward Linenthal categorises the key themes, or narratives that are expressed in contemporary memorials. ‘Narrative’ here is used to describe how social groups define a particular situation in
order to engender a particular response. Firstly, Linenthal describes a 'progressive' narrative whereby tragedy is made bearable by focussing on the good that came from the event. Secondly, a 'redemptive' narrative is evident in terms of the meaning that religion can provide in tragic circumstances. Finally, the 'toxic' narrative expresses the pain of the reality of the event and its remembrance.  

The memorialisation of the impact The Great Hunger in mid-nineteenth century Ireland, for example, represents a progressive narrative of cultural trauma and its impact on individual and national identity.
National Monument to the Irish Famine, Sydney

Fig 6: National Monument to the Irish Famine, Sydney
The international movement to establish memorials to the Irish Famine amongst the nations that received significant numbers of Irish immigrants was inspired by the former Irish President Mary Robinson in a speech in Canada in August 1994. Her address emphasised the importance of remembering and honouring the voiceless victims of the Great Irish Famine. Since 1994, monuments have been established in Grosse Isle, Quebec; Dublin, Ireland; Boston, Massachusetts; New York City; Williamstown, Victoria; Croagh Patrick, Ireland & Sydney, New South Wales.

An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger) which afflicted Ireland in the 1840s has been described as the single most crucial event in that nation’s history. Between 1845 and 1851, Ireland lost almost a quarter of its total population of approximately eight million. One million people died through hunger and disease and a further one million were shed in the emigration of Irish men, women and children pursuing their hopes of a better life in colonies in North America and the Pacific.

Among this number were many single or orphaned young women selected from Irish poorhouses and offered the opportunity of work and marriage in New South Wales. Between 1848 and 1850, over two thousand Irish women arrived in Sydney under assisted immigration schemes administered by the British government and funded by the sale of Australian Crown lands. Through the immigration of these women to New South Wales, the British government sought to alleviate the pressures on poorhouses, while also responding to the colony’s demand for a supply of domestic servants and ‘suitable’ wives.

Hyde Park Barracks was selected for their reception and emptied of its convict remnants in late 1848. The arrival of 200 orphan girls from the Earl Grey ushered in the building’s role as the Immigration Depot. As the first refuge for these Irish women in Australia, it fulfilled the role of reception and labour exchange for single female assisted immigrants from 1848 until 1886.

Sydney’s National Monument to the Irish Famine, designed by artists Angela and Hossein Valamanesh and dedicated in 1999, aims to acknowledge and commemorate the large numbers of often young, single women who arrived in Australia and resided at the Barracks during its time as the Immigration Depot.

The memorial is designed as an integrated part of the surrounding architectural and landscape context. The main focus of the design is the dislocation of the Barracks southern compound wall. A section of this wall appears dismantled and rebuilt on a rotated axis. In the space of the removed wall are two glass panels bearing sandblasted inscriptions of women’s names, intersecting a bronze cast table projecting outwards in either direction.

The tableau of the dislocated wall, rotated on its axis, with the cast bronze table and its simple reminders of both Irish and colonial domestic life, is powerful in its symbolism and moving in its imagery. Viewed through the glass etched with fragments of names, the dislocated wall leads both into and out of the walled courtyard of the Barracks, a place of arrival but also, a point of departure.

The memorial is not a commemoration of the Famine itself, but rather to the more than one million Irish men, women and children who died in it and those whose lives were changed by it. In a wider sense, the National Monument to the Irish Famine is not just a memorial to those who died or were forced to leave their homeland but rather it is a memorial to those who came to Australia, what they were to achieve and the legacy they and their descendants would leave to Australia.

The Irish Famine is a watershed in the history of Ireland. Its impact changed Ireland’s political and cultural landscape permanently. The famine established itself in Irish cultural memory in terms of both the inhabitants of Ireland and the resulting international diaspora, becoming a rallying point for various nationalist causes. The National Monument to the Irish Famine, sited in one of Sydney’s most significant heritage buildings, sets Australian national identity and cultural memory in a wider international context and defines the postmemory of the local and global Irish population.
Summation: The Place of Memory

Recent memories are bound together not simply because they may occur contiguously, but rather that they form part of a collection of thoughts that are common to a larger group which we have an affiliation to, whether overtly or not. Affiliations with groups provide individuals with the frameworks for which memories can be localised. As individuals, we are able to sustain memories because we are able to recollect them within the mental frameworks constructed by the group. These mental spaces as Halbwachs has noted, also relate to physical spaces that particular groups occupy. Physical objects and spaces are relatively stable in their make up and so provide us with relatively permanent reference points in space. Because of their relative permanence therefore, our images of social spaces provide the illusion of stability and the ability to rediscover the past in the present:

We conserve our recollections by referring them to the material milieu that surrounds us...Our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group. 104

Tangible remains give both memory and history its relevance, giving society an assurance of the existence of a past. These physical remains, however are limited to what they communicate, their interpretation depending on the time, context and intentions of the reader. They provide evidence of the processes of history and memory and help to build our shared experience and understanding of the past.

When nations build for remembrance's sake, the past and our relationship to it is reshaped. As Ivy has noted, building for remembrance can be construed as a political act, constructing cultural memory and controlling “the narrative of actual events, determining the sequences of experiences, and interpreting them for subsequent generations.” 105

Memorial artefacts are therefore political texts, a subject of and subject to the intentions of the author, readers' interpretations and political will. They are shaped by their culture but also shape the culture they are within:

...monuments do not simply bear the impress of the past. By providing a means for its articulation, monuments are implicated in the reproduction of a 'past' as well. Rather than forming an inert backdrop for the unfolding of historical narratives, monuments are inextricably intertwined in the production of the past, not simply reflective of it. 106

The maintenance of cultural memory whether celebratory or problematic however, relies ultimately on the production of memorial artefacts that represent, evoke and sustain remembrance of the past.

The following chapter “Producing Memory” examines the aesthetic, political, cultural and personal challenges involved in the production of meaningful memorial artefacts.
placing memory
PRODUCING MEMORY

Fig 7: Detail Austrian Holocaust Memorial, Vienna
There were twelve to fifteen international artists and architects who had been asked to submit proposals, and I was a baby compared to most of them. In the end, I was selected, which was a mixed blessing. It entailed five years of very, very difficult problems – with the city, the bureaucracy, and the politics. Luckily I worked with some really great architects there; if it wasn’t for them, I probably would have been crushed by the whole experience and might have given up. I can’t say I enjoyed making the piece at all, though I’m very proud that it’s there.

Rachel Whiteread
Introduction

In 1996, the Turner Prize award-winning British artist Rachel Whiteread was selected as the winner of a competition to design Vienna’s official Holocaust memorial.

The Austrian Holocaust Memorial appears as a hermetically sealed empty book-lined room using the idea of the void and absence to express the genocide of European Jews. The work is a concrete construction measuring ten metres by seven metres at its base with a height of almost four metres. It appears as a casting of an anonymous library room with the outside surfaces appearing as the library shelves, turned inside out. Rather than the spines of the books facing outward, as they would in a real situation, Whiteread deliberately places the spines of the books inwards so that they are invisible and their contents are not revealed:

...it was a piece that was to be in a square called Judenplatz which is a, a sort of domestic scale square, and it was as if one of the rooms from the surrounding buildings had been taken and put in the centre of the square, and all of the books were completely blank. You had no idea what was supposedly in them, and the pages were facing outwards so you couldn’t read the spines of the books, so that was essentially the idea, a sort of blank library.  

The library shelves are stacked from floor to ceiling with endless copies of the same book, a reference to the unknowable number of victims, the anonymity of the statistics of Holocaust deaths and the idea of the Jewish people as ‘people of the book’. The double doors of the library are also cast inside out, with no hinges, doorknobs or handles, suggesting entry but no means of opening.

Text appears on the base of the memorial in front of the double doors to the library in German, Hebrew and English stating the number of Austrian Jews killed in the Holocaust. On the other three sides of the memorial are engraved the names of those sites where Austrian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust including the death camps of Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald.

Whiteread’s winning proposal continues her exploration of her ongoing sculptural interest in the solidification of absence through positive casting techniques. The memorial communicates absence and silence, an attempt to represent the unrepresentable, symbolising the incomprehensible numbers of victims and the untold stories of their lives. In this context, Dora Apel argues that art is able to respond to effects of trauma through its ability to communicate abstractly:

Art illuminates traumatic experience through the sideways glance, allowing the viewer to apprehend what can be only shown indirectly, allusively and in sometimes surprising ways. Perhaps even more than literature, film or theatre, visual art affects viewers in ways that are nonnarrative and noncognitive, in other words, in affective and emotional ways that are unsuspected, sometimes uncomfortable, raising contradictory or unresolved feelings. 

This chapter, “Producing Memory” examines the processes and production of material objects that are the means of transfer of cultural memory. Whiteread’s design for the Austrian Holocaust Memorial brings into focus the ways in which the production of memory is a complex interplay of political, personal, cultural and aesthetic forces, under challenge to respond to the uncertainties and discontinuities of the contemporary.
Memory and Mnemonic Practice

Death, Grief and Mourning

As a life crisis, death marks a point of transformation of the physical body and social and cultural relationships. The way a society and its individuals relate to death is a reflection of the social, historical and cultural framework which are in existence. This context influences how we see death and how we represent it. If death is considered to be a displacement that creates distance, spatially or temporally, then memories have the potential to function as mediators between the domain of life and the domain of the afterlife.

The experience of death involves both physical and psychological responses to the loss of the living. One of these responses, a way of keeping the dead within the sphere of life is to create something permanent in its place. The response to memorialize, to create an object of remembrance, aims to establish this link between the past and the present.

The absence of the individual through death commonly expresses itself through material forms such as text, images and objects. All these forms work as a means of recalling the absent, of bringing to the present lives or events that are no longer present. Through built representations, it is possible for the dead to be given a powerful presence in the present, increasingly evident in the appropriation of public space at a time of public death or collective or traumatic loss. Hallam and Hockey, when discussing English and American examples, argue that the memory making capacity of memorials is often a result of use as markers of bodily remains:

...memorials might also be regarded as a replacement for the vulnerable body or come to be treated, through graveside practices, as though they are the body – this accrual of identity and subjectivity normally associated with the living body occurs through the use of particular visual images/material objects. The inscription of words, however, is often crucial in establishing relationships between the memory object (for example, a memorial stone) and the subject to be remembered. 4

Spaces that are associated with death are ascribed meaning through the cultural practices that are linked to these spaces. These practices, such as commemorative events and private and public rituals and their relationship with a space have the potential to invoke death-related memories. Hallam and Hockey note that spaces of death are of “immense as well as intimate proportions” 5 and occur at all levels of society from officially sanctioned public sites such as churches, museums and urban spaces, to individual sites such as workplaces, homes and interiors. Cultural practices associated with these sites range from the macro to the micro level.

The construction of monuments and memorials function to evoke memories aimed at countering loss caused by death, establishing connections with absent individuals, bringing them into the present while at the same time acknowledging the distance between the past and the present. Peter Homans notes that, throughout time most societies have connected the experience of loss with mourning, or the healing response to the pain of loss to the building of manmade objects or cultural symbols to signify that loss and re-present it in order to make it understandable and bearable. 6 Homans distinguishes between grief, the emotions experienced by an individual in response to loss and on the other hand mourning, a socially produced ritual in response to grief. Mourning therefore is understood as social practices that seek to ‘heal’ the pain of grief. Grief is an emotion while mourning is the expression of grief through symbolic action. 7
For most societies, rituals of mourning and remembrance are fixed around the body which is ritualistically cleansed, honoured and visited, sometimes for generations following death. Where a body does not exist, mourning practices become fixed on the sites of death. Here space becomes a substitute for the grave and the focus for the rituals that individuals and families conduct to honour their dead.

Mourning practices in contemporary Western societies are no longer seen as public concerns but rather as the private responses within the family unit. This is a relatively recent phenomenon, as mourning practices in the past, particularly in the nineteenth century were more overtly public in nature. During this period mourning was regarded as a community practice because the community was seen as bearing the burden of loss, rather than the immediate family of the deceased. Everyday day life was infused by the overt public ritualization of grief from the wearing of mourning dress for both men and women, to the respect toward the bereaved displayed in public. Homans argues that mourning practices, while relatively stable over time have recently declined in western societies, primarily due to the “erosion and fragmentation of community caused by the processes of modernization.”

Prior to the nineteenth century, the dead were generally buried in the centre of cities where they symbolically served as a civic reminder of the fate of all individuals. Due to health, cultural and economic factors however, burial sites have moved from city sites such as churchyards and town commons to more peripheral locations. By the late nineteenth century therefore, the cemetery was no longer regarded as a public venue and mourning practices became essentially private.

Cas Wouters notes changes in recent decades in Western memorial practices. Since the 1960s, for example, the wearing of black, the principal outward sign of mourning, has to a large extent disappeared as a mourning protocol in contemporary Western societies. In its place, since the 1980s a quest for new rituals has emerged, in this case more varied and informal than traditional patterns. Because cemeteries and rituals such as the wearing of black have disappeared from the public realm, personalised or more ‘democratic’ approaches to commemorating death have appeared in recent years.

Mourning rituals function on a psychic as well as a social level. They produce a feeling of solidarity within a group which has the potential of regulating intense feelings such as grief and sorrow and enhancing the sense of being connected to a larger community. The need to mourn, as part of a healing process following death, is a universal phenomenon.

While each individual will undergo their own mourning process, memorial artefacts have the potential to provide a common locus that brings individuals into the communal sphere, creating a communal sense of loss. Mnemonic structures such as monuments and memorials have traditionally been the site for individual and collective mourning. As Homans has argued, these spaces of memory facilitate mourning though a process of ‘return and release’:

Traditionally, the monument has been the material structure around which both personal and collective mourning have taken place, and it has facilitated that mourning through a process of return and release. The monument ‘re-presents’ a past event and serves as a carrier of memory back through time to that event. After the event has been recollected and reflected upon, memory is released, and one comes back, so to speak, to the present. Through this process, memory of an earlier experience of loss is assuaged and rendered, or rerendered, less stressful.
Monuments or Memorials?

Collective memory could not be maintained and passed on from one generation to the next generation were it not able to reside in physical objects of remembrance such as monuments, memorials, museums, archives and cemeteries. Communities often go to great lengths to create and maintain such sites of memory, a recognition of the understanding that our link with the past is through those physical memory sites that give permanence to memory.

Since the Renaissance the Western tradition of memory has been based on the idea that physical artefacts can act as representations of the mental processes of remembering. Acknowledging and demarcating historical moments are phenomena that have existed in all cultures. As Rorty has noted, it has been generally understood that memories can be transferred to physical objects, which re-present memories and because of their durability, preserve their life beyond their immediate existence. Various physical forms such as objects, texts and images have the potential to trigger the recollection of events, individuals and relationships from the past.

Memory is able to take form and be described through the use of metaphor. A range of metaphors are commonly used to describe memory and allude to its different characteristics, either framed in terms of fixity and stability or ephemerality and temporality. The notion of containment is often associated with the idea of memory and hence the ability of memory to be contained within a material object, for memories to be stored or held. Archaeological metaphors for memory are also commonplace – memories are seen to be capable of being unearthed, recovered, reconstructed or fragmented. In direct opposition, the temporal nature of memory is equally common as a framing metaphor. Memory is often acknowledged as being susceptible to fading with the passing of time and hence the need to take active steps to sustain it.

Mnemonic practices in architecture work within both these frames of reference in order to recall past events, individuals or experiences through the exploitation of some form of visual linkage or cue. In its simplest form, the physical referent may take the literal form of what is being remembered, as is the case in the traditional concept of the monument, a heroic figurative icon celebrating national ideals and triumphs. In the contemporary context, recent memory practice in architecture has tended to reflect the polyvalent interpretations of history of late modernity and may be built objects or take a more conceptual, ephemeral form.

Monuments and memorials are key forms of built remembrance, however within the literature, the definition of each is confused, elusive and interchangeable. Formal distinctions between the two terms are blurred.

The word 'monument' is derived from the Latin noun monumentum, which is derived from the Latin verb moneo. The primary meaning of moneo is to bring to the notice of, to remind. Monumentum is therefore something that stimulates the remembrance of a person or an event. Monumentum could be used for anything with this purpose – text, a building, a work of art; but its primary denotation was a tomb or a funerary memorial. In common usage, the word ‘monument’ retains this basic meaning and has special reference to a tomb, a cenotaph or a memorial. The word ‘memorial’ is derived from the Latin word memoria, the adjectival form of the word memory. A memorial is therefore something that is capable of preserving the memory of something else.

Both words, monument and memorial therefore refer to ways in which we represent the past and make it meaningful in the present. If they both engage with the past, how is it possible or in fact is it necessary, to distinguish between them?
Many authors make a distinction between monuments and memorials by referring to monuments as celebratory or triumphal and memorials as more reflective and contemplative in their design. John Mack, for example, argues that memorials are "designed to embrace the healing possibilities of remembrance and reconciliation," while monuments "have a more celebratory, even triumphalist role." Mack draws an association between remembering and healing, referring to the Freudian view that individual psychological healing is progressed as a result of bringing into consciousness those events and experiences that have been forgotten or repressed. Furthering his distinction between monuments and memorials, Mack argues that memorials precede and eventually become monuments:

The memorial exposes all – it is equivalent to the grief and depth of remembrance occasioned by funerals. The monument equates, in terms of moral charge, to the end of grieving: it moves moral ambiguity on towards resolution; it implies forgetting...Memory in these contexts is the acknowledgement of achievement, a method by which the living make an accommodation to absence, and the dead are allowed to live on.

Similarly, Mike Rowlands argues that memorials become monuments as a result of the successful conclusion of the mourning process:

Our comparison suggests that monuments become memorials when they satisfy three functions for the living. First they should acknowledge the importance of the death and destruction that constituted the sacrificial act...Secondly, this acceptance of violence takes place in a context where it is claimed that something has been gained instead, which is effectively the transformation of a sense of collective loss into an object of devotion and passion. Thirdly, the dead are deified as part of that devotional logic in the sense that they become embodied in the idea of the collective. It is the role of the living to recognize the debt and express a willingness to reciprocate.

Rowlands' distinction between monuments and memorials, however, relies on an acceptance that the key function of a memorial is to facilitate mourning. Similarly, Homans focuses on the ability of the monument to serve as a link to the past whereby "memory of an earlier experience of loss is assuaged and rendered, or rerendered, less stressful." As will be shown, this dissertation argues that individual mourning plays only a minor, limited role in the ongoing life and relevancy of a memorial.

Arthur C. Danto, when discussing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, distinguishes memorials from monuments by arguing that the former are concerned with healing, remembrance and reconciliation while the latter are generally celebratory and triumphal:

We erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget. Thus, we have the Washington Monument but the Lincoln Memorial. Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends. The Washington Monument, vertical, is a celebration, like fireworks. The Lincoln Memorial, even if on a rise, presses down and is a meditation in stone. Very few nations erect monuments to their defeats, but many set up memorials to the defeated dead. Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honour the dead. With monuments, we honour ourselves.
Maya Lin considers her work to be memorials rather than monuments, referring to place making rather than object making as the key design focus. The distinction follows that memorials are fundamentally about engagement and monuments about seeing.

James E. Young, the pre-eminent scholar in the field of monuments and memorials, makes the following distinction between them:

In this study, therefore, I prefer to distinguish a memorial from a monument only in a broader, more generic sense: there are memorial books, memorial activities, memorial days, memorial festivals, and memorial sculptures. Some of these are mournful, some celebratory: but all are memorials in a larger sense. Monuments, on the other hand, will refer here to a subset of memorials: the material objects, sculptures, and installations used to memorialize a person or thing. For the purposes of this book, I treat all memory-sites as memorials, the plastic objects within these sites as monuments. A monument, on the other hand, is always a kind of memorial.

Despite Young’s definition, the words monument and memorial continue to be used interchangeably in his own work and in other memory discourse.

To force a distinction between the terms monument and memorial it is argued, is artificial and not helpful. The day-to-day use of the words suggests that they are commonly understood to mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably. The National Monument to the Irish Famine, for example, while being officially called a ‘monument’ is in fact conceived in the tradition of contemporary polyvalent attitudes to memory making.

This dissertation therefore makes no distinction between the terms monument and memorial. Efforts by authors as described above to make distinctions between the two terms are seen as unnecessary, as both terms refer to ways in which the past is represented and made meaningful in the present. More successful forms of recent memorialisation are based on allowing for a range of interpretations of the past, be they celebratory or reflective. In this sense, a distinction between the terms monument and memorial or other terms such as memorial space, memorial architecture or memory space it is argued, are meaningless. What is key are the attitudes to memory making revealed by the artefacts produced, not the artefacts themselves or their categorisation.

Acts of Memory

Processes of Memorialisation

Acts of memory, or the process of memorialisation are acts of performance, representation and interpretation associated with the loss of individual life. As a response to death, memorialisation serves two key needs, to maintain the memory of the deceased and at the same time to assist in accepting the reality of death and loss. Memorialisation assists individuals through the grieving process, as a focus for deeply felt emotion and as a way of honouring the individual. Memorialization provides a process where death can be mourned, where loss is recognized, experienced and eventually accepted.

Memorialization ultimately is a process of naming, of inscribing either literally or abstractly an association with the past. In a literal sense, memorialisation processes can be evidenced in the naming of markers such as bridges, roads and public buildings. In a more abstract sense, monuments and memorials serve to communicate aspects of the past through more symbolic means.
Forty has noted that much artefact making in Western society has been devoted to the creation of physical representations of the elusive world of human memory, from funerary sculpture to information technology. Similarly, Mieke Bal argues that cultural memorialisation is an activity that occurs in the present, marked by the continual reshaping and re-presentation of the past, even as it continues to shape the future.

The development of memorialisation practices however, cannot be discussed without reference to the historical development of the technological means of recording the past and its relationship to the development of collective memory. Jacques Le Goff provides a valuable insight in this area, identifying five distinct periods in the history of Western cultural memory. Firstly, pre-historic societies without writing possessed 'ethnic memory', forms of memory practice not reliant on visual recording. Secondly, the development of writing in the period from prehistory to Antiquity, while never fully supplanting oral memory practices, results in the development of key mnemonic practices such as commemoration and documentary recording. Thirdly, memory practices in the Middle Ages involved “the Christianization of memory and mnemotechnology, the division of collective memory between a circular liturgical memory and a lay memory little influenced by chronology, the development of the memory of the dead and especially of dead saints…” The fourth period identified by Le Goff is from the Renaissance to the present day, in which the invention of the printing press allows for the externalisation of individual memory. The Romantic period of the nineteenth century in particular, is marked for its range of commemorialia and the growth of archival state memory through museums, art galleries, libraries and archives. The final period, that of the contemporary, is marked by the invention of electronic means for the storage and transmitting information.

The separation of the past from the present is a relatively recent phenomenon. For most people until the nineteenth century, the past was thought to be much like the present. It was only in the late eighteenth century that people began to see the past as different to the present. This new understanding heightened the need to cherish symbols of national aspirations and identities such as monuments. Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins note that many histories of memory identify a significant transformation in the experience of time in the period between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century – a shift from a ‘space of experience' to a ‘horizon of expectation’. The increasing importance of commemorative practices in the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to death, heightened this sense that the past could no longer be felt in the present and was something that needed to be preserved.

Today, the public and private need to memorialize has never been stronger. Cities are increasingly being marked by places of remembrance - museums, monuments, memorials and interpretive sites are being imagined and constructed at a pace unequalled since the decade after the First World War. Additionally, as Linenthal has noted, memorialisation has emerged as a significant form of cultural expression, a democratisation of death evidenced in the compression of time between event and the conception of memorial building and the rise of performative memorial processes such as spontaneous shrines. In addition, the growth of memorialisation has been key in terms of emerging and marginalised cultural identities:

Much more than a gesture of remembrance, memorialization was a way to stake one’s claim to visible presence in the culture. At sites all over America, memorialization became a strategy of excavation and preservation of long hidden ethnic American voices and grievances.
Motives for Memory Making

Beyond identity claim, the motivations for memory making are rarely straightforward, often representing competing and conflicting agendas. Tania Zittoun’s investigation of the semiotic dynamics of memorials, for example, proposes four possible functions of a memorial “…as a place of reunification of a state; as a form of linking and transmission of experience between people; as a place of mourning; and as a didactic object.”

When the purpose of a memorial is to present an ideal of a unified nation-state, the meaning which a memorial participant has to relate to is that which the nation attempts to ascribe through the object itself. In assuming the meaning and forms of past events assigned to by the state, memorials concretise specific historical viewpoints. Through the textual, material and symbolic form of the memorial, the memorial participant is able reconstruct its official meaning. As Young has noted however, the official meaning ascribed to a memorial is a factor of the time of its making and may not have relevance beyond that period:

...monuments have long sought to provide a naturalizing locus for memory, in which a state’s triumph and martyrs, its ideals and founding myths are cast as naturally true as the landscape in which they stand. These are the monument’s sustaining illusions, the principles of its seeming longevity and power. But in fact...neither the monument nor its meaning is really everlasting. Both a monument and its significance are constructed in particular times and places, contingent on the political, historical, and aesthetic realities of the moment.

When the purpose of a memorial is as a form of linking and transmission of experience between people, remembering fosters a shared sense of community and identity. Artefacts and rituals serve to recall those events that are important to the self and the community. Commemorative forms such as memorials and monuments establish a shared sense of identity through a continuity between the past, present and the future. As Young has noted:

Rather than presuming a common set of ideals, the public monument attempts to create an architectonic ideal by which even competing memories can be figured...in the absence of shared beliefs or common interests, art in public spaces may force an otherwise fragmented populace to frame diverse values and ideals in common spaces. Through the creation of common spaces for memory, monuments create the illusion of common memory.

When the purpose of a memorial is the locus for individuals and communities to express the pain and grief of loss, to be able to have it acknowledged, give it form and integrate it into their memories, the result is the alleviating of the effects of personal and cultural trauma. Time is often an issue in these cases, particularly the need to meet emotional needs prompted by the ongoing anniversaries of traumatic events. Recent traumatic events such as the September 11 terrorist attacks and the 2004 Asian Tsunami have heightened the need for memorialisation to address the emotional needs of communities.

When the purpose of a memorial is as a didactic object, its educative function is both personal and communal, inculcating both in a sense of shared experience and destiny. Memory making associated with culturally traumatic events may even display this aspect, as a call to “learn and do not let this happen again.”

Ultimately, however, all memorials are located in space and time. They are created with specific intentions related to a specific spatio-temporal context. The intentions that people bring to memorials will change over time – from the need to mourn, to a need to place an event in a social and historical context, to the need to educate:
Memory is, after all, a process and is everlasting only when it remains a process and not a finished result. For just as memory is a negotiation between past and present, it is also an ongoing negotiation among all the groups of people whose lives were affected by this event and those whose lives will be shaped by what is built here.  

Above all however, for memorials to have ongoing cultural relevance, they can never be simply about mourning, they can never be simply expressions of “petrified grief.” A key argument in this dissertation therefore, is that the role of officially sanctioned memorial spaces extend beyond a simplistic understanding of them as devices to facilitate mourning:

- Although memorial culture may not heal the wounds of collective trauma, the vitality of collective acts of remembrance...ultimately has nothing to do with curing or controlling social grief and everything to do with reclaiming a sense of joy and inventively engaging the energies, affects and forces grief stirs forth.  

Memory making is motivated by a matrix of intentions, in some cases compatible, in other cases competing. Nicholas Capasso, for example, argues that the marked proliferation of formal memorialisation in the United States since the 1980s represents a “new stage of national retrospection”, linking the accelerating trend to a number of factors including national retrospection, a populist trend towards religious faith, a parallel to the historical preservation movement, the assertion of group identity and the fin-de-siecle effect. Motivations underlying the design of spaces memorialising culturally traumatic events need to be understood therefore as multiple and complex, rather than simply addressing the short-term needs of mourners:

- Given that individual gravestones might suffice in mourning of the dead, the real raison d'être of a memorial is that it addresses certain societal (rather than individual) needs by encouraging a public remembrance of the metanarrative, the larger context and the course of the events that lead to the death of those commemorated.

The Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, for example, while responding to the memorialisation of traumatic death, is a counter to simplistic understandings of memorial spaces as motivated only by the need to mourn.
Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, London
The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, located in the southwest corner of Hyde Park is a memorial expressly designed as an enabling civic experience rather than a solemn symbol of loss and mourning. Designed by American landscape architect Kathryn Gustafson and titled ‘Reaching Out/Letting In’, the memorial fountain is intended to symbolise Diana’s personality and openness and the two sides of her life, those happy times as well as those turbulent periods.

The fountain, a mandatory part of the competition brief, is interpreted as a necklace of water, a horizontal landform hugging element that amplifies the existing terrain and its boundaries. The embrace of the distorted oval necklace form is suggestive of the notion of reaching out/letting in, a reference to Diana’s power and vulnerability.

Dedicated in 2004, the fountain is more accurately described as a large oval stream bed approximately 50 metres by 80 metres in size. Composed of 545 individual pieces of Cornish granite, the stream bed ranges in width between three and eight metres and changes from a smooth bed with gentle ripples of water to a more turbulent side with steps, curves and rills and more active water formations.

The memorial is designed explicitly as a public open space, an everyday experience within the parklands of a dense urban city. Here memorialisation is not predicated on mourning but is rather an enabling civic gesture that is symbolic of Diana’s contribution to public life itself. By deviating from conventional memorial responses, the Memorial Fountain explicitly defines the space of memory as one of joyfulness and celebration rather than one of mourning. The memorial is a landscape of openness and optimism rather than one that situates itself in a mournful memory of the past. The memorial’s complex interplay of open space, tree plantings, water and views create an environment for public enjoyment through which memory of the Princess is projected.

In avoiding any didactic message, the Memorial establishes itself as a place first and foremost, an ongoing positive legacy of Diana’s life that builds on the rituals of everyday public life rather than the temporally limiting agenda of mourning and grief.
Memorialization and the Displacement of Memory

Despite the varied motives for memorial making, a key fate that all monuments and memorials have in common is what Robert Musil describes as their ‘invisibility’:

...What strikes one most about monuments is that one doesn't notice them. There is nothing in the world as invisible as monuments. 36

While monuments are invariably constructed to be the focus of our attention, they inevitably become part of the visual blur of the contemporary cityscape. Monuments are above all, intended as permanent fixtures of the landscape – they are built to last, to endure through generations. Musil notes that the task of most monuments is to “call forth a remembrance” 37 but in most cases they fail:

One cannot say that we don't notice them; one would have to say they un-notice us, they withdraw themselves from our senses. 38

Musil argues that eventually everything permanent will lose its ability to call our attention to it. Similarly, Nora argues that rather than holding memory, the monument displaces it. The less that memory work comes from within the individual or the community, the more it exists externally in “exterior scaffolding and outward signs.” 39 The natural memory work of the community is replaced by the material object of the monument.

It can be argued that in presenting a resolved, closed past in monuments, as Lowenthal and Nora have suggested, there is also the risk of destroying the understanding and connection of the past that an individual has within themselves. The monument has the appearance of permanence, with events fixed in time but while the movement of time brings about the monument, it also changes how it is understood.

It can be argued therefore that once material form is assigned to memory, the need to remember is no longer required. Anniversaries often have the effect of drawing our attention to monuments that would otherwise go un-noticed. In creating monuments and memorials, individuals and communities are relieved of the responsibility to remember. Memorials therefore become self referential and isolated from our daily lives.

In facilitating the making of memorials, we are in danger of being more forgetful. The motivation to remember events through memorialisation can be seen as an equally strong impulse to forget them.

Monuments and memorials are political texts, a subject of and subject to the intentions of the author, readers' interpretations and political will. Memorials are not impartial, they are shaped by their culture but also shape the culture they are within:

...monuments do not simply bear the impress of the past. By providing a means for its articulation, monuments are implicated in the reproduction of a 'past' as well. Rather than forming an inert backdrop for the unfolding of historical narratives, monuments are inextricably intertwined in the production of the past, not simply reflective of it. They can be understood as signifying systems-processes of making meaning that are produced and reproduced rather than statically cast once and for all. 40

Young argues that the monument has been “reformulated in its function as memorial” 41 and forced to re-evaluate its aesthetic response to events such as the Holocaust, and more recently, the terrorist attacks of September 11. The traditional monument, with its singular vision of history is at odds with the contradictions and complexities of contemporary events. The nation's need to establish a singular memory of the past is increasingly at odds with the response of artists and designers who are increasingly sceptical of the traditional forms and functions of monuments. Memorials are therefore more likely to be the site of contested cultural meanings than the site of shared national values.
Memorial Architecture and the Dilemma of Representation

Western Memorialisation

The typology of memorialisation in western societies has remained relatively constant since the time of the Egyptian civilization, the earliest examples taking the form of monuments to war, paying homage to the power of divine forces, gods and kings. Roman monuments, for example, take the form of triumphal arches celebrating the achievements of rulers or military leaders. A new, more democratic style of monument making appeared in the period following the Napoleonic wars, when large armies of citizens began to replace mercenary troops. Here marks a shift from the celebration of rulers to the honouring of the individual soldier and their sacrifice in the name of the nation-state.

Nicholas Capasso notes the last great period of memorial building in the United States began in the 1880s with post-Civil War memorialisation and culminated in the first two decades of the twentieth century prior to the memorialisation of the Great War:

Memorials of this period—when virtually all public sculptures were indeed memorials—were designed in accordance with a shared visual language of naturalism, allegory and classical reference. This closed and limited set of form and iconography was shared, however, only among the power elite of the civic and art worlds. Memorials thus met the needs of sponsors, creators and the enfranchised, educated, white, male and affluent segment of the public. Those with any voice agreed upon and took satisfaction in equestrian portraits, winged victories, obelisks, exedrae and the like.

The essential forms and motifs of Western memorial architecture therefore borrow from the Egyptian and Roman traditions. Classical forms such as obelisks, columns and arches appear as the predominant memorial types. Until the mid-nineteenth century, these forms were used consistently by memorial designers, artists, architects and builders, particularly in relation to war memorials. Wars were traditionally remembered in terms of the triumphant victory of the state, rather than any reference to ordinary soldiers. From the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards, however, a steady shift emerged away from the celebration of state power to the more complicated memorialisation of war through the sacrifices and lost lives of individual soldiers.

The First World War and its aftermath brought to the fore the need for an appropriate architectural language to express the loss of individuals and communities. K.S. Inglis describes the memorialisation response to the carnage of the First World War as an international ‘war memorial movement’. Rather than focusing on the glory of victory, the memorial forms of the First World War commemorate human sacrifice and the individual cost of the war.

The need to recognise loss and commemorate the dead was a universal pre-occupation, particularly in the decade after the Great War—"...the need to bring the dead home, to put the dead to rest, symbolically or physically, was pervasive." In some cases, this architectural exploration encouraged the development of traditional motifs into new forms while others explicitly drew on religious themes or symbolic motifs. Jay Winter argues that the use of traditional motifs in the form of classical or romantic images in First World War memorials is related directly to the communal sense of bereavement in the Europe of the Great War and its aftermath:
Traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less challenging intellectually and philosophically, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind. Sir Reginald Bloomfield’s design for the Menin Gate memorial, for example, honours the men and women killed at Ypres. The arch form of the memorial echoes an existing gateway through which Allied soldiers had passed on their way to the battlefields. Bloomfield however transforms the arch by inscribing it with the names of the dead, altering its original form to accommodate the 54,896 names of the missing. Edwin Lutyen’s 1927 memorial to the missing at Thiepval similarly lists the names of 73,357 soldiers, transforming the traditional form of the arch as a war memorial to hold the names of the dead. Both Bloomfield and Lutyen’s memorials mark a transition in the commemoration of the First World War.

Winter argues that new forms of commemorative art emerged in the aftermath of the Great War because traditional approaches glorifying sacrifice were seen as being “too unreal, too uplifting, too patriotic, and insufficiently sensitive to the desolation of loss.” As a result, new expressions emerged, communicating sadness as a primary theme and directly addressing the processes of mourning:

...they were built as places where people could mourn. And be seen to mourn. Their ritual significance has often been obscured by their political symbolism which, now that the moment of mourning has long passed, is all that we can see. At the time, communal commemorative art provided first and foremost a framework for and legitimation of individual and family grief.

Winter argues that the retreat to traditional archaic forms of memorialisation following the Great War is a reflection of the universality of bereavement and mourning and the need for grief to be mediated by classical, romantic and religious forms rather than a new architectural language.

Following the great wave of memorialisation after the First World War, public commemorative artworks remained relatively undeveloped. The modern movement’s suspicion of the monument contributed significantly to this dormant status. Lewis Mumford’s critique in the *The Death of the Monument* argued that the monument came:

...not out of life and its renewing impulses, but out of death: a desire to wall out life, to exclude the action of time, to remove the taint of biological processes, to exclude the active care of other generations by a process of architectural mummification.

The monument was therefore regarded as inappropriate to modernity. The world did not experience another memorial movement after the Second World War. Most nations did not construct new spaces of memory. Instead they reconstructed First World War memorials and converted them to memorials to both wars. Until the Second World War therefore, traditional modes of commemorating the war dead hark back to earlier conventions, providing the bereaved with a way of remembering that allowed them to live with the loss of loved ones and move on with their lives. At the same time, however, the aesthetic codes adopted by memorial makers reflected their time of making:
As intersection between public art and political memory, the monument has necessarily reflected the aesthetic and political revolutions, as well as the wider crises of representation, following all of the century’s upheavals...In every case, the monument reflects both its sociohistorical and its aesthetic context: artists working in eras of cubism, expressionism, socialist realism, earthworks, minimalism, or conceptual art remain answerable to the needs of both art and official history.5

The Dilemma of Representation

Prior to the Second World War, public commemorative art operated within the figurative tradition, coupled with architectural motifs such as arches, columns and obelisks. Figurative representation allowed for clear, unambiguous meaning in the representation of the past and a means for communicating an agreed system of cultural and social values.

In the period after the Second World War, a period marked by the social, political and moral impact of events such as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Holocaust, the certainty of historic events and their meanings began to be widely debated. Giving material form to historic events such as these became problematic. Winter argues that the Second World War marks the end of the usage of the classical motifs of commemoration and mourning which was prevalent after the Great War:

Before 1939, before the Death Camps, and the thermonuclear cloud, most men and women were still able to reach back into their ‘traditional’ cultural heritage to express amazement and anger, bewilderment and compassion, in the face of war and the losses it brought in its wake.5

The singular, defining scope of figurative representation could no longer respond to the challenges of an era defined by discontinuities and uncertainty. Memorialisation of the Holocaust in particular required significant rethinking of traditional memorialisation responses. Abstraction, on the other hand, offered the possibility of supporting divergent meanings and interpretations of the past.

In the aftermath of the Second World War therefore, a new language of memorial design began to develop, leading to the appearance of greater degrees of abstraction in commemorative art. Quentin Stevens argues that three interrelated factors have impacted on public memorial design, resulting in this increasing tendency towards abstraction – the interest in formal abstraction in sculpture of the time, the developing interest in challenging the spatial relationships between the work, the viewer and site, and the need to respond to the artistic challenge of representing problematic aspects of the past.5

Developments in art in general have also influenced the development of commemorative art forms. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, large scale public artworks began to be produced and sited in urban spaces. The U.S National Endowment for the Arts initiated the Art in Public Places program in 1967 which encouraged “visually pleasing but self-contained accoutrements to urban buildings and spaces.”54 The contemporary equivalent of the NEA program, the General Service Administration’s Art for Architecture program until the 1990’s however, actively discouraged public art with a commemorative content.
Contemporary Memorial Practice

Since the 1960s, newer forms of memorialisation have emerged in western societies that challenge the conventions of the traditional monument and the notion of memory as a knowable entity. Recent forms of memorialisation such as counter memorials and spontaneous memorials, while not the subject of this dissertation, offer insights into the potential for extending the design possibilities of representing memory in officially sanctioned public memorial spaces.
Sue Anne Ware argues that if memory is understood as a process, of continual re-evaluation and reconstruction within the context of the present, then traditional fixed forms of commemoration are unable to reflect its inherent properties. Using the term ‘anti-memorial’, Ware focuses on the need for contemporary forms of memorialisation to address “the informal and the local as opposed to the formal and the national.”

This critique of traditional commemorative forms is a direct antecedent of the 1970s German counter-memorial movement.

While in most cases the memorialisation of culturally traumatic events, to one degree or another, reflects the progressive, redemptive or toxic narratives identified by Linenthal, the representation of events such as the Holocaust have called for other ways of recalling the past. Hence a significant critique of the assumed relationship of memory and its three dimensional representation began to occur in the 1970s, prompted by the re-examination of the Holocaust in relation to post-war German history. Conventional memorial practices began to be seen as inadequate and inappropriate to the burden of remembering the Holocaust. Critics of conventional memory practices argued that traditional responses would discourage engagement and understanding of Germany’s Holocaust past and would induce forgetting rather than active remembering:

The difficulty was to know how to remember the atrocity without lessening its horror, without somehow sanitizing it by making it tolerable to remember...56

Counter memorial artists seek to challenge the traditional understanding of the monument as an expression of the knowable, of closure to events. The works that have emerged from this movement have often been of a temporary nature and have required the active participation of the public in the making of memory. Young notes that counter memorial “...aim 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 passers-by but to demand interaction, not to remain pristine but to invite their own violation and not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to drop it at the public’s feet.”57

Jochen Gerz’s Monument for Peace and Against War and Fascism is an example of how leading artists in the avant-garde countermonument movement actively challenged the belief that memory is a quantifiable object and seek to encourage greater interaction with individuals in the making of memory.
Monument for Peace and Against War and Fascism

Fig 10, Unveiling, 1986, Monument for Peace and Against War and Fascism, Hamburg

Fig 11, Seventh lowering 1992, Monument for Peace and Against War and Fascism
In 1983, at the invitation of the City of Hamburg, Germany, artists and designers were invited to design a 'Monument Against Fascism, War and Violence – and for Peace and Human Rights'.

The winning design by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz was designed to directly engage with its viewing public and to eventually disappear. The monument, unveiled in 1986, took the form of a twelve metre high, one metre square hollow aluminium column, sheathed with a thin layer of soft lead sheeting. A temporary inscription in a number of languages at its base read:

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

At each corner of the column was attached a steel-pointed stylus, intended to allow visitors to inscribe thoughts, graffiti and messages. As sections of the column were covered with text and images, the column was progressively lowered into the ground. Over the next seven years, the monument was progressively lowered, finally disappearing on 10 November 1993. Currently the only evidence of the monument is a stone inscribed with the words “Harburg's Monument Against Fascism”. The disappearance of the monument has therefore returned the burden of remembering to the community, rather than assuming that role for posterity as a traditional monument would do. As Young has noted, in “... defining itself in opposition to the traditional monument's task, the Gerzes' Harburg monument illustrated concisely the possibilities and limitations of all monuments everywhere.”

A primary concern for the artists was to respond to the intentions of the monument organisers but at the same time seek not to allow the public to remove the burden of remembering by building. Their design was a monument that was not simply against itself but also against the idea of a monument, a form too closely related to the rhetoric of fascism. Rather than accept the park-like setting for the monument offered by the competition organisers, the artists proposed a site in the commercial core of Harburg, a suburb of Hamburg populated by Turkish 'guestworkers' and working class German families.

The vanished monument therefore returns the burden of memory to its host society, allowing the people of Harburg and of Germany to remember the wrongs of the past but also to be ever vigilant and take action to counter Fascism in the present:

The 'trick' is to use a version that exists in the tradition of art history to mirror the expectations people place on a monument, reflecting these back on them, and to pass the task the monument was meant to perform to the people. That means they are seduced into articulating.  

While the designer's intentions were for visitors to inscribe their names and thoughts on the memorial, some deliberately subverted this by adding offensive comments and trivial graffiti. While this indicated a reluctance to 'play along' with the designer's intentions, these additions to the memorial became a mirror of existing tensions, accurately reflecting back the community's attitudes to memory and memorialization.
Spontaneous & Performative Memorials

In concert with the evolution of the counter-monument movement, the emergence of performative and spontaneous forms of memorialisation as an international, predominantly Western contemporary form of mourning ritual, has evolved in recent decades as a key way in which individuals and communities have attempted to cope and acknowledge the circumstances of traumatic death. Harriet F. Senie argues that spontaneous memorial practices revive the role that public cemeteries historically played in Western cities. Sites of spontaneous shrines operate on two levels – as a place to leave a ritual offering and as a site of pilgrimage to understand the personal impact of traumatic events.

Prior to the nineteenth century, the dead were buried in cemeteries within the town centre, serving in part as a daily reminder of humankind’s mortality. Since the nineteenth century, however, cemeteries have been located outside the main centres of towns, primarily for economic and health reasons. By the end of the nineteenth century, cemeteries ceased to be public places:

> During the twentieth century, perhaps in reaction to earlier perceived excesses of grieving, or maybe in response to the unprecedented devastation of the two world wars, burial practices changed. By mid-century, death and mourning had almost become taboo, too uncomfortable for public expression...

Mourning in a cemetery is therefore an essentially private affair. Spontaneous shrines on the other hand, are overwhelmingly public and invite participation. Performative memorial responses as a phenomena began to develop momentum with the response of visitors to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial where visitors have left over 30,000 objects, not including flags and flowers. Recent examples include the outpouring of grief expressed in floral tributes at the death of Princess Diana and the candlelight shrines and photographic walls at Ground Zero following the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Anthropologist Sylvia Grider argues that the appearance of spontaneous memorials indicate the need by individuals to make a personal connection with a catastrophic event, assisting individuals to reduce the enormity of catastrophic or traumatic events to a human scale that is understandable and accessible:

> For many people, placing a memento at a shrine is an act as sacred and comforting as lighting a candle at a church altar. The shrines are a metaphoric threshold which represents the end of numbness and the beginning of the ability to take action.

Traditional memorials appear long after the event that they memorialise, are deliberate in their intent and express public and personal meanings. Spontaneous memorials, on the other hand, appear soon after the event, often within hours of it occurring, and express very personal reactions. While traditional memorials tend to be created for a future audience, spontaneous memorials are intended for an immediate audience. While traditional memorials are static, spontaneous memorials are dynamic in their appearance and content.

Spontaneous memorials are typically characterised by an attempt to claim and define public space through an assemblage of artefacts that accrue over time. The nature of items that are left behind are often of a sentimental, sometimes ‘kitsch’ nature, for example, the teddy bears and children’s toys at the site of the Oklahoma City bombing. While these items may be unremarkable in nature, they appear as a consistent vocabulary, the ritual of leaving the items behind in a public place being more important than the nature of the items themselves.
Spontaneous memorials are however, more than expressions of grief. They may also act as symbols of protest or discontent that in their immediate and performative response to events, have the power to trigger other reactions in the wider cultural sphere. The material that is left by individuals are both an offering to those who are being memorialised and a message for the broader public and media. They are personal messages that are intended to be seen.

The NAMES Memorial Quilt, began as a form of spontaneous memorialisation and provides significant lessons in ways in which memorial spaces can facilitate the need by individuals to make a connection with culturally traumatic events.
NAMES Memorial Quilt, Washington D.C.
In the first decade of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, some social groups were disproportionately affected and many of these groups found existing cultural forms of mourning unable to respond meaningfully to the emerging social crisis. Groups such as the gay community responded to the AIDS crisis by developing new cultural forms and processes to meet the need for personal and collective mourning and memorialisation.

The NAMES Quilt Project began as one panel, a commemoration by one person of a dead friend. It soon expanded to a collaborative format and has grown to include more than 44,000 panels representing more than 84,000 individual victims of AIDS. Panels were sized to approximate the size of a coffin and laid out as if stitched together, woven into a superquilt conveying the enormity of human loss. The grid allows for a non-hierarchy, emphasising equality and inclusiveness. Each block of the Quilt is comprised of eight individual panels stitched together. In the centre of all displays of the Quilt are blank squares where visitors are invited to record their thoughts and reactions.

Though not directly influenced by the naming aspects of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the NAMES Memorial Quilt is the logical successor to the creation of an intimate memorial landscape from a larger tragedy. The NAMES Memorial Quilt draws explicitly on the public response to the Wall. Like the Wall, the Quilt is about the naming of names, both visually and verbally:

It is an organized, and wildly successful, attempt to express a wide range of emotions and to create a community for grieving and for coming to terms with devastating loss.  

For Cleve Jones the designer of the memorial, the idea of a patchwork quilt became the “domestic equivalent for the sign of national unity” 66, a need to make AIDS American, rather than a disease of minority groups. Commentators have recognised that as well as symbolising familial warmth and humanity, the quilt was also quintessentially American, with its roots in folk art traditions of the nineteenth century.

A significant performative aspect of the NAMES Memorial Quilt is the ritualistic actions involved in the display of the panels themselves. From an initial intent to unfold the heavy panels with dignity and a sense of organized ceremony, arose the ritual of unfolding:

It is usually performed with a team of eight volunteers, many of them panel makers, although they do not necessarily unfurl the panels they have created. The team wears white clothing, so as not to distract from the colours of the quilt. ...After the panels are opened, the names of the people whom they honour are read aloud. 67

The Quilt, last unfolded publicly in October 1996 is a significant sociological artefact, commemorating the dead, as a focus for collective mourning and as a call to social action:

...the AIDS Quilt was never just about culture and memory. It was also intended as a tool of political mobilization and as a weapon in the battle for access to economic resources that could be used in the fight against AIDS.  

The full NAMES Memorial Quilt is a public spectacle because of its sheer size but walking amongst its panels is a deeply personal and intimate experience. Above all, performative memorial projects such as the NAMES Memorial Quilt are a manifestation of the deep need for communities to do their own memory work. While officially sanctioned monuments and memorials assist in the healing process, many people yearn to find their own ways to negotiate loss, “...many even feel compelled - to do the work themselves, to be part of these fertile pockets of conversation.” 69
While the development of newer forms of memorialisation such as counter memorials and performative and spontaneous memorials offer new ways of approaching the design of spaces dealing with the culturally traumatic events, officially sanctioned memorial processes often reflect more conventional approaches to memory making.

In the introduction to *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, Paul Williams discusses the aesthetic controversy surrounding the recent completion of the National World War II Memorial in Washington D.C. Designed by Friedrich St. Florian, the memorial, completed in 2004, comprises a ring of fifty six grey columns representing the states and territories of the United States that were involved in the conflict. At the northern and southern ends of the composition are two pavilions representing the Atlantic and Pacific theatres of war, separated by a large reflecting pool and fountains.

The overwhelmingly critical reception of the design noted that while consistent with the stylistic conventions of previous World War memorials the memorial expressed “little of what we now expect from structures commemorating mass death and suffering, including the experiences and conflicted memories of ordinary citizens who fought, worked and grieved.”

The aesthetic shortcomings of the memorial were particularly stark in the context of the legacy of memorial design achieved by Maya Lin’s 1982 masterwork, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In this sense Williams notes that in the approach to contemporary memorial design, “…critical consensus now favours minimalist and abstract design over that which is grandiose and authoritative; decentred and incommodious space over that which is central and iconic; bodily visitor experiences that are sensory and emotional rather than visual and impassive, interpretive strategies that utilize private, subjective testimony over official historical narratives…”

The following section examines the cultural context of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the key design characteristics that have established it as the critical and populist benchmark in contemporary approaches to memorial design.
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.
Fig 14. Detail, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.
In 1979, The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc was created to establish a memorial that would be a tangible symbol of recognition of the sacrifice of Americans in the Vietnam War. Recognising the war as a contested period in American history, the competition organisers hoped that by separating American policy in the war from the individuals that served and died, the memorial would begin a process of national healing and reconciliation. Four basic criteria for the design of a memorial were therefore established: that it be reflective and contemplative in character; that it harmonize with its surroundings, particularly the neighbouring national memorials of the Mall; that it would contain all 58,000 names of the dead and missing and; that it make no political statement about the war. From its outset, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was based on a desire to 
"...begin a healing process."  

The 1,421 design entries submitted were judged anonymously by a jury of eight internationally recognized artists and designers. On May 1, 1981, the jury presented its unanimous selection for first prize as Maya Lin, a 21 year-old Chinese-American postgraduate architecture student at Yale University. Construction was completed in October 1982 and the memorial was formally dedicated on 13 November 1982.

Lin conceived the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a park within a park, a protective, quiet place – distinct yet in harmony within its setting in Constitution Gardens. Lin characterised her design as a "rift in the earth, a long, polished, black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth." The black polished granite of the memorial creates a mirror like surface reflecting the image of the lawns, trees and monuments of its garden-like setting.

The memorial, consisting of two 75 metre long black granite-clad walls sited below grade and connected in a v-shape at a 125 degree angle, is a cut into the earth and is seen as a scar, the memory of a wound. The names of more than 58,000 American dead and missing from the war are inscribed in chronological order according to the year of death or disappearance. Other than the names of the dead, the only other text that appears on the memorial is located at its apex, representing the beginning and end points of the war:

Prologue: In honour of the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order they were taken from us.  

Epilogue: Our nation remembers the courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty and country of its Vietnam veterans. This memorial was built with private donations from the American people. 

The memorial stands in contrast to the other national memorials and monuments on the Washington Mall. While other monuments are constructed in white stone and are designed to be seen from a distance, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is horizontal and low, hidden from immediate view and constructed in black granite. The memorial participant’s own reflection as well as symbols of the nation, the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorials are brought into the context of the memorial, fusing the past with the present and setting the memorial within a historical continuum. The Vietnam War previously disowned culturally, becomes embedded in American history and identity while at the same time bringing both the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial into new relevance. The memorial is therefore not simply a site for private grief, it is more importantly a site of public commemoration and a representation of cultural trauma.
Critical and Public Response

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial appeared in a context when public art had become an increasingly accepted form of articulating public space. The positive critical reception of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial design recognised its direct influences from the sculptural traditions of late 1970s minimalist work and the site-specific public art of the time. Early critics of the winning design focussed on its apparent similarities to minimalist art. Works such as Richard Serra’s *Pulitzer Piece: Stepped Elevation* (1970-71) and *Shift* (1970-72) reveal similarities in form and materiality.

Criticism of Lin’s design from the non-art world however, began soon after the design was publicly revealed. The design was initially criticized as not being sufficiently heroic, “a black gash of shame.” In March 1982 as a response to appease critics of the memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund agreed to the incorporation of figural group of Vietnam soldiers by sculptor Frederick Hart to be placed near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Later additions to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial have also included a memorial to women serving in the war. These figurative additions appear as subordinate elements in relation to the Wall, spatially, conceptually and experientially. The criticism of Lin’s design however, dissipated quickly after its dedication when it became clear that it had a profound emotional response in visitors.

In the design of the memorial, Lin rejects the conventional heroics of military monuments and in its place presents a poignant, contemplative, arguably apolitical design. The memorial does not say that death is noble or at the other extreme, that it is simply a waste. In essence the memorial only says that death is real and that in war, no matter the rights or wrongs, individuals die. The memorial can therefore be seen fundamentally as a landscape created by the enormity of loss.

Key Design Aspects

Form

The traditional war memorial form is rejected through the lack of figurative depictions and in its low horizontal form:

> Because the form we expected is not there, we are encouraged to replace it with expectations for new forms that may be more personal and individual. This is an important first step in the memorial’s process of appeal to divergent individuals – conventional expectations for the work are destroyed, requiring us to bring to it something out of our individual experiences that does not necessarily conform to conventional expectations. 74

The lack of information, other than individual names, on the memorial focuses our attention on its formal aspects. This directness in form allows for the acceptance of a range of visitor expectations because information describing any appropriate meaning to be understood is deliberately not designed into the work. The ambiguity of meaning allows for multiple interpretations by the memorial participant as well multiple interpretations over time.

The form of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial welcomes the memorial participant, its non-threatening gesture achieved through its open-ended v-form:

> It’s like opening up your hands. It’s not so threatening. You’re using the earth. Asking people to come in, protecting people from the sounds (of the city) and in a way that’s no more threatening than two open hands. 79
Setting
The tapering wall forms of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, while symbolizing the tenuous beginning and end of the Vietnam War, also suggests a unity with its landscape rather than being an object set apart or dominating it. Visitors descend into the earth, into a space separate from the everyday to re-emerge on the other side in a renewed state. The siting of the wall below grade takes the memorial participant into the experience, disconnecting them from their immediate surroundings and allowing a space for contemplation. Capasso has noted that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial can only be understood peripatetically, through the act of walking:

People do not observe the Wall in a fixed instant as an object apart – they move slowly along it, down into its space, and, owing to its reflective surface, find themselves inextricably merged with it. The National Park service allows friends and relatives of the deceased to take pencil rubbings of the names and to leave behind letters, flowers or personal mementos. These bodily, psychological and ritual engagements intensify individual experience of the memorial and are in great measure responsible for its emotional charge and popular acclaim.80

Lin chose to arrange the names of the deceased chronologically rather than alphabetically, starting at the apex of the V-shape and ending back at the centre. The memorial was originally designed however, so visitor approach was central, towards the vertex of the composition. The start and end points of the war were therefore located at its centre, the memorial participant completing the circle by beginning and ending at the meeting of the first and last names. Due to pedestrian damage to the surrounding turf, visitors are now channelled from one end of the memorial to the other. This however, has produced an unexpected dimension to the experience of the memorial, allowing for the intensification of its emotional impact as the volume of names increases and the memorial participant gradually becomes subsumed by the memorial space. The siting of the memorial below grade therefore takes the memorial participant into the experience, disconnecting them from their immediate surroundings and allowing a space for contemplation:

The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it.81

Time
In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, information describing the Vietnam War itself is omitted. There is no chronology of events, battles or overarching story. No dates appear on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial other than the two dates representing the beginning and end of the conflict, 1959 and 1975. Individual names while listed chronologically according to date of casualty, are not defined by the inscription of the date of death.

In deciding to list the names chronologically according to dates of casualty rather than alphabetically, Lin gives each individual their own identity and place in time. If, for example, the names were listed alphabetically, then common names would have appeared in multiple and loved ones would be unable to make a connection. Listing the names chronologically also allows for the recognition of colleagues of individuals, those who may have been killed in the same mission on the same day. The listing therefore allows for the individual as well as their stories to be revealed.

Daniel Abrahamson notes that Lin understood the chronological listing and layout of the names meeting at the intersection of the two walls as the key to the meaning of the memorial:

The time sequence, which has the dates of the first and last deaths meeting at the intersection of these walls, is the essence of the design. It is a segment in time, meant to recognize all those who served during the war, and giving special recognition to those who will never return from it.82
The chronological, circular form of the text is therefore key to the meaning implied by the memorial. Where listings of the dead occur in earlier memorials, they are conventionally expressed in alphabetical order, usually with some other form of notation such as rank. For Abrahamson, Lin's representation of time in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial represents "...a potentially new type of monumental representation of history." 83

Naming
A key source of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's power is its direct association with those for whom the Vietnam War was a defining moment, either culturally, socially or through loss.

The chronological listing of the names, according to date of casualty, conveys the idea of the war as a story of individual sacrifices and gives each individual a special place in history. Each name is marked by either a cross or a diamond symbol. The diamond symbol denotes the confirmation of that individual's death. Those names marked with a cross, numbering approximately 1,150, are either missing or unaccounted for. If an individual returns alive, the cross is converted into a circle, a symbol of life. This, however, has never occurred. If an individual's remains are identified, a diamond will be superimposed on the cross. No information is provided on the individual's rank, unit or military decorations -- only names are listed. All individuals are therefore seen as equal in death.

Names have the power to evoke connections. As individuals we tend to react to names that are familiar to us -- our own name, a name of a loved one or even an acquaintance, a name resembling someone well-known or famous, a place we recognise. Scanning the list of names we look for points of connection, we are searching for something of ourselves in the names of the fallen:

The most commonly noted response of visitors at the memorial has been to think of the widening circle of pain emanating from each name -- to imagine for each name the grieving parents, sisters, brothers, girlfriends, wives, and children; to imagine, in effect, the multitude of people who were directly affected by the war. 84

The listing of names as a memorial impulse is not new. First appearing as a memorial strategy in the aftermath of the First World War, the listing of names brought home the personal cost of the war and democratised the conflict. Everyday soldiers became heroes, rather than merely the generals that sent them to war. The listing of the names gave equal standing to recruit and officer and can be seen as a reaction to the anonymity of modern warfare. The names therefore stood for both the dignity of the individual soldier and the recognition of the individual cost of war.

In addition however, the listing of names has an aesthetic or design aspect in the Vietnam Veterans memorial. The scale of the listing is evocative of the scale of loss. In the memorial's case, the listing of over 58,000 names is an overwhelming design element in itself, particularly as it is used in relation to the movement of the body and its reflection in the polished granite surface.

Lin conceptualised the text as a book to be read. The names are etched either left or right justified, so the opposite side is ragged, as in the pages of a book. The lettering can be read on a personal level, in terms of its content as well as in a more abstract sense in terms of its collective visual presence, "like a beautiful fabric, so that the text begins to symbolize something other than just names carved there." 85

Reflectivity
As noted by a number of scholars such as Sonja K. Foss and Peter Ehrenhaus, the listing of names as a design strategy is only part of the basis for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's ability to evoke powerful
emotional responses in the memorial participant. The other significant aspect of the Memorial's design is its reflective surface.

The black polished granite surface of the memorial reflects the memorial participant, drawing them into the memorial itself. When a visitor gazes on the wall, their reflection is superimposed on the inscribed names, the past and the present becoming one. The name is therefore 'held' between the gaze of the memorial participant and their reflected gaze. There is no possibility of focussing on both the name and the reflected image at the same time as they belong to separate visual spaces:

*When you touch a friend's name on the stone, for a magical moment you are suspended halfway between heaven and earth...with them again. Then you back off and see his name and your reflection in the polished granite.*

The reflectivity of the black granite surface dematerialises the form of the memorial, further emphasising the inscribed names and their relationship to the memorial participant.

**Performativity**

The reflectivity of the wall also induces the desire to touch the names, producing the effect of image and reality converging through physical touch. Rubbings are taken of the names by loved ones. Every day family members and friends leave mementoes and tokens of remembrance at the memorial, making them as much a legacy of the Vietnam years as the memorial itself.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial creates a place for ritual performances. Touching names, taking rubbings of names, leaving personal objects and participating in communal gatherings are ritual behaviours that are an essential part of the design of the memorial. Lin designed the memorial with the intent that the names themselves would be the memorial. What she did not foresee however, was the power of the specific strategies of naming that she employed to encourage visitors to leave behind mementoes of life, to "give those names the keepsakes of identity, as if to restore to the dead the intimate worlds they lost." 87

**Between Ambiguity and Specificity, Between Abstraction and Figuration**

The success of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial lies in its ability to meet both the aesthetic expectations of architecture and contemporary public art through strategies of abstraction and conceptualisation while at the same time creating a place for the expression of highly intimate, personal memorialisation processes to occur.

Foss attributes the success of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in responding to divergent experiences and meanings of the war to a number of factors - its rejection of traditional rhetorical conventions of idealization and heroism in favour of the focus on individual names; the intimate relationship of the memorial with its site, including its welcoming formal gesture; the absence of didactic information on the war; the focus on the loss of life rather than the events of the war; and the use of 'multiple referents', abstract forms that allow the memorial participant to focus on aspects that conform to their own experience and understanding of the war. 88

Foss argues that the ease with which the Vietnam Veterans Memorial allows the visitor to enter the work is directly related to the fact that it does not attempt to tell its audience what to think:

*It confirms, supports, and reinforces whatever individual expectations and perspectives visitors wish to bring to the memorial so that we are able to maintain them without fear of challenge or rejection.* 89
Fig 17, View with Hart figures, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial's abstract form, lack of figurative representation and didactic content allows the work a wide variety of referents that could be attributed to it. These referents will vary according to the memorial participant but the end result is the confirmation of the memorial participant's perspective on the war, according to the referents perceived by the memorial participant.

Similarly, Lora Senechal Carney argues that the rhetorical power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is grounded in its use of "meiosis, or understatement; ambiguity, reversals of expectations, and self-reflection." Carney argues that prior to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the public expectation of commemorative art was one that was essentially rhetorical, that it was expected to persuade the memorial participant through specific aesthetic strategies. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial however succeeds by being ambiguous and open to interpretation.

This ambiguity of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's design, argues Ehrenhaus is an 'invitation to encounter' meanings that the individual has not been directed to perceive. In Silence and Symbolic Expression, Ehrenhaus explores the use of silence in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a means of allowing for diverging interpretations of the past and our relationship with it. By rejecting the rhetorical conventions of traditional commemorative art, Ehrenhaus argues that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial offers the memorial participant the opportunity for distilling their own version of the past, discovering meaning within its silence.

Rowlands describes the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as antimonumental, designed not as a passive spectacle but one that enables engagement. For Rowlands the memorial has "an individualizing motive....that denies the inscriptions an existence as a timeless, numinous image of the nation to which the viewers might submit themselves." Instead, the memorial is "interrogative" and "implies terrible things about futility." Rather than operate passively therefore, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial asks the memorial participant to work to extract their own meaning from it. The memorial is as profoundly about the experience of the memorial participant as it is about the complex contradictions of the Vietnam War. In the absence of explanations about the conduct of the war and of death itself, the visitor is allowed to develop their own understandings and meanings:

For me, these projects require the kind of art that can communicate with you almost immediately and not be referential. The second you start intellectualizing, its lost. What I really question is allegory. This represents that because it says so in the guidebook. It's the difference between telling people what to think and enabling them -- allowing them -- to think. Hence the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been likened to a slate which vast numbers of people have used to envision their own stories, the black walls acting as screens for multiple projections of memory and history:

...the black granite walls of the memorial act as a screen for myriad cultural projections; as a site for contemplation, it is easily appropriated for diverse interpretations of the war and of the experience of those who died in it. To the veterans, the wall is an atonement for their treatment since the war; to the families and friends of those who died, it is an official recognition of their sorrow and an opportunity to express a grief that was not previously sanctioned; to others it is either a profound antiwar statement or an opportunity to rewrite the history of the war to make it fit more neatly into the master narrative of American imperialism.

Because the memorial does not focus on the war itself but rather the individual cost of the war, it is able to appeal to a wide audience, from critic to supporter:
While all rhetoric is ambiguous and open to interpretation because of the various meanings symbols elicit in individuals, abstract, non-discursive rhetoric is particularly subject to diverse interpretations and the assignment of a wide variety of referents to the aspects of design. \(^9\)\(^7\)

Combined with this ambiguity is a specificity that grounds the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the personal, the naming of the deceased.

The pure abstraction of form and the pure specificity of the names combine to create a compelling symbol of loss and remembrance. The memorial focuses on the names as the one ultimate truth of the Vietnam War, specifically taking no side in the moral and political debate about the Vietnam War. The naming of the dead avoids moral arguments, the repetition of name after name conveying only the message of waste. The focus is on the individual rather than the contested nature of the war. Lists of names form a closure, a reference point in a confusing and traumatic period of American history. Without the names, the memorial would simply be a monumental piece of land art:

The power of the design lies in the overwhelming presence of individual names, which represent complicated human lives cut short. Lin’s organization of the names also contributes to the tension between particular names and the whole formed by the names together. The dead appear on the Wall not alphabetically but rather in the order in which they died in Vietnam. Soldiers who died together are listed together on the Wall, so that on every line on every panel stories of particular times and places are inscribed with the names. \(^9\)\(^8\)

The names bring life to the memorial, they animate and counter the abstraction of form. The small typeface is deliberately designed to encourage touching. The size of a fingertip, the typeface is intimate and personal, inviting tangible interaction:

The names keep you from remaining indifferent. You become part of them, and they become part of you. They search for something within you, and they stimulate you to search for something with greater meaning than yourself. \(^9\)\(^9\)

Lin, referring to the addition of the Hart sculpture to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, comments on this ability of the names to make a connection with the visitor:

...as each person enters the memorial, seeing his face reflected amongst the names, can the human element escape him? Surely seeing himself and the surroundings reflected within the memorial is a more moving and personal experience than any one artist’s figurative or allegorical interpretation could engender. \(^10\)\(^0\)

This nexus of the ambiguous and the specific in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial it is argued, is effectively a play of the abstract and the figurative. The figurative here is described more broadly than the conventional meaning applied in art, that of the representation of human form. In the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the names are figurative in that they represent individuals textually rather than pictorially. The names however, operate as effectively, if not more effectively on a figurative level in giving form than pictorial representations because they require engagement by the memorial participant:

They are names which run deep into the heart of America, each testimony to a family’s decision, sometime in the past, to wrench itself from home and culture to test our country’s promise of new opportunities and a better life. They are names drawn from the farthest corners of the world and then, in this generation, sent to another distant corner in a war America has done its best to forget. \(^36\)\(^1\)
Summation: The Production of Memory

Memorial artefacts allow for the past to be represented and made meaningful in the present. Dominated by figurative representation until the mid-twentieth century, the memorial design typology in the West has since this time been under challenge to respond to the uncertainties and discontinuities of the contemporary.

Where figurative representation is limited by its singular meaning, abstract representation offers the potential for supporting multiple interpretations of the past and instead of limiting meaning, provides "new ways of provoking responses from visitors, transmitting messages, and addressing new subjects of remembrance." 102

Internationally, contemporary approaches to memorial design are situated and are directly influenced by the legacy of Maya Lin's seminal work, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Lin successfully uses minimalist design strategies to address the representation of problematic memories, events which in their scale and inherent contradictions had to that date not been the subject of formal memorialisation.

Similarities with minimalist sculpture are, however, more than stylistic. Maya Lin's work is deliberately experiential in the great tradition of the best minimalist sculpture. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial "propose(s) a new dialogic relationship between subject and object, one that involves intensified levels of physical and perceptual intimacy and self-realization." 103

The incorporation of minimalist aesthetics and design strategies in public memorial design post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial have established a range of new relationships between public and private space, personal and collective memory and abstraction and representation. However, it is argued that this legacy has over time been negatively affected by the way in which memory is consumed, by both the designers of memorial artefacts and the viewing public itself.

The following chapter "Consuming Memory" examines the nature of memory as a consumable entity and the implications for those involved in their design and visitation.
producing memory
THREE
CONSUMING MEMORY
It was an incredibly bright cloud, like an unimaginable hallucination. You could almost see the towers. That's where the idea of Phantom Towers came, like phantom limbs. The idea was to restructure that cloud into the shape of the towers.  

Paul Myoda
Introduction

Witnessing the surreal aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center site on the night of September 11, artist Paul Myoda became captivated by the sight of great plumes of dust and smoke, strangely illuminated by the floodlights lighting the wreckage of the site.

Myoda and fellow artist Julian Verdiere and a number of other arts professionals responded by collaborating on a temporary art installation titled *Tribute in Light*, two soaring beams of blue light conceived to replace the image of the Twin Towers. The work consisted of eighty-eight blue searchlights placed on a site to the north-west of the world Trade Center site:

> What you see in those beams of light are the pulverized towers – incandescent dust. When I looked up into the night sky, I could see airplanes flying through the columns of light. I tried to imagine what it was like for people in the planes to glide effortlessly through their ghostly presence.

The first public presentation of *Tribute in Light* took place near the site on the six month anniversary of the terrorist attacks and has since been repeated on the night of September 11 each year since. Originally called *Phantom Towers*, in response to Myoda’s idea of phantom limbs, the display was retitled *Tribute in Light* following discussions with government officials and relatives of victims. Rather than emphasize the towers, people became the focus of the installation.

As a spectacular memorial event at the scale of the city, *Tribute in Light* is now an ongoing agent for the production of the collective memory of New York City and the nation. As a memorial event, *Tribute in Light* is compelling because of its ability to reignite the memory of the Twin Towers, both their absence and their presence. The ephemerality of the event, linked in time as an annual reminder, means that in temporarily evoking the towers *Tribute in Light* also evokes the memory of life before September 11:

> New Yorkers largely made sense of this human event through the lens of the city skyline; through the physical space defined by destruction and replacement. The beams of light have acted as a placeholder for a city awaiting a concrete replacement.

Designed by Minoru Yamaki and completed between 1971 and 1973, the twin towers of the World Trade Center were at the time the world’s tallest and largest buildings, embodying the economic and civic ambitions of Manhattan and New York City. While the twin towers were initially not met with architectural praise, suffering as they did from not being in sync with the cycle of architectural fashion, a decade following its opening there developed a new respect for modernism and consequently a respect for Yamaki’s design. Initially criticised for its overscaled, barren plaza, and the scale of the towers in relation to its urban setting, the citizens of New York strongly identified with the new buildings, despite their architectural awkwardness:

> They were the neighbourhood sign for otherness, for connectedness to the rest of the world, for the fact that this connection was pursued by other, faceless, unknowable people...

The twin towers were visible from almost any point in New York City. For its citizens, they became orienting devices and in a way made the city more understandable, more intimate. Nicholas Ouroussoff, writing in the Los Angeles Times two days after the attacks comments on the fondness and familiarity engendered by the towers:

> Yet despite its mediocrity as a work of architecture, the Trade Center’s psychological impact on the city’s collective identity was indisputable. Visually it was more than a blunt symbol of a capitalist society. Its massive forms provided a reassuring image of stability amid New York’s congested, sometimes chaotic urban landscape. Set at Manhattan’s southern tip, it was the city’s emotional anchor.
For many Americans, the Twin Towers represented the image of New York, if not of the United States itself. While physically the towers have been removed from the New York skyline, they have intensified in the public imagination:

Although the two towers have disappeared, they have not been annihilated. Even in their pulverized state, they have left behind an intense awareness of their presence. No one who knew them can cease imagining them and the imprint they made on the skyline from all points of the city. Their end in material space has borne them off into a definitive imaginary space. 8

This imaginary space is what Tribute in Light so evocatively fills. It is a memorialisation of both individual loss and the loss of the towers themselves. Tribute in Light is an urban performance of collective memory, an annual ritual at the scale of the city and a significant form of American postmemory, an ongoing agent for the production of the collective memory of New York City and the nation.

Critics of collective memory studies argue that processes of remembering and forgetting are inherently problematic when individual memory processes are likened to collective processes. Kansteiner, for example, argues that collective memory is the product of complex processes of cultural dialogue and negotiation between three different historical agents – the visual and textual objects of memory, the makers of memory and the consumers of memory. 9 Kansteiner argues that memory studies have focussed on the first two agents, consistently overlooking the role of the consumers of memory in the production of collective memory. The consumers of memory, it is argued here, can be described in two broad categories – those involved in the production of spaces of memory, the design profession, and those involved in their reception, the viewing public.

This chapter, “Consuming Memory” defines the visual nature of memory in late modernity and its implications in terms of the consumers of memory, the designers of memory spaces and the viewing public. Myoda and Verdière’s Tribute in Light brings into focus the way in which the dominance of vision in late modernity is key to understanding the representation and consumption of memory in built space.
Memorial Designers and the Aesthetics of Minimalism

Background

Following the dedication of Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982, minimalist design strategies have become the default aesthetic for public memorial design in the West. As a thematic term in the visual arts, ‘minimalism’ tends to be used primarily to describe one of the seminal movements in contemporary art, the work of a range of American artists who developed a new form of abstraction in the 1960s. While not a defined artistic movement, the term ‘Minimalism’ refers to a an avant-garde art aesthetic that evolved in the United States in the 1960s and is primarily associated with the works of Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin and Robert Morris. Predominantly found in sculpture, minimalism is marked by single or repeated geometric forms and an overt rejection of illusionism. As a reaction against the dominant contemporary aesthetic of Abstract Expressionism of the 1940s and 1950s, minimalism sought to remove all evidence of the hand of the artist, in particular any trace of emotion or spontaneity.

The formal aspects of minimalism were not new in art history, the Russian Constructivists, for example, explored similar territory in the early twentieth century. Most art historians however, trace the beginnings of Minimalism to Frank Stella’s Black Paintings, exhibited in 1959. These works moved away from the dominant aesthetic of Abstract Expressionism by removing all sense of illusion and artistic creation. The works were about the materiality of painting – paint as paint and canvas as canvas. They refer only to their own presence rather than alluding to anything beyond. As transitional works between Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, Stella’s Black Paintings are however, not completely removed from allusion. The titles in the series (Arundle Castle, Marriage of Reason and Squalor, for example) refer to twentieth century disasters or other negative themes. Minimalism when more fully developed, would reject all forms of aesthetic allusion.

Minimalism: Aesthetics

‘Aesthetics’ is defined Oxford Dictionary of English as “a set of principles concerned with the nature of beauty, especially in art”. In the Western philosophical tradition, aesthetics can be defined as the study “of our aesthetic experiences, involving studies of the aesthetic objects, of the bodily disposition and mental faculties enabling us to have such experiences, and a study of the language used to express and convey these experiences.” For this dissertation, the term aesthetics is used in the context of the visual and experiential properties of a work of art, for example, scale, materiality, and form.

Minimalist sculpture of the 1960s appears ‘minimal’ in the sense that it appears to be reductive, depersonalised and anonymous and hence devoid of intention or feeling on behalf of the artist. Conventional aesthetic aims of composition, expression and artistic intent are rejected. Equally, they appear minimal in terms of their level of artistic execution:

...they have a minimal art content: in that either they are to an extreme degree undifferentiated in themselves and therefore possess very low content of any kind, or else the differentiation that they do exhibit, which in some case may be very considerable, comes not from the artist but from a non-artistic source, like nature or the factory.

Minimal artists were focussed on the ‘objectness’ of the work, its physical presence in relationship with the viewer and sought to challenge painting as the dominant plastic art, its emphasis on sight and the frontal relationship with the viewer, the containment of artistic expression within the picture frame and its referential underpinnings.
Susan Best notes that minimalism is typically interpreted as “anti-subjective, anti-expressive and anti-aesthetic” 5, generally understood to mark the beginning of the anti-aesthetic tradition in Western art and the rejection of the subjective dimension in art. Best argues that minimalism has been positioned erroneously as the beginning of the anti-aesthetic tradition and that rather than seeing minimalism as a rejection of conventional aesthetics, it was more a “refiguring of aesthetic problems.” 6

This refiguring is discussed briefly in the following section in terms of key aesthetic characteristics of minimalist work.

Formal Qualities
As an art form based on abstraction, minimalism sought to focus on the formal qualities of the artwork rather than an attempt to refer to other ideas or situations beyond itself. Minimal works are typically abstract, three-dimensional, modular, geometric, preconceived in design and industrial in execution and characterized by a “...play with formal components such as colour and space.” 7

Materiality
In minimalist works materials were no longer signifiers for other materials, for example, as stone was to skin in the pre-modern. In minimalist works materiality and colour are generally non-referential, representing nothing other than itself.

Meaning
Minimal works are also characterised by a muteness, they do not at first appear to refer to anything else beyond their own physical presence. Minimalism sought to remove the origin of a work’s meaning to the outside, no longer the domain of private psychological but rather a function of a public, cultural space. Meaning was externalised, traditional sculptural illusionism rejected. Minimal artists worked against the suggestion of an underlying order in their forms as this implied an underlying meaning:

This question of language and meaning helps us by analogy to see the positive side of minimalism’s endeavour, for in refusing to give the work of art an illusionistic centre or interior, minimal artists are simply re-evaluating the logic of a particular source of meaning rather than denying meaning to the aesthetic object altogether. They are asking that meaning be seen as arising from – to continue the analogy with language – a public, rather than a private space. 8

Experience
Through the formal qualities of the artwork, minimalist artists focussed on the viewer’s direct experience of the work in the here and now rather than the illusionistic qualities of the artwork or its conceptual basis. Minimalist works were positioned within a gallery space without plinths or other structures that assisted in objectifying them. The forms were free of traditional sculptural norms and often intruded into the space of the gallery and often affected the pace of the viewer. Minimal works demanded to be perceived as part of a place, a setting in which the viewer was as much a part as the work itself. This changes the viewer’s relationship with the work as it is now a part of the viewer’s space and hence part of the experience of the sculpture. This relationship has been described as a ‘theatrical’ one which dissolved the divide between subject and object through time:
...Minimal artists acknowledge both the viewer and the space of the gallery. They grasp aggressively at all available space, and in so doing point in every direction. They force the audience to an awareness of existence that goes beyond the presence of any particular art object. The audience is persuaded to walk about the newly defined and delineated space, and the path is determined by the art. 19

Repetition

In minimal works, traditional aims of composition were replaced by the "industrial logic of artless sequence" 20, often employing serial techniques and repetition as a way of focussing on the object rather than its meaning:

For the serial principle seals the object away from any condition that could possibly be thought to be original and consigns it to a world of simulacra, of multiples without originals, just as the serial form also structures the object within a system in which it makes sense only in relation to other objects, objects which are themselves structured by relations of artificially produced difference. 21

Expression

Minimalist artists intended to eliminate art's expressive grounding, its basis in the intentions or feelings of the artist. They rejected the illusionistic tradition of art and privileged fact over emotion.

Minimalism: Critical and Public Response

Early critics of minimalism reacted against its reliance on simplicity and abstraction, seeing it as an attack on the possibility of meaning in art. To its detractors such as art critic Michael Fried, the term minimalism denoted a simplicity in artistic creation as well as a minimal means of artistic execution. Early descriptors reflect this. Otherwise called ABC art, primary structures, flat art, neo-dadaism, or nihilism, minimalism is popularly understood as reductive and infantile.

Minimalism's detractors focussed on two forms of artistic shortcomings. Firstly, minimal art was seen as excessively reductive art, works that were too 'simple' in content and aesthetic experience. Secondly, minimal art was seen as lacking in real artistic output, often being seemingly too easy to make. While presenting itself as formal art in the tradition of the great art movements of the twentieth century, to its detractors minimalism appeared as a latter day form of Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades. Minimal art was thus "based on an internal contradiction: presenting itself as 'high', formal art, it was not legible as such; it was not art-enough." 22

In Art and Objecthood Fried argued that minimalism was in fact a form of literalism, emphasising minimalist works literal qualities, rather than its minimal or reductive means. Fried rejected numerous traits of minimalist works that focussed on their objecthood, including qualities such as 'spatial recession', 'scale' and 'duration', arguing that in focussing on these traits of objecthood, minimalism was promoting an awareness of the physicality of the artwork and the viewer's spatial relationship with it. Fried argued that this awareness of the objecthood of minimalist works are distractions from the state of focus, or 'grace' that was required to contemplate modernist art. 23

For many critics of minimalism, Richard Serra's Tilted Arc epitomises the perceived elitism, reductivism and difficult language of minimalist art.
Tilted Arc, New York City

Fig 19, Tilted Arc, New York City

Fig 20, Tilted Arc, New York City
Commissioned by the U.S. General Services Administration's Arts-in-Architecture program and sited in the Federal Plaza, New York, *Tilted Arc* comprises a monumental plate of core-ten steel, 36.6 metres long and 3.66 metres in height and tilted 30 centimetres off the perpendicular.

Constructed in 1981, the sculpture was dismantled in 1989 following a prolonged artistic and public debate. Key to the public reception of the work was the way in which it was sited in the plaza, deliberately altering the way in which pedestrians and users of the nearby buildings accessed the space. The work was removed after legal intervention, the decision based on functional grounds rather than the artistic integrity of the work. Reasons for removal included the effect of the work on the use of the plaza by pedestrians and for public events, the fact that it became a magnet for graffiti and the homeless and its impact on public safety and surveillance of the plaza:

...Serra’s mammoth, perilously tilted steel arc formed a divisive barrier too tall (12 feet) to see over, and a protracted trip (120 feet) to walk around. In the severity of its material, the austerity of its form, and its gargantuan size, it served almost as a grotesque amplification of Minimalism’s power rhetoric. Something about the public reaction to that rhetoric can be deduced from the graffiti and the urine that liberally covered the work almost from the first, as well from the petitions demanding its removal...24

In form, *Tilted Arc* approximately bisected the semicircular, granite paved Federal Plaza, establishing new relationships with the space of the Plaza and its users. The work is fundamentally grounded in the experiential aspects of Minimalism, the intensification of perception and sensory transformation. For Serra, the movement of people through the space, influenced by the siting and form of the *Tilted Arc* is key to the work:

My sculptures are not meant for the viewer to stop, look, and stare at...*Tilted Arc* was built for the people that walk and cross the plaza, for the moving observer....Space becomes the sum of successive perceptions of the place. The viewer becomes the subject. One’s identity as a person is closely connected with the experience of space and place. When a known space changes through the inclusion of a site-specific sculpture, one is called upon to relate to the space differently...25
Minimalism as an Aesthetics of Reception

The debate around Minimalism revolved around form and materiality as well as context, or how the works were encountered, that is the relationship with the viewer. Even in the modernist tradition of Western sculpture there was an understanding that sculpture was a defined entity that was separate from other objects in life and experienced primarily by sight. Modernist sculpture was experienced across a space that defined the difference between the real world and the world of illusion of the sculpture. The transition point between these two worlds was the plinth, which both physically and conceptually separated the work from everyday life in the same way as a frame of a painting does. The minimalist eradication of the plinth affected both the form of the sculpture and its perception. A new relationship between the viewer and the work was brought into existence:

In short, with minimalism, sculpture no longer stands apart, on a pedestal or as pure art, but is repositioned among objects and redefined in terms of place. In this transformation the viewer, refused the safe, sovereign space of formal art, is cast back on the here and now; and rather than scan the surface of a work for a topographical mapping of the properties of its medium, he or she is prompted to explore the perceptual consequences of a particular intervention in a given site. This is the fundamental reorientation that minimalism inaugurates. 26

Modernist art was intended to evoke in the viewer a transcendental experience whereby the creative expression of the artist opened a new visual experience for the viewer. In contrast to Modernist intentions in sculpture, Minimalist works change the emphasis from formal and compositional relationships within the sculpture to a relationship with the viewer. Placement of the work within the confines of the gallery space or landscape is orchestrated by the artist so that the viewer becomes aware of their movement through space. The physical situation of the minimal work is therefore as much a part of the work as the object itself. For artist Robert Morris, sculpture should be removed from its pictorial associations and be purely a three-dimensional experience, requiring the viewer’s active participation:

The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light and the viewer’s field of vision. The object is but one of the terms in the newer aesthetic. It is in some way more reflexive because awareness of oneself existing in the same space as the work is stronger than in previous work, with its many internal relationships. One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context. Every internal relationship, whether it be set up by a structural division, a rich surface or what have you, reduces the public, external quality of the object and tends to eliminate the viewer to the degree that these details pull him into an intimate relation with the work and out of the space in which the object exists. 27

Minimalist sculpture is therefore more corporeal than visual, it engages the viewer on a sensual and phenomenal level rather than a literal or simply aesthetic one. The viewer becomes part of a bodily experience mediated by sculpture. Minimalist sculpture “intrude[s] on us in such a way as to make us acutely aware of its physical presence in our space.” 48 As Morris argues, sculpture therefore moves from the formal aspects of the art object – scale, colour, composition – to the viewer’s response and self-awareness:

In a sense, what is most important is what the sculptural object does – in terms of response – rather than what it is. 49
Best, referring to an analysis of minimalism by Rosalind Krauss and Thierry de Duve, notes that minimalism represents a “shift from an aesthetics of production to an aesthetics of reception”:

To calibrate the achievements of minimalism more precisely we could say that minimalism questioned the expressionist theory of art, but not expression in toto. It questioned one account of the subject, but not subjectivity in general. It questioned the focus upon the artist’s hidden thoughts and feelings, but not the whole question of intention. And these various moves have important consequences, one of which is the shift of focus away from production and on to the work and its reception.

Minimalism stresses the temporality of perception, an interest in the body and in the presence of objects. Minimalist sculptures in particular, through their size, scale and relationship with the gallery interior or external landscape sought to facilitate an embodied experience of the artwork. The viewer’s bodily presence is thereby registered against the size, scale and form of minimalist sculptures making them aware of their physical movement, their sensory reactions and the physical context of the work and its spatial relationship with it. Minimalist sculptures, often physically large and dominant in terms of their physical context, rely on interaction with its audience in order for the work to be understood.

Because of the minimal physicality of the artwork - its visual flatness, use of reductive materials, simple geometric shapes and repetition of form – the viewer is not absorbed in its illusory qualities and hence its potential to refer to things beyond itself. Because the viewer is not drawn to any referential qualities of the work, focus is drawn to its physical qualities and its context, both physical and sensory. Changing qualities of light and shadow, openness and enclosure, depth and frontality, reflectivity and flatness, produce a rich embodied experience when coupled with the interaction of the boundaries of the artwork’s site and the presence of other viewers.

The philosophical basis of Minimalist art is grounded in the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Morris uses the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty to describe the experience of the minimal work as a temporal encounter between the body, the work and the space containing the work. Describing the experience of a viewer moving around a minimalist work, Morris makes a comparison between the experience of its physical shape against the mental image of its form. For Morris, the goal of the new sculpture is to allow this form to become visible to a spectator moving around the object.

Merleau-Ponty’s contribution to phenomenology is essentially a revised understanding of perception and perceptual consciousness and a rebuke of the prevailing subject-object relation. The classic understanding of perception sees the perceiving body as an object with various properties that creates certain impressions that consciousness deciphers, ignores the ‘subjective’ nature of human experience. Merleau-Ponty argues for perception as the fundamental human function and for the perceiving human to be acknowledged as the central reference point in Western philosophy. He suggests that the perceiving human being is the central point of reference in the posing and debating of philosophical issues, arguing that we are in a constant relationship with our environment and we only come to know our selves in terms of what we perceive and experience:

Our body is in the world as the heart is in the organism. It keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, and with it forms a system.
The Minimalist subject, unlike its Cartesian precursor, is a subject that perceives in relation to the conditions of the spatial field experienced. That is to say, the Minimalist subject perceives in an ever-changing temporal sense. As Merleau-Ponty describes:

But the system of experience is not arrayed before me as if I were God, it is lived by me from a certain point of view; I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception.  

For Merleau-Ponty’s subject, perception is contingent upon the conditions of the situation. We are immersed in a world through our body, a ‘lived perspective’. Our body has dimensions and orientations – a top and bottom, a front and a back, a left and right side. These conditions establish what Merleau-Ponty calls a level of ‘pre-objective experience’, a datum of reference points which functions as the reference for our engagement with the world:

To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily in space: it is of it.

For Merleau-Ponty, perception also plays a key role in the construction of space, arguing that space is not perceived simply as it is, it is partly perceptually constructed. For Merleau-Ponty, space is seen as “a certain possession of the world by my body, a certain gearing of my body to the world.” Merleau-Ponty’s conception of space is essentially Kantian, whereby space is seen not an objective construct, but affected by the subjective nature of human sensory faculties. For Merleau-Ponty, however, it is the body that plays an essential role in the constitution of space – space is constituted by the body and is perceived and subjectively experienced through the embodied subject. Geometrical co-ordinates are therefore seen as simply a tool in understanding space. Space is defined not as a physical setting in which objects are contained but a form of external experience where the relationships of and between objects are constituted by the experience of the perceiver:

The body is our general medium for having a world.

The body, through its sensory organs, particularly sight, touch and hearing is inevitably involved in all perception. The body becomes therefore, as the zero-point of observation of the world, the key element in our spatial construction of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is not seen as an object in the world but the very mechanism in which we perceive our world, including the perception of space. Here space is not seen as an abstract set of co-ordinates or an ether from which the world is structured. Merleau-Ponty argues that lived experience of the body-in-space is the key dynamic from which all conceptions of space are constructed:

In so far as I have a body through which I act in the world, space and time are not, for me, a collection of adjacent points nor are they a limitless number of relations synthesized by my consciousness, and into which it draws my body. I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them.

The way we perceive space is therefore not a function of the objective location of our bodies in space, but of space experienced and occupied by the body. By seeing the body as the locus of lived experience or embodiment, the self is viewed as an integrated being:

...my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. And indeed its spatiality is not, like that of external objects or like that of ‘spatial sensations’, a spatiality of position, but a spatiality of situation.
Minimalism was therefore grounded in a world perceived by the body rather than an art of the object. Minimalism also rejected traditional composition thereby often assuming repetitive, aggregative forms, pushing art towards the utilitarian and the anti-artistic. On the surface, this has compounded the misreading of minimalist art as reductive.

The populist understanding of minimalism as a difficult, abstract and formal art is directly related to the public reception and controversy surrounding works such as *Tilted Arc*. While misunderstood by the public as an art of the purely visual, designers of memorial spaces similarly focused on minimalism’s visual language without an understanding of its underlying basis, its corporeal rather than visual grounding, based on Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the centrality of bodily experience.

**Minimalism: Legacy in Architecture**

Beyond art, minimalism has been used to describe approaches in a wide variety of creative fields from music, theatre, literature and dance. First becoming popular in the 1980s, the term Minimalism as it is applied to architecture can be traced to the collaboration between a number of prominent haute-couture fashion designers and architects. *Fashion designers such as Issey Miyake, Armani and Calvin Klein developed boutiques in London and New York with a “recognizable aesthetic based on simplicity, the use of white, cold lighting, large spaces with few objects on display, and the minimum of furniture.”* 4 Architects responsible for these boutiques include John Pawson, David Chipperfield and Claudio Silvestrin:

> The popularization of the term Minimalism is to a considerable extent tied to a change in commercial strategies that began when a few designers decided to stop barraging their customers with information and instead to display their creations just as they were, allowing customers to appreciate the quality of raw materials and the care with which they had been made. 45

Following publication of these projects, the term minimalism has been retrospectively linked to the work of other architects such as Tadao Ando, Alberto Campo Baeza and Herzog and de Meuron who had been working in a similar idiom over a number of years.

While minimalism in art has a specific referential framework, the term as it is applied in architecture is more generalized, referring to visual characteristics such as compositional rigour, formal and material restraint, a reductive approach to expressive media and an austerity in formal expression.

John Macarthur argues that following the growth of discursive architecture in recent decades such as postmodernism and deconstructivism, there is a return in architecture to “see buildings again as physical objects, in the sense of their architecture being a matter of formal properties of three dimensional shape and material arranged in space.” 44 Macarthur refers to minimalist architecture as having a “fixation on object qualities,” 45 recognising that the meaning of minimalism in art is quite different to minimalism in architecture:

> Minimalist practices ignored the traditional aim of abstraction in the exploration of the formal properties of a medium or discipline and instead used provocatively mute or ambiguous objects to disquiet expectations of what the art object might be and make an observer self aware of the act of perceiving. By contrast, what is generally called ‘minimalism’ in architecture is precisely that elegant abstraction to the essentials such as space and material that Minimalism was attacking in art. 46
This difference between the understanding and hence utilisation of minimalist aesthetics in art versus architecture, while not particularly important in most areas of architecture, is in fact a critical issue in terms of the design of memorial spaces.

Minimalism and Memorial Architecture

As an aesthetic response, minimalism is key to the power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Since its dedication in 1982, minimalist design strategies have transformed the way in which public memorials, particularly those that deal with problematic pasts have been conceived, constructed, managed and understood.

While a symbolic object such as a memorial is one way in which a permanent link can be established with the past, the mechanism by which this may happen has had limited investigation with the exception of the work of architectural historian Jeffrey Karl Ochsner.

In his discussion on the communicative aspects of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Ochsner refers to, and extends the work of psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan and his theory of 'linking objects' in the process of mourning. Ochsner considers the way in which the Vietnam Veterans Memorial communicates with its audience, theorizing the memorial as a 'linking object', as conceived by Volkan. Additionally, Ochsner argues that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is able to foster active, intimate responses because it creates a 'space of absence' as defined by Richard Etlin, a void in which is experienced the simultaneous absence and presence of the dead. Ochsner argues that the space of absence as defined by Etlin can be considered as a type of linking object. As a linking object, the space of absence is a "site for projection...we project the life we find." Ochsner defines the key aspect of a linking object as one that is "psychologically invested with aspects of the deceased and of those who mourn." In order for active engagement to occur as argued by Ochsner's theory of linking objects, the visual linkage or cue must allow for projection by the memorial participant:

The linking object is not itself actually alive, yet through it we experience the presence of the dead person. This can occur because the linking object is a site for projection: That is, we project the life we find. Through a linking object, we are able to connect with our own internalized 'living' representation of the person being recalled.

For projection to occur, crucially, identification must take place. For identification to take place, a space must be set apart from the everyday to allow for the act of reflection. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial creates a distinct space of contemplation through its siting and choreographing of visitor experience. Having set the stage for identification, the strategies of listing the names of the dead employed by Lin allow for individual stories to be told within the larger cultural memory of the war. The names and the way they are expressed on the memorial become the linking object, allowing for the projection of the visitor into the space of memory.

The linking object is therefore a design element of a memorial that acts as the site for the memorial participant's projection of the deceased individual. In the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the linking objects are the inscribed names of the individuals. The 'linking' capacity is not simply though the use of the name itself but significantly through the strategy of chronological listing.
Importantly however, for the linking objects to be effective, they must not be ‘overdetermined’:

... they must leave ‘space’ into which the projection can occur,...if the space is too overtly incomplete, though, the process will fail because the projection must remain unconscious. If the choreography becomes too evident (once the viewer senses that he or she is being manipulated), then the viewer will become fully conscious of what is expected, and the unexpected cannot occur. 5

The names ‘link’ because they identify individuals uniquely. The memorial participant recognises familiar names, ethnicities and generational links:

Indeed it may be uniqueness of each name that takes them all from seeming abstraction and makes them suddenly so very real. 5

Additionally, those directly connected to individual names may recognise other names alongside who also died in the same action.

Ochsner argues that the names and the reflective surface of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial operate as the linking object in the memorial and allow the memorial participant to actively engage with and project themselves into its space. Through its reflective surface, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial allows a simultaneous awareness of both surface and space and of connection and separation:

The spatiality of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial – the relationship of physical space and virtual space, mediated by a surface of names – allows proximity to and identification with the dead, and an experience of the simultaneous reality of separation and connection, of living and dying. 5

The inscribed text makes the memorial participant aware of the surface of the memorial while its reflectivity brings the memorial participant into the virtual space of the memorial. Simultaneously therefore, the memorial participant experiences the perception of the individual names and the reflection of the memorial participant and others:

When we turn and see ourselves, therefore, this double reading catches us, and the identity of those whom we see through the surface is the same as the identity of those whose names we read. The way in which the wall is like a window opening into an interior space allows us to project ourselves through it. However, unlike a window, the wall is not a neutral receptor. Instead, it is inscribed with the names of the dead. As we gaze upon the wall, the figure reflected back gazes upon us through the field of names...What we feel is the simultaneous recognition of identity – of ourselves with those in the wall, of ourselves as in the wall but also separate from it, and therefore of the living and the dead. In an instant we return to a primary state of knowing – seeing ourselves reflected in the eyes of another, seeing ourselves within the other and the other within ourselves. We experience both connection and separation – and, in that, we experience the connection of the living and the dead. 5

Ochsner argues that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial “is essentially incomplete without human participation; it cannot be fully understood without addressing the issues raised by human interaction.” 5 In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, experience is foregrounded because of the use of typical strategies of minimalism – abstraction and reduction of form and a muteness of expression and meaning. Rather than focus attention on visual codes of representation, the minimalist aesthetics of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial focuses attention
on a range of senses – sight, sound, movement, touch. Through the formal qualities of the work, the memorial participant’s direct experience of the work becomes focal, the memorial participant becoming part of the experience of the work.

The effectiveness of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial suggests that typical minimalist design strategies have the potential as a grounding for memorial architecture. The non-representational basis of minimalist design allows it to operate in domains of contested memory and politics, an area where figurative work is unable to operate as successfully as it would be interpreted as positioned. The lack of evident authorship in minimalist design implies it belongs to all, allowing a wide audience to engage with it and take ownership. The physicality and experiential focus of minimalist design emphasises its embodied relationship with the memorial participant and hence its relationship to mortality.

The silence of abstraction as seen in the aesthetics of minimalism therefore invites the visitor to project their own experiences and understandings onto the memorial, allowing for multiple and often conflicting understandings of the past to become simultaneously meaningful.

As an aesthetic strategy however, it should be noted that minimalism has also the potential to sanitise problematic pasts, where conflicting meanings may be smoothed over by the mirror of a blank slate. Consumers of memory therefore need to be able identify and understand key messages that memorial spaces seek to convey in terms of the palimpsest of history itself.

Within this abstraction it is argued therefore, that some form of figuration is required “to evoke an empathic link between viewer and monument that might then be marshalled into particular meaning.” In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the names are the figurative element that act in Ochsner’s terms as ‘linking objects’. If understood in a broader sense, a linking object is simply a form of figuration. Figuration however, must not be overdetermined, it must leave open a space for memorial participant projection to take place. Effective memorial design, it is argued here, is therefore a balance between abstraction and figuration, between ambiguity and specificity. Critically, however, for identification and projection to occur in the memorial participant, figuration needs to be foregrounded within the abstract aesthetics of minimalism.

Minimalist Aesthetics and the Legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial challenged the idea of memory as a knowable object and changed forever the popular conception of what a public memorial should be and how it should work. The benchmark set by Maya Lin’s design changed the context for future memorial design. Visitors would now expect to physically and emotionally interact with a memorial and to be moved to a point of catharsis:

Today’s most progressive and innovative memorials have in common two important elements: a strong sense of site and an interactive nature. Maya Lin is clearly the pioneer in this regard, for she was the first to apply successfully the contemporary aesthetic of site-specificity to a commemorative function. Her Wall bears the most salient features of this new memorial type: a rich and multilayered involvement with the site; a blurring of traditional distinctions between sculpture, architecture and landscape architecture; the creation of a phenomenal, if not actual, enclosure which demarcates a sacred space; and an extended horizontal dimension, which encourages visitors to experience the place over time.
Memorial design has continued to evolve since the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, however much of its development, it is argued here is focussed on the architectural vocabulary of memorial design rather than a concern for meaningful engagement between participant and space. Many memorials built post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial appropriate its formal elements without understanding the site specificity of the work, both physically in terms of its setting, and socio-culturally in terms of its historic context. Hence the growing repertoire of standard memorial design elements that continue to appear in many variations — reflecting pools, stone walls, walls with names, fountains, lawns and groves of trees are common elements employed in many memorial designs.

The following discussion focussing on key benchmarks in memorial design post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial, examines the ways in which Maya Lin’s legacy has been misunderstood and transformed by subsequent designers. The examples represent significant officially sanctioned memorial responses to culturally traumatic events and map a trajectory of memorial design strategies post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial to the time of writing of this dissertation.
Astronauts Memorial, Cape Canaveral

Fig 27, Astronauts Memorial, Cape Canaveral
In the aftermath of the 1986 Challenger space shuttle disaster, amidst the television images of its destruction mid-flight, a popular response developed to honour its seven astronauts in a permanent memorial. NASA recommended that this idea be pursued, extending the scope of the memorial to all other astronauts who had died in space missions and offering a 2.5 hectare site near the entrance to Spaceport USA located at Cape Canaveral. In 1987 a national design competition was launched to find an appropriate design for the memorial. The winning design by Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones Architects is dedicated to the memory of the men and women who have died in the United States space missions since the 1960s.

The Astronauts Memorial is located on the grounds of the John F. Kennedy Space Center Complex at Cape Canaveral, Florida. Spaceport USA is a large tourist facility on the outskirts of the Kennedy Space Center and is one of the most visited tourist sites in Florida. The memorial is located on a small raised landing modelled on a NASA launch platform and linked by a ramped walkway, adjacent to a lagoon and metres from the complex’s cafeteria.

The central element of the Astronauts Memorial is the 'Space Mirror', a monumental plane of 93 polished black granite panels inscribed with the names of twenty NASA astronauts and other U.S Air Force, civilian and international pilots and astronauts killed in U.S. space programs.

The names of astronauts killed in the same incident are located on the same panel, or on adjacent panels. Individuals are listed in groupings according to mission, revealing their stories within the overall placement of names. Groupings are placed randomly on the expanse of black granite, appearing almost as constellations in the night sky. The names of the deceased are cut completely through the thickness of the granite, exposing a translucent acrylic backing. This backing is lit from behind using a combination of reflected sunlight and artificial lighting, causing the names to appear to glow against the reflection of the sky on the polished granite surface. The names of the astronauts appear to float, suspended in the image of only reflected sky and clouds, held between the past and the present.

Part of the power of the memorial is that it remains 'unfinished'. Only five of the 93 panels are inscribed, an indication of the ongoing sacrifices that may be made in the name of the U.S. space program. The memorial allows for additional names to be added without the work appearing to be 'waiting' for additional names.

In contrast to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Astronauts Memorial elevates the deceased to the heroic. The naming of the astronauts occurs above eye level so that visitors are required to engage with the memorial in a subordinate manner. The astronauts are symbolically and physically elevated, above all human reference points. The scale of the space mirror encourages the visitor to situate their thoughts beyond the immediate, to the vast expanse of space and our relation with it. The designers hoped that visitors would view the space mirror in close proximity, so that their entire vision was taken up by it, the names appearing to burn and shimmer in the reflected sky.

The monumental 15 metre wide, 13 metre high mirror of polished black granite panels are housed on a steel substructure, intended to follow the sun using a simple satellite-tracking mechanism. The front of the mirror faces the sky and the viewer while the rear faces and tracks the sun. Originally designed to follow the sun, parabolic reflectors on the rear of the mirror were designed to direct reflected sunlight through the acrylic backing of the name cutouts, illuminating them against the black granite. Following continual failings of the tracking system, the mirror has subsequently been fixed in place and floodlights positioned to allow the names to illuminated twenty four hours a day.
Fig 23. Detail, Astronauts Memorial, Cape Canaveral
The Challenger disaster, one of the most media saturated events in recent American history, provoked considerable national debate and reflection. Within this context, the design of the Astronauts Memorial seeks to reconcile the memorialisation of individual death against the framework of the celebration of spaceflight and its technology, arguably the highest technological achievement of humankind.

The Astronauts Memorial seeks to create a solemn, contemplative and awe-inspiring response from its visitors, provoking questions of humankind’s relationship with technology:

We understand the Space Mirror as posing of its visitors three principal questions of collective and personal identity. First, it asks us to contemplate ourselves in relationship to those whose names are inscribed on the wall. Second, it poses the question of who we are or will be in relation to technology. Third, it asks us to contemplate ourselves in relationship to the cosmos. 59

The black face of the mirror can be read as a symbol of mortality, the white of the steel armature, a symbol of technology. In its design, the Astronauts Memorial skilfully celebrates technology while at the same time acknowledging its dangers. The upward and outward gesture of the mirror alludes to a realm beyond earthly concerns. The astronauts are symbolically returned to space, in perpetuity. In contrast to the mirror and names of the astronauts, the visitor is dwarfed and earthbound.

The Astronauts Memorial while conceptually and technically accomplished in its original intent, has not been as successful as its designers intended in terms of its public reception. Carole Blair and Neil Michel argue that part of the reason for this lack of visitor engagement is the result of the siting and design of the memorial’s grounds as well as its location in Spaceport USA. Discussing visitors’ reactions to the memorial, Blair and Michael note that most visitors do not recognise the Space Mirror as a commemorative space and few intentionally interact with it. The design of the memorial grounds in particular, subvert the commemorative intentions of the memorial:

The theme park setting of Spaceport USA obscures the commemorative messages available in the Space Mirror, rendering symbols of death, especially technology-related death, alien and perhaps even unwelcome messages. A more important problem, though, is that the memorial grounds themselves provide an atmosphere of diversion and distraction incompatible with a meaningful commemorative experience. 60

The lagoon setting might otherwise be assumed to be a contemplative setting for the memorial. The reality is however the opposite. Its abundant wildlife, in particular the presence of alligators, reduces the viewing platform of the memorial to a space to observe wildlife rather than contemplate the meaning of the memorial. Adjacent visual distractions such as a model of the space shuttle and noise from nearby roads also contribute to creating an environment not conducive to contemplation and reflection. Distance is also created between the visitor and the granite face of the memorial by the steel and mesh structure of the memorial armature.

In their critique of the Astronauts Memorial, Blair and Michael make two key points in relation to successful public commemoration and memorialisation. Firstly, they argue that successful public commemoration needs to respond effectively to viewer’s identity constructions:

...For discourse of any kind – including architecture or landscape – to perform commemorative work effectively, it must both reflect and inflect the identities of the individual and her/his community. Put most simply, the message it inscribes must generally be recognizable to its audience. 61
To be recognisable to an audience, to allow for in Ochsner’s terms, projection to occur, a process of identification needs to take place between the memorial participant and the memorial. For identification to occur, the memorial participant needs to be given the physical and emotional space to remove themselves from the everyday and situate themselves in a space of contemplation and reflection. Fundamentally, the Space Mirror appears as just another of Spaceport’s many ‘attractions’.

Secondly, Blair and Michael argue that successful public commemoration solicits participation from its audience, allowing space for interpretation and the projection of multiple understandings:

Successful commemoration spaces engage us by asking us to think. Rather than telling us what to think, they invite us to think, to pose questions, to examine our experiences in relation to the memorial’s discourse. 62

The Astronauts Memorial, while skilfully negotiating a number of divergent themes ranging from celebration to reflection, is hampered in its ability to establish these multiple interpretations because of the problems caused by its siting. Participation, interpretation and projection in the memorial participant is curtailed because of the distractions of its immediate surroundings to such an extent that, as noted in Blair and Michael’s field observations, many visitors are simply unaware of its commemorative function.

In addition however, the aesthetics of minimalism utilised in the Astronauts Memorial becomes a stylistic tool rather than a basis for allowing active interpretation and hence engagement with the work and its meaning.
Oklahoma City National Memorial, Oklahoma City
At 9.02 on the morning of April 19, 1995, a massive explosion tore apart the entire north side of the Alfred P. Murrah Building, a United States Government building complex located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 168 people, including 19 children were killed in the explosion, regarded as the first terrorist attack on American soil.

In 1997, an international design competition was launched to establish a fitting memorial for the tragedy. The winning design by Butzer Design Partnership was announced in July 1997 and honours the victims, survivors and rescuers. The memorial is located on the site of the demolished Alfred P. Murrah Building and is comprised of a number of related symbolic elements that develop an overall narrative of the event and its aftermath.

Marking the formal entrances to the memorial stand the Gates of Time, monumental bronze portals that frame the exact moment of the bombing. On the eastern gate is marked 9.01, a representation of the last moments of peace while on the opposite western gate is marked 9.03, representing the first moments of recovery. The gates work to metaphorically freeze the moment of the bombing in space. Bracketed in between these gates, and marking the space of the memorial itself is the unrecorded time of 9.02, the exact moment of the bombing. Both time inscriptions are marked on the interior faces of the gates, facing each other and the Reflecting Pool.

On the outside of each gate is marked the following inscription:

‘We come here to remember those who were killed,
Those who survived and those changed forever.
May all who leave here know the impact of violence.
May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity.’

A Reflecting Pool runs east-west across the centre of the memorial site and is comprised of a thin layer of water flowing over black polished granite, giving it an unending depthlessness. The reflecting pool aims to offer a place for reflection, literally through the use of a reflective surface. Visitors observe their reflection superimposed on the site of the Murrah building, an intersection of the living and the dead similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Visitors spontaneously dip their hands in the pool and leave traces of their handprints on the entry portals to the memorial.

To the west of the pool is the Field of Empty Chairs, comprising 168 empty chair-like sculptures of bronze and stone floating over translucent glass bases, each chair representing a life lost in the bombing. At the base of each chair the name of each victim is etched in glass. The chairs are arranged in nine rows, symbolic of the nine floors of the Murrah Building. Each victim’s chair is located in the row related to the floor they worked on or if a visitor, the floor they were visiting at the time of the blast. The placement of the chairs also relates to the pattern of the blast, with the most number of chairs nearest the location of the bomb and the most heavily damaged part of the building. The westernmost section of the arrangement of chairs includes five chairs that represent the five people who died in the blast but were not in the Murrah Building but in adjacent buildings. 19 smaller chairs represent the children killed in the bombing. Three unborn children who died with their mothers are listed below the names of their mothers. The chairs as a large grouping convey an ordered sense of absence:

a very simple yet powerful portrayal of someone not being there. The image of 168 empty chairs clustered on the grassy slope...seemed so quietly overwhelming...Like an empty chair at a dinner table, we are always aware of the presence of a loved one's absence. These chairs will provide family members with a special place where they can stand near, or even sit and think about their loved one. They may choose to leave a token of remembrance on the chair, as is done with the fence today.
While the chairs suggest absence, they also convey silence and formality. The chairs offer a tactile connection with individual lives lost and act as miniature altars, the site for floral tributes and other offerings. As initially designed, visitors are drawn to individual chairs, laying flowers, leaving mementos and in some cases seen to hold, embrace and sit on or next to the chairs themselves. Originally intended as a grassed field with open access, the site of the 168 chairs now has restricted access due to the amount of foot traffic across the landscape.

At the east and southeast border of the site stands the only remaining walls of the Murrah Building on which are inscribed the names of more than 800 survivors of the blast from the building and surrounding area.

On the northern side of the memorial site is located a large American elm which withstood the force of the blast. Known as the Survivor Tree, it stands as a symbolic reminder of the resilience of those who survived. While heavily damaged during and after the bomb attack, the tree is now maintained and protected as part of the overall Memorial. An army of fruit trees, representing rescuers surrounds the Survivor Tree. Hundreds of seeds from the Survivor Tree are planted each year and the seedlings are distributed throughout the United States on the anniversary of the bombing. For example, saplings were sent to Columbine High School after the massacre of students and teachers there and to New York after the attacks on the World Trade Center.

Spontaneous memorialisation at the site began soon after the bombing, most notably on a chain-link fence marking the boundary of the bombing site. A substantial portion of the fence was moved and incorporated into the official memorial. Visitors still leave mementos on and along the so-called Memory Fence. The items left are collected, catalogued and stored as part of the ongoing life of the memorial.

The themes of the Oklahoma City National Memorial reflect the fact that the bombing "took place in what was envisioned as America's 'heartland', shattering the assumption that Middle America was immune to acts of mass terrorism as well as the assumption that the nation still had 'zones of safety,' such as day care centres." The memorial is therefore a 'national' symbol, a reflection of a culturally traumatic event that was so fundamentally unanticipated - home grown terrorism located in middle America.

In focussing on the individual physical and emotional response to the memorial space, the Oklahoma City National Memorial builds on the legacy of Maya Lin's intuitive understanding of the interaction of visitors with the space of memory. The 168 chairs are three dimensional antecedents of the 57,000 names of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Recognising that simply naming the 168 individuals who lost their lives would not have presence on their own, as it does in Lin's design, the designers give three dimensional form to each individual. The extent of loss therefore is visually powerful because there are 168 distinct objects, standing in some respects like headstones in a cemetery:

These victims of violence would not be forgotten. Their deaths would be redeemed by becoming public. The spectre of meaningless death would be contained through the physical presence of individual memorial chairs and through the civic rhetoric of "lessons" of the bombing. These dead, the memorial claims, are still among us, they still teach us, we redeem their deaths by our willingness to be touched and transformed by the public legacy of their deaths.

In Ochsner's terms, the chairs function as the linking objects, offering the potential for visitor identification and projection. While the chairs are undifferentiated from afar, with the exception of the 19 children's chairs, they are objects that are personal enough to make a human connection with the memorial participant.
Because they are of a human scale and represent a human activity, their abstracted form goes beyond symbolism. The chairs, as markers of human occupation imply the absence of the individual. The chair as a familiar symbol sets the stage for identification. The domestic, ordinary nature of the empty chair becomes a powerful point of identification for the memorial participant, potentially allowing for projection and engagement with the commemorative themes of the memorial.

While evocative of absence, the minimalist design aesthetic employed arguably depersonalises each individual. The repetition and categorisation of the chairs focuses on the narrative of the event rather than the humanity of the individual:

Moreover, if their emptiness evokes loss, it also intimates silence: chairs are generally sites of spontaneous and often heated discourse – grouped around dinner or seminar tables, for example – but this memorial’s stone and bronze chairs are lined up in nine immutable rows. Designed to avoid contact with each other, they face onto a reflecting pool and gaze upon themselves.

The chain link fence that originally marked off the boundary of the bomb site on the other hand continues to be adorned by handwritten notes, flowers, photographs, dolls and teddy bears. Visitors were drawn to the fence, leaving stuffed toys, letters, flowers and other mementos. The design of the memorial therefore recognises and incorporates spontaneous acts of remembrance as part of the story of the site. The fence works as a bounding element between the ground of the dead and the living, in much the same way as traditional cemetery gates demarcate a place for the dead.

In contrast to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Oklahoma City National Memorial explores a more didactic role, revealing specifics of the actual event and placing it in a broader context of how the event changed the American people. The cultural and political context of why the bombing took place is not addressed in the memorial itself.

Sturken refers to the visitor experience of the Oklahoma City National Memorial as “a kind of organized spontaneity,” an “aesthetically careful space” in which the visitor experience is strategically orchestrated. Visitors know before they come to the memorial what acts of remembrance are connected to the fence and the chairs, the two key focal points of the memorial.

The didactic nature of the memorial experience stands in direct opposition to Maya Lin’s differentiation between “…telling people what to think and enabling them – allowing them – to think.” The aesthetics of minimalism in the Oklahoma City National Memorial becomes a tool for narration rather than a basis for allowing active interpretation and hence engagement with the work and its meaning.
Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin

Fig 27. Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin
In April 1994, an open competition was announced for the design of national memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Twelve artists were also invited to submit designs. No guidelines were stipulated other than the overall cost of the proposal. Two designs were selected as the eventual winners of the competition. Both designs from the first competition were eventually vetoed by Chancellor Helmut Kohl. A second competition was conducted in November 1997 with a design by architect Peter Eisenman and artist Richard Serra emerging as the winner. In June 1998, a modified version of Eisenman’s design incorporating a museum was approved by the German parliament. The memorial was completed in late 2004 and formally dedicated on May 10, 2005.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is located in the Friedrichstadt district of Berlin, approximately 170 metres south of the Brandenburg Gate. The site of the memorial was the location of the Nazi regime’s Imperial Chancellery. On three sides of the site are located foreign embassies and housing and on the fourth facing west, is the Tiergarten, Berlin’s largest park. The space of the memorial is therefore part of the urban fabric of Berlin, accessible twenty-four hours a day and capable of being used by visitors as well as passers-by. Beneath the field of stelae is an underground ‘Place of Information’ that holds the names of all known Jewish victims of the Holocaust, obtained from the Israeli museum Yad Vashem.

The memorial is composed of 2,711 concrete slabs or stelae arranged in a grid pattern across a sloping site of approximately 19 hectares. Each stelae are 2.38 metres long and 0.95 metres wide and vary in height from 0.2 metres to 4.8 metres, creating an undulating, wave-like appearance when seen en-masse. While the stelae are abstract, their individual differences in height imply the anonymity of a packed crowd.

The design cannot be understood as a ‘snapshot’ image. Rather, what visitors take way with them is the emotional experience of inhabiting the memorial. Visitors descend into the space of the memorial, disconnecting themselves from their surroundings both visually and aurally. The rows of stelae placed close together in a seemingly endless configuration is intended to evoke feelings of disorientation and claustrophobia when experienced. The tight arrangement of the stelae, each two degrees off the vertical, produces a disorienting, uncomfortable atmosphere when one moves within the field. The intention here is for a contemporary audience to experience emotions that parallel those of the victims of the Holocaust. The restriction of views and sound from within the field of stelae function to amplify feelings of disorientation and hopelessness. The memorial participant feels claustrophobic, confused and alienated. Eisenman’s intention is to create a field of disquiet, a context from which the meaning of the Holocaust may begin to be addressed.

The stelae landscape is dissected by a grid of 950mm-wide pathways, allowing only for individual passage. At the edges of the field the stelae are only slightly raised above the ground line, appearing much like tombstones. As the visitor moves toward the centre of the field, the ground falls and the stelae rise in height. In some places the stelae tower 3 metres above the memorial participant, creating an oppressive, disturbing experience. The tight spacing of the stelae forces participants to experience the space in a solitary manner, focussing on their own perceptions and reactions rather than the presence of others. The ground surface rises and falls in an apparently random manner, making the participant, wary and unsteady in their movement through the memorial space.

The memorialisation of the Holocaust in Germany has been dominated by the dilemma of remembering a past it would arguably prefer to forget. In 1997, Young voicing his opposition to the idea of building a memorial to the Holocaust in Berlin, argued that such a high profile national memorial would in fact encourage forgetting by erasing memory of the Holocaust itself. By the time Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra were chosen as the memorial’s designers, he argued for the support of the project - “I began to see how important it would be to add a space to Germany’s restored capital deliberately designed to remember the mass murder of Europe’s Jews.”
three

Fig 28. Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin

Fig 29. Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin
Young's transformation is symbolic of a larger cultural shift away from the impossibility of architectural representation of culturally traumatic events such as the Holocaust to an acknowledgement that even flawed attempts are able to encourage remembering of the Holocaust.

In the design of the memorial, Eisenman attempts not to represent the Holocaust itself but to represent what it represented:

The enormity of the banal is the context of our monument. The project manifests the instability inherent in what seems to be a system, here a rational grid, and its potential for dissolution in time. It suggests that when a supposedly rational and ordered system grows too large and out of proportion to its intended purpose, it in fact loses touch with human reason. It then begins to reveal the innate disturbances and potential for chaos in all systems of seeming order, the idea that all closed systems of a closed order are bound to fail. 73

Eisenman uses the architectural metaphor of the labyrinth, abstracted and re-presented to suggest the breakdown of the narrative of history and the experience of discontinuity:

The labyrinth, architecturally, is the nearest thing to a non-narrative, non-linear, non-anthropometric condition. 74

The Holocaust is therefore remembered as an active condition within the present, an abstracted placelessness that is a point of reference to events rather than representing the events themselves. The documentation centre sited below the memorial supplies the narrative that is deliberately denied by the memorial.

The memorial is grounded in minimalist design strategies and precedents. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe appears as a field without a centre of distinct focus. While surrounded by significant civic institutions, the meaning of the memorial is not generated by its relationship to its context. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial which is embedded in its context and directly gains meaning and gives meaning to its context, particularly the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe appears purely self-referential and inward looking.

While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is set apart from its surroundings through a strategy of excavation, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe abruptly connects with its surroundings. While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has a distinct beginning and end and a defined approach and a clear narrative, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe appears as a field, has no distinct boundaries or point of approach and hence no clear beginning point or end point and no narrative other than visitor experience.

Conflicting extremes of visitor motivation ranging from respect and remembrance to voyeurism and tourism exist in tension at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The memorial, designed as space rather than object, engenders human interactivity through its manipulation of the ground plane, the form and placement of the stelae and its material presence. Memorial participants become conscious of their bodily movements as a result of the focus on maintaining a steady passage across the undulating terrain. The gradual rise in the height of the stelae encourage visitors to step over the 'top' of the memorial by jumping from one stelae to another. Those stelae that approximate the height of a chair or table are used by visitors to recline or sit on. Because the terrain falls gently towards the centre of the site, a natural soundscape is created, encouraging the echoing of the human voice. The concrete materiality of the stelae invite the sense of touch, particularly on warm days when the surfaces of stelae are in the shade.
The 'hyper' interaction of visitors in the space however, denies the possibility of the space operating as a space of reflection. Rather it is a space of action and distraction:

Immediately after the opening on May 12, 2005, discussion over proper behaviour began. 'Stop Disgracing Ourselves', the Berliner Kurier said in one headline. The Tagesspiegel complained about some of the visitors 'strange customs' like kissing and sunbathing around the pillars. Some younger people used it as an amusement park, jumping from the top of one slab to another. 73

Stevens explores the critical and public reception of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe including observations of visitor behaviour, noting that the memorial is "highly theatrical" 74, allowing for multiple and varied forms of physical interaction. The pure abstraction of the memorial offers no clues to participants of appropriate codes of behaviour within the space. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is not physically bounded as a space that requires a different mode of behaviour than normal:

Rather than framing a fixed, collective audience, this complex field creates multiple, individuating viewpoints and stages for individuals to act differently. People are dispersed throughout the site. The field's interstitial pathways are intentionally too narrow for people to walk abreast. Visitors are forced to walk in separate aisles. People move through the stelae field site along two different axes, in different directions. The regular gridded layout allows people to frequently turn corners and change aisles; it also brings strangers together, leading to close encounters, sometimes very suddenly. People often step up onto the stelae and walk across the top surface of the field. The ease of walking up onto stelae allows people an overview: those on taller stelae are prominently displayed to others. Rows of adjacent stelae tops and adjacent aisles provide 'parallel' spaces where visitors can emulate others' actions. Visitors spend most of their time at this memorial looking at and photographing each other. Watching and being watched is combined with practices specific to remembering – sitting or standing and thinking, crying - which are personal and private. 75

The stelae appear as a field not for remembrance but for human performance. The repetitive form, materiality and colour of the stelae form a mute background to the colour and movement of human interaction with the space. New visitors to the space are encouraged by the actions of others. While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial fosters the leaving of items of personal remembrance such as dog tags, flowers and teddy bears, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe fosters a different kind of interaction:

At the MMJE, most additions highlight ignorance of its importance: deposits include food waste, cigarette butts, drink bottles, vomit and urine. Graffiti threatens to permanently change the MMJE's symbolism. Its stelae provide many large canvases. The stelae have been given graffiti-resistant coatings. Close observation reveals a large number and variety of small scratch marks made on the stelae by visitors with small tools such as keys or coins: mostly visitors' names and simple cartoons: personal meanings unrelated to the history of which the site aims to remind visitors. Such unconscious defacements indicate that for many visitors, this memorial does not mean. Visitors are aware of the object as material, rather than as medium. 76

135
Stevens argues that the mood of the memorial space of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a function of how people are behaving in the space at a given point in time. While some audience behaviour is related to remembrance and reflection related to the Holocaust, the dominant form of behaviour relates to physical interaction with the forms and spaces of the work:

Most visitors do not appear to think, or to be receiving or producing meanings. Many visitors' apparent obliviousness to the 'negative' sensations intended by the MMJE design demonstrates that its meaning is not contained in its physical form. 77

In Ochsner's terms, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is not a space that enables identification and projection as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial allows. Intended meanings for the memorial as a place of remembrance are negated ultimately by the lack of signification within its design, the lack of 'linking objects'. The aesthetics of minimalism in the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is taken to its extreme in terms of abstraction. The result is a memorial experience of play and performance rather than reflection and understanding.
World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City

Fig 31. World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City
On September 11, 2001 two passenger jets travelling from Boston to Los Angeles were hijacked and redirected to New York City. One plane was flown into the 87th floor of the north tower of the World Trade Center at 8.46 am and the second plane was flown through the 78th to 84th floors of the south tower at 9.03 am. The south tower collapsed at 9.59 am and the north tower collapsed at 10.30 am. A total of 2,292 people were killed in the World Trade Center attack.

In April 2003, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation launched what was to become the largest design competition in history, the creation of a permanent memorial honouring those lost on September 11, 2001 and an earlier terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. The Memorial Mission Statement provided the framework for the competition:

Remember and honour the thousands of innocent men, women and children murdered by terrorists in the horrific attacks of February 26, 1993 and September 11, 2001.

Respect this place made sacred through tragic loss.

Recognize the endurance of those who survived, the courage of those who risked their lives to save others, and the compassion of all who supported us in our darkest hours.

May the lives remembered, the deeds recognized, and the spirit reawakened be eternal beacons, which reaffirm respect for life, strengthen our resolve to preserve freedom, and inspire an end to hatred, ignorance and intolerance.

Reflecting Absence was chosen as the winning design on January 6, 2004. Landscape architect Peter Walker collaborated with architect Michael Arad to produce the final design, softening the original proposal with the addition of a forest of trees. The memorial is located on the site of the original World Trade Center north and south towers, bounded by Fulton, West, Greenwich and Liberty Streets.

The World Trade Center Site Memorial design critiques Daniel Libeskind’s master plan for the site by filling in the 10 metre depression covering the entire site, the ‘bathtub’ as it came to be known. Unlike all other finalist schemes, Reflecting Absence did not propose that the whole site become sacred ground, removed from the everyday life of New York City. Instead, contrary to Liebeskind’s master plan, the site is returned to grade, linking it directly to its surrounding context. The memorial plaza is a transitional space, mediating between the city proper and the memorial. The plaza is designed as integrated into the city fabric, rather than being set apart from it. Additionally, where Libeskind proposed cultural buildings overhanging the tower footprints, Reflecting Absence was the only finalist scheme that deliberately removed these elements, allowing the footprints to remain free and undisturbed.

The design features no above ground structures. No remnants of the World Trade Center buildings are given centre stage, no patriotic flags or statues. While the original scheme presented a stark above ground landscape, the addition of Peter Walker to the design team resulted in the incorporation of an urban forest, softening the overall public realm of the memorial. The memorial plaza is punctuated by informal plantings of deciduous trees appearing in rows, clusters, clearings and groves. The trees, through their temporal cycle of rebirth extend the visitor experience and deepen the power of the memorial. The Memorial Plaza is designed as a green oasis within the Lower Manhattan area, planted with deciduous trees, including Sweet Gum trees which will turn red and gold around the time of September 11 each year.

The focal point of the memorial is the two voids containing recessed reflecting pools, representing the footprints of the twin towers. The voids are a powerful metaphor of absence and loss. Visitors will be able to
view the voids from within the Memorial Plaza. The recessed pools approximate the size and location of the footprints of the twin towers, visible reminders of absence. Cascades of water line the perimeter of the pools, adding an aural dimension to the experience of the Plaza and the memorial.

Michael Arad and Peter Walker’s _Reflecting Absence_ focuses on the direct and present meaning of loss both on a city scale and on an individual scale. The two voids representing the footprints of the twin towers are in Ochsner’s terms, urban linking objects, city scale gestures that allow for identification and projection of the cultural memory of the events of September 11. At smaller scale, the listing of names around the perimeter of the reflecting pool voids operates as the linking objects that personalise those events into a narrative of individual stories.

The World Trade Center Site Memorial however is also significant, not because of the winning scheme _Reflecting Absence_, but of what it reveals of the culture of contemporary memorial design, its concern for the visual and the spectacular over meaningful engagement:

Almost all of the schemes seemed to have a somewhat generic quality, as if they were more concerned with encouraging feelings of warmth rather than emotions more directly connected to the trade centre tragedy. They seemed soft, if not kitschy, like the interiors of all too many contemporary suburban churches. 79

Critics of the eight finalists noted that they were “...unexceptional, minimalist, and timid designs that looked more appropriate for a corporate plaza than a memorial.” 80 Minimalism was noted as the key aesthetic influence with designs rejecting figuration. 81 Clay Risen in an article for the New York Observer described the influence of Maya Lin on the eight finalists’ designs in terms of embodying a dogma: 82

...the other final contenders in the memorial design competition even more strongly emphasized the individual singularity and ‘exceptionalism’ of 9/11 space. Brian Strawn and Karla Sierralta’s Dual Memory featured thousands of light portals, one for each victim, that illuminated an underground chamber where enormous translucent photos of each victim would hang, surrounded by attendant biographies and memorial messages. The ghostly sea of larger-than-life faces in the accompanying design renderings suggests a labyrinthine and overwhelming totality of people. 83

The trauma of September 11, 2001 was made inescapably public through the television and the media. Television networks so caught by the turn of events of that day had little control over what was being broadcast live to a worldwide audience. In the following days and weeks, the confronting coverage was repeated over and over again, as if in traumatic flashback. The attacks of September 11, 2001 were a spectacular televiusal event and, with the exception of _Reflecting Absence_, the selected finalist designs for the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition all are inescapably bound to the spectacle of loss televised on that day:

The 9.11.01 attacks were designed as a media event, one that involved at least four planes, and at least four targets, all to be hit roughly simultaneously, or in close sequence, and in ways that would command maximal attention, that would create the most spectacular effect within a spectacle-saturated world. 84

The spectacular nature of the event prioritises the skyscraper as a key interpretative element and the privileging of the footprints of the World Trade Center towers as key interpretive elements. Of the eight finalist designs in the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition, _Reflecting Absence_ most successfully negotiated the need for remembrance and regeneration within the powerful televiusal memory of the events of September 11 and the civic memory of the Twin Towers themselves.
Fig 32. Garden of Lights, World Trade Center Site Memorial competition finalist, New York City

Fig 33. Dual Memory, World Trade Center Site Memorial competition finalist, New York City

Fig 34. Passages of Light: Memorial Cloud, World Trade Center Site Memorial competition finalist, New York City
Fig 35. View from North Tower bedrock, World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City

Fig 36. Entry, World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City
Since winning the competition in 2004, however, the design of the memorial has been dramatically altered due to budgetary and site constraints. A major change to the design, for example, is the removal of the underground galleries and the names of the deceased lining the pool at this level. Now relocated to the ‘balustrade’ of the pools at plaza level, the experience and meaning of the memorial bears little relationship to the 2004 scheme. The rush to memorialize the events of September 11 has been a key reason for the inability of the design to withstand the politics of memorialisation.

Writing in 2006, Young commented that, even five years after the event, the cultural meaning of September 11 2001 was still not fully known and therefore impossible to concretize a particular memory of:

- This is why we should not turn this devastated site into a memorial only to the nearly three thousand lives lost here. Such a memorial would preserve the sanctity of this space... but it also inadvertently would sanctify the culture of death and its veneration that inspired the killers themselves. For whether we like it or not, memorials to death and destruction can also monumentalize and privilege such death and destruction. 85

The competing political, professional and personal agendas surrounding the memorialization of the events of September 11 are a work in progress and will continue to impact on the design of the World Trade Center Site memorial. What has been clear, however from the experience of the World Trade Center Site memorial is that memorialization processes need time:

- Faster is not better when you are trying to get beyond tragedy, because it denies the reality of mourning and of human nature, which is that psychological wounds take as much if not more, time to heal than physical wounds and that you cannot rebuild a city successfully when you do not know entirely what you want it to be and when the wounds are still fairly raw. 86

Additionally, the use of minimalist aesthetics in the eight finalist designs in the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition is overwhelmingly stylistic rather than corporeal. The spectacular nature of the events of September 11 and the short time span between event and the selection of the process of determining a suitable design has resulted, it is argued, in memorial responses that are equally spectacular rather than offering meaningful engagement.
Consuming the Language of Minimalism

It can be argued that the success of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial popularized what had previously been regarded as the difficult formal language of minimalist art. At the same time, its popularity initiated a surge of interest in formal memorialisation and the construction of other memorials in the United States, particularly those that dealt with painful events.

While the viewing public can be seen as the principal consumer of memory, the other key aspect of memory consumption is that related to those involved in the design of such spaces:

For artists working in an era of abstract expressionism, earthworks, and conceptual art, and for architects answerable to postmodern and deconstructivist design, the perceived public audience is often none other than themselves.87

The success of Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial and its incorporation of minimalist aesthetics set the benchmark for future memorial design. Memorials that followed in its aesthetic wake however, have not been able to match the power of Lin’s design. Post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial designers failed to understand the power of minimalism beyond its aesthetic language. The failure to understand the conceptual grounding of minimalist aesthetics has resulted in the consumption of the visual language of minimalism rather than its experiential basis. This is key to understanding why contemporary memorial design invariably focuses on the visual rather than the experience of the visitor.

A key reason for the focus on the visual rather than experiential aspects of memorial design lies in the dominant Western conception of space itself. Space, both physical and representational is critical to the discourse and production of architecture. Historically, space has been understood as a realm of neutrality and objectivity where relationships and meaning are fixed. Space has therefore been assumed to be a neutral, mappable void in which objects exist and events take place.

In The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History, Edward S. Casey argues that the supremacy of space as a concept can traced back to the rise of neo-Platonism and its convergence with medieval Christianity. Since Descartes in the 17th century, space has been traditionally conceived as geometric, objective, measurable and disembodied from human perception:

As a result a certain closure is achieved: mathematics becomes the language of truths about the world....The body becomes an object whose true being is disclosed only by those natural sciences that attend to it.88

Descartes separates mind and body and at the same time elevates the mind over the body, arguing that the mental and the material are two different entities and each may have causal effects on the other. The result of the Cartesian program produced a non-unified account of the person where the nature of the mind was independent of the body.

Descartes was so effective in framing the mind and body as separate that his treatise would become the acceptable understanding of the mind-body relationship for more than the next three centuries. Over this period, the body has primarily been discussed in terms of scientific description where its various anatomical and physiological functions have been described in terms of scientific law. The body has therefore been seen as essentially an object and more significantly, no more important than other physical objects in our world.
To a large extent, Western culture continues to be dominated by the influence of the Cartesian paradigm. Cultural endeavours such as architecture in particular, are still dominated by a perception of space as a visual field, neutral, measureable and geometric.

Traditional concepts of space therefore, see space as either objectively measureable and reducible to the objects and forms in space, or as an ideal construct. Both presuppose a conception of space as innocent and neutral. Reading memorial spaces through a traditional Cartesian lens negates the possibility of the contribution of users of these spaces in the shaping of memory. The Cartesian view of space is non-participatory and the memorial user is not acknowledged in the active ongoing construction of that space of memory.

This conception of space is linked directly to the dominance and privileging of vision over the senses in late modernity.
The Viewing Public & the Spectacle of Memory

The Disembodied Eye and Modern Memory

Throughout history, societies have devised means by which those things that need to be remembered in order to keep the community strong and coherent have been given symbolic or physical shape. Systems, myths, rituals and physical objects act as aide-memoires to record key individuals and events that have shaped the past and the beliefs and values that should determine the future.

The importance of the visual in the creation, retention and retrieval of memories has been understood since at least the time of medieval Europe. Metaphors used to describe memory are primarily visual in nature and sight has been understood as the key way in which memories are generated and maintained. Ocular metaphors occur consistently, linking knowledge with clear vision and light as a metaphor for truth:

Terms such as paranoia, narcissism, and exhibitionism suggest how powerfully visual experience, both directed and received, can be tied to our psychological processes.

Since the ancient Greeks, the privileging of vision over other senses such as hearing or touch, has had profound implications for the development of Western philosophy. Martin Jay develops the argument of Hans Jonas that the “externality of sight allows the observer to avoid direct engagement with the object of his gaze.” In other words, the dualism of the observer and the observed, the subject and the object was established early in Hellenic thought, a distinction that is crucial to later Western philosophy. Sight, less temporal than other senses, allowed for the elevation of the static Being over the dynamic Becoming, a fixed eternal presence over ephemeral appearances.

It was in the Renaissance, however, that vision truly came into its own as the master sense in Western thought:

Not only did Renaissance literature abound in ocular references, not only did its science reproduce the world with greater fidelity than ever before, not only did some of its greatest figures like Leonardo da Vinci explicitly privilege the eye over the ear, but also the Renaissance saw one of the most fateful innovations in Western culture: the theoretical and practical development of perspective in the visual arts...

The Renaissance (re-)invention or rediscovery of perspective, the technique of rendering three-dimensional space onto two-dimensional flat surfaces was the great technical innovation of Renaissance art and its effects on Western thinking were far reaching. The conventions of perspective in Renaissance art, relying on a lens-like, disinterested view of the world, further separated the subject from the object. The visual field is now transformed into a perspectival field of representation. The multiple visual vantage points of medieval art are thereby replaced by the “sovereign eye” of perspectivalism:

If the beholder was now the privileged centre of perspectival vision, it is important to underline that his viewpoint was just that: a monocural, unblinking fixed eye (or more precisely, abstract point), rather than the two active, stereoscopic eyes of embodied actual vision, which give us the experience of depth perception. This assumption led to a visual practice in which the living bodies of both the painter and the viewer were bracketed, at least tendentially, in favour of an eternalized eye above temporal duration.
Of significance also, is perspectivalism's perceptual field - an ordered, homogenous grid of co-ordinates that defines a notion of space that is still dominant today.

The French philosopher Descartes deliberately adopted the technique of perspectivalist painter, using a camera obscura to reproduce the world he observed. In describing the physical journeys he undertook prior to embarking on his philosophical journeys, Descartes wrote that for nine years “I wandered here and there throughout the world, trying everywhere to be a spectator rather than actor in all the comedies that go on.” He further argued that the spectator possessed a neutral attitude to what was being observed – “the mental processes of knowing a thing is good or bad is distinct from, and can occur without, the mental process of knowing that we know it.” Descartes therefore adopted the role of the disinterested observer:

- Cartesian dualism was, moreover, particularly influential because of its valorization of the disembodied eye. In either of its guises, speculative or observational, it justified a fully spectatorial rather than incarnate eye, the unblinking eye of the fixed gaze rather than the fleeting glance.

In *Scopic Regimes of Modernity*, Jay argues that the establishment of the 'ocularcentrality' of modernity can be directly traced to the development of Cartesian perspectivalism, a new concept of space that was “geometrically isotropic, rectilinear, abstract, and uniform” that resulted in the “denarrativization or de-textualization” of pictorial space:

- Cartesian perspectivalism was thus in league with a scientific world view that no longer hermeneutically read the world as a divine text but rather saw it as situated in a mathematically regular spatio-temporal order filled with natural objects from without by the dispassionate eye of the neutral researcher.

The Cartesian view of the world was thus one reduced to a visual field which relegated the body as an object within it.

The postmodern obsession with surfaces has its roots in modernity and its concurrent privileging of vision. In *Scopic Regimes of Modernity*, Jay argues that vision has dominated the modern era in a way that clearly sets it apart from its premodern predecessors and even its postmodern successor. Jay identifies two other visual cultures that appeared in modernism although neither possessing the all-persuasive power of Cartesian perspectivalism. Firstly, Flemish art is seen to suppress narrative and textual reference in favour of description and visual surface, “it casts its attentive eye on the fragmentary, detailed, and richly articulated surface of a world it is content to describe rather than explain.” Secondly, the visual culture of the Baroque rejects the geometricalization of the Cartesian tradition for a celebration of the dazzling and the ecstatic:

- In opposition to the lucid, linear, solid, fixed, planimetric, closed form of the Renaissance...the baroque was painterly, recessional, soft-focused, multiple and open.

Both these latter visual cultures are seen by Jay as being permanently repressed in favour of Cartesian perspectivalism throughout the modern era. With the rise of the postmodern however, the previously established hierarchies of the visual subcultures are reversed, leaving multiple 'scopic regimes'. Jay argues that, of the three scopic regimes, it is the 'Baroque vision' that has come into its own in this present age. Thus the "dazzling, disorientating, ecstatic surplus of images in baroque visual experience" is seen to be one of the dominant visual cultures of our time.
The significance of the visual in terms of modern memory becomes more problematic in relation to the
dominance of the visual in late modernity. Pierre Nora argues that our age is obsessed with the archive, that
"ours is an intensely retinal and powerfully televisual memory." 104 The rapidity of change creates an anxiety
about the meaning of the present and we feel the obsessive need to collect, document and archive:
Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the
immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. 105

Edkins sees modern memory as having three significant characteristics – archival, private and alienated.
Firstly, memory is archival in the sense that there is an overwhelming desire to store the physical remnants of
what cannot be remembered, amassing a great accumulation of things that may be needed to be recalled at a
future date. Secondly, memory has become essentially a private endeavour, based on the search for personal
identity. Thirdly, modern memory separates the past from the present rather than highlighting its connection.
In agreement with Nora, Edkins argues that this view of memory as archival, private and linearly separated
between past and present is specific to our time. 106

Hence the defining characteristics of modern memory, grounded in the visual and the spectacular rather than
the experienced.

Andreas Huyssen notes that one reason for the strength of memory making seen in the rise of museums and
monuments in the late twentieth century is that they offer something that mass communication technologies
such as television do not, the power of the material object:
The permanence of the monument and the museum object, formerly criticized as deadening
reification, takes on a different role in a culture dominated by the fleeting image on the
screen and the immateriality of communications. It is the permanence of the monument in
a reclaimed public space, in pedestrian zones, in restored urban centres, or in pre-existing
memorial spaces that attracts a public dissatisfied with simulation and channel-flicking. 107

While the strength of memory making in built form can be ascribed to a reaction against the dominant visual
culture of our time, contemporary memorial design it is argued, continues to reflect the paradigm of the
spectacle, of memory as something that is visually contemplated rather than experienced. Recent memorial
design reflects this paradigm:
...there can be a sense of the macabre associated with these memorials and there is a fear that
we might go too far with them – show too much – so that the memorial becomes more like the
scene of a horrific car accident where the passerby cannot help but look. 108

The French Situationist Guy Debord, writing in 1967 coined the term 'the society of the spectacle', arguing that
the notion of 'spectacle' was simultaneously the mechanism and the basis of a society which produced endless
images of images, signs with no meanings, realities without any meanings, texts without narratives:
In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an
immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into
representation. 109

Similarly, Frederick Jameson writing in 1992 argued that contemporary experience has been reduced to "series
of pure and unrelated presents..." 110 implying that "the experience of the present becomes powerfully and over-
whelingly vivid and 'material' and that thereby the world "momentarily loses its depth and threatens to become a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density." Both Debord and Jameson are speaking of the postmodern tendency to valorise surfaces, an age that has glorified the spectacle as the only true reality.

Recent Australian memorials such as the National Police Memorial Canberra are evidence of an approach to memorial design that focuses on the visual rather than the experiential.
National Police Memorial, Canberra

Fig 37, National Police Memorial, Canberra

Fig 38, Detail, National Police Memorial, Canberra
Designed by Fairweather Proberts Architects and dedicated in November 2006, the National Police Memorial is located in the southern area of Kings Park, adjacent to the National Carillon located on Aspen Island.

The National Police Memorial is intended to honour Australian Police Officers who have lost their lives in the course of their duties and to acknowledge the contribution of policemen and women in serving the Australian community. The memorial comprises two key elements, a paved terrain and a memorial wall holding the names of the fallen.

The paved terrain of the memorial apron creates an undulating formal commemorative space, an attempt to communicate the uncertainty and unpredictability of policing activities. Engraved in this ground is text from official police records and the words of loved ones of the fallen.

The second element of the memorial, a bronze panelled wall is adorned with bronze 'touchstone' plaques carrying the name, rank, date and place of death of officers killed in the line of duty. The names of the fallen are not placed in any order but are distributed randomly across the surface of the wall. The memorial wall holds places for 1200 names, of which approximately 719 are currently engraved.

Each touchstone is intended to be created as a pair with one being presented to the family of the fallen and one to be incorporated in the memorial wall. Similar strategies of linking private and public remembrance have been used in other recent memorials internationally, most notably in the Dallas Police Memorial, dedicated in 2001. In that instance a more profound strategy of cutouts of the badge numbers of the fallen is used, the negative space being left on the memorial and the positive cutout being presented to the officer's family. While referred to by the designers of the National Police Memorial as touchstones, it is arguable how effective these are in fact in inviting the spontaneous sense of touch. What one reads and responds to first and foremost is the formal geometry and materiality of the plaques and their arrangement on the wall. The names, the most potentially compelling element of the memorial, are almost incidental to the design.

In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the fingertip size of the typeface is intimate and personal, deliberately designed to encourage touching. In the National Police Memorial, the size of the typeface is not generated by its relationship to the memorial participant, but rather to the size of the touchstone and the graphic relationship between the two. Additionally, where each name inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is presented as a totality, as a continuous line using consistent capitalization, in the National Police Memorial, names are presented as fragments of text, as lists of first names and surnames. The end result is one of depersonalization.

In the National Police Memorial, the strategies of naming do not allow for the names to act, in Ochsner's terms, as linking objects. Individuals are separated from other individuals through space and time, they become anonymous objects, without any context and meaning. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial which reveals the stories of individuals through the placement of adjacent names, the National Police Memorial presents individuals in isolation.

The design for the National Police Memorial it is argued, shows how the potential for the communicative aspects of naming through Ochsner's concept of 'linking objects' can be subverted by a focus on a formal rather than an experiential approach to memorial design.
The Spectacle of Memory

Memorial spaces, it can be argued, are essentially places that frame the extraordinary. In doing so, they are potentially sites that draw visitation because of their otherness. As sites of memory consumption, memorial spaces therefore operate within a larger context of pilgrimage and tourist experience.

The tourist experience itself is essentially a quest for ‘authentic’ experience. Tourists visit places that are perceived as authentic because they perceive their own immediate contemporary world as inauthentic. Sites of death and disaster are often seen as possessing a particular type of authenticity and often become the focus of tourist interest. In Debord’s society of the spectacle therefore, it is not possible to identify the authentic, unless it is something set apart from the everyday. In the case of sites representing death or catastrophe, they are potentially the only sites that convey a sense of the ‘real’:

Arguing that voyeurism is wrong not only fails to acknowledge the totalizing reach of both tourism and spectacle, it also fails to account why people feel the need to gaze upon sites of tragedy in person. People are not just repulsed by sites of horror – they are also attracted to them as possible containers of authenticity and reality.

Tourism to such sites can take on the connotation of ‘pilgrimage’, in its conventional meaning as a transformative journey to a sacred site:

Often insulated from death and disaster, and generally discouraged from public displays of grief, people go to these sites to see and touch real-life tragedy, to weep and mourn and feel in socially accepted situations.

Pilgrimage by definition involves travel. A contributing factor for the attraction of sites of death and disaster are often their location, usually on the physical periphery of societies and removed from the everyday. Tourist consumption of death sites is evident prior to the twentieth century, however, the globalisation of these sites through late twentieth century mass media and telecommunications has given rise to situations where global events are perceived locally and hence become attractive destinations for a particular tourist experience. Mass communication technologies hence shape our perception and understanding of what are significant sites in our cultural history. John Lennon and Malcolm Foley describe how tourism “…which encompasses the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites” has now become as commonplace as leisure or recreational forms of tourism. The phenomenon, described as ‘dark tourism’ is characterised in three key ways:

First, the global communication technologies play a major part in creating the initial interest...
Second, that the objects in dark tourism themselves appear to introduce anxiety and doubt about the product of modernity...
Third, the educative elements of sites are accompanied by elements of commodification and a commercial ethic which…accepts that visitation…is an opportunity to develop a tourist product.

Lennon and Foley link the popularity of dark tourism to the ever increasing influence of the media and its ability to frame places in terms of the unusual or the remarkable. As an “intimation of post-modernity”, Lennon and Foley assert that dark tourism while educative, also contains elements of mass consumerism.
Marita Tumarkin, however argues that blaming media influence may not touch the essence of why people are drawn to these sites. She suggests that “the nature and intensity of emotions inspired by encounters with death as an idea, while often unnerving, can also prove to be mesmerising and addictive.” Part of the reason for this lies in the dominant nature of vision in our culture. Public experience, because of technologies such as television and the internet, has been subsumed into a private realm. There is an urge to experience the reality of what is increasing mediated and represented through mass communication technologies, to be able to “stand on the ground where something happened is to feel the reality of the event – to feel meaningfully linked to others and to history.” In this regard, Tumarkin chronicles the overwhelming need of New Yorkers to visit Ground Zero immediately following the attacks. Rather than simply explaining this reaction by way of closure, healing or paying one’s respects, Tumarkin argues that:

Going to Ground Zero was a way of countering 9/11 being transformed into TV spectacle, a hyper-real and addictive show. It was a way of bringing meaning to an incomprehensible and endlessly replayed sequence of events that was doggedly rewriting history.

The role of the mass media in dark tourism is also evident in the growth of the phenomenon of spontaneous shrines. The televisual coverage of sites of death and disaster inevitably focuses on the material culture of grief such as spontaneous shrines. At established memorial sites such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Oklahoma City National Memorial, these offerings have become tourist attractions in their own right.

Tourist led expeditions to sites of death and destruction have become increasingly popular. Holocaust sites such as the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau, for example, receive hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Visits to such sites take on the veneer of a religious pilgrimage, “their conjunctions of hope and horror, good and evil, chaos and order, heroism and despair evoke images and emotions so unlike those of daily life as to endow these places with a tangible spirituality.”

To visit New York and not view Ground Zero would be almost unthinkable, September 11 forever branding the city as a site for dark tourism. The three September 11 sites began attracting tourists, that is people with no direct connection with the suffering experienced in those places, within weeks of the attacks. Debbie Lisle in her discussion of the temporary viewing platform at the World Trade Center site confronts issues relating to how societies locate, interpret and consume sites of disaster:

The ‘rush’ of 11 September commemoration is just the latest example of how the shortened attention span of the tourist demands an immediate memorialisation of events.

Increasingly therefore, the time between an event and its memorialisation has become shorter. In the past, collective memorialization has generally taken place with a considerable distance of time. Historic memorials such as the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials, for example, came into being many decades after the death of the individuals. Since the 1960s, however, this process has accelerated. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for example, was completed seven years after the withdrawal of American troops while the Oklahoma City National Memorial was completed five years after the 1995 bombing. In the context of the memory boom in Western culture, the need to memorialize sooner rather than later reflects a paradigm of memory as yet another consumer product.
Lisle argues that tourist responses to disaster sites and their subsequent memorialisation should not be seen as automatically inappropriate. At the Ground Zero site, for example, while many visitors to the viewing platform did behave as if they were in Disneyland, more often than not, people were drawn into moments of silence, introspection and acute reflection:

I want to defend the possibility that tourists are perfectly aware of the society of the spectacle – that tourists know the world is mediated and commodified for their consumption. What I am suggesting is that even for ‘reflexive’ tourists, sites of atrocity function in specific ways with respect to ‘the real’. These sites are coveted because they are the only places left which haven’t been commodified and turned into a spectacle. In effect, the only ‘real’ thing anymore, the only thing that can be differentiated from the surrounding spectacle, is catastrophe. Everything else is mediated, simulated, banal.

People’s motives in visiting sites of trauma, however, cannot simply be described in terms of the extremes of voyeurism or pilgrimage. Intentions are often never clear, there can be conflicting and overlapping motivations involved in visiting such sites. A range of visitor motivation from curiosity, remembrance, education and duty is evident at sites affected by death and disaster:

...people make pilgrimages to sites of tragedy in order to pay tribute to the dead and to feel transformed in some way in relation to that place. In such places as the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Ground Zero, the practices of sorrowful pilgrimage and tourism are intermixed and often inseparable.

Visitors to sites of violence seek some form of understanding or resolution of these contradictory emotions, some sense of the personal and the nation state redeeming itself from these events:

Even if no resolution can be clearly formulated, sufficient demarcation of the acts of visiting, confronting, and feeling – via the use of boundaries, staged progression, and accompanying narrative – can often supply an overarching framework within which contradictory emotions and meanings can be embraced.

In referring to the recent growth of memorial museums internationally, Williams argues that a key reason for visitation to these sites of death and disaster is understanding, either on a personal level or in terms of history itself. Additionally, the way in which memorial museums frame questions of morality is another key reason that visitors are drawn to these sites:

I posit that a key aspect of their appeal is in the way they offer a concrete instance for thinking about extreme conditions and moral choices that both defined the political twentieth century, and also speak to our human fascination with danger, mortality, and loss. That is, in the everyday lives of visitors who will probably never be asked to confront such life and death situations, historical atrocities allow us to experiment mentally with the furthest boundaries of what life can involve.

Monuments and memorial sites commemorating death or painful events are invariably sites of dark tourism. The tendency to reduce these experiences to spectacle and voyeurism can however, be avoided through
strategies focussed on the positive engagement of the visitor and the commemorative experience. The Salem Tercentenary Memorial is an example of how a site marked by commodification and curiosity can present the past in a meaningful way.
Salem Tercentenary Memorial, Salem

JOHN PROCTOR
HANGED
AUGUST 19, 1692

Fig 39. Detail, Salem Tercentenary Memorial, Salem
The tourist experience of Salem, Massachusetts is grounded in the compelling history of witch hunts, trials and hangings in seventeenth century colonial America. The presentation of this history however, is focussed predominantly on the sensationalist aspects of this past, reduced to consumer kitsch and retail based tourist experiences. Tragedy, fear and death, the dominant experiences of that period in history are replaced by an evocation of the occult, ghosts and dungeons. The dominant overlay of 'witch kitsch' obscures the reality of the Salem witch trials.

In 1991, a design competition was conducted to establish an appropriate memorial commemorating the 300th anniversary of the tragic witch hunts in Salem. The winning entry, designed by architect James Cutler and artist Maggie Smith was dedicated in August 1992.

The Salem Tercentenary Memorial seeks to reveal a more authentic historical experience for the tourist. Judith Wasserman argues that it is evidence that a memorial landscape can, if effectively designed, provide tourists with an authentic experience of history:

> The memorial creates an atmosphere conducive to remembering, to engaging with history, and to enacting rituals that can aid in healing the implications of the tragedy.\(^{130}\)

As no known authentic sites existed for the creation of the memorial, an urban park was selected, sited between a historic cemetery and house. The memorial comprises a simple stone wall hugging the perimeter of the site, a minimalist assemblage that requires the visitor to interpret and complete the act of memory making. Protruding from either side of the granite wall is a series of twenty stones. The wall, constructed in mortarless ashlar with aged stone has the appearance of a ruin. In the centre are eight black locusts trees, symbolic of the trees used for hanging those found guilty of witchcraft.

The simplicity of the design is suggestive of a historic graveyard or churchyard. On entering the memorial space, the visitor ritualistically moves clockwise around the internal perimeter of the wall. Parts of the wall are removed, revealing only a stone threshold. The exposed thresholds are engraved with the words of the accused. These anguished cries appear from under one wall and seem to disappear under another:

> The proclamations, however, disappear under the wall - representing the way language at the Salem witch trials was used to pervert the justice process rather than aid in realizing truths.\(^{131}\)

The disappearing text engages the visitor, questioning their understanding of the meaning and intent of the text and its relationship to real events. The names of the accused are engraved on the protruding stones, serving both as tombstones and benches:

> The engraving is off-centre, leaving enough room for the visitor to sit without obscuring the name. A shift occurs - the visitor sits with, befriends, and comforts the accused.\(^{132}\)

The Salem Tercentenary Memorial resists the commodification of memory, creating a poetic evocation of the past, grounded in historic authenticity and the positive engagement of the memorial participant.
Summation: The Consumption of Memory

Kansteiner argues that collective memory processes need to be understood not as an extension of individual memory but as a "complex process of cultural production and consumption that acknowledges the persistence of cultural traditions as well as the ingenuity of memory makers and the subversive interests of memory consumers." 3

Focussing on the consumers of memory, those involved in its design and the viewing public, is critical in understanding the ways in which the legacy of Maya Lin’s design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has over time, been reduced to a formal aesthetic language rather than one focussed on the experience of the visitor.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was derided as minimalist by its early critics. In describing it as ‘minimalist’ the clear intention of these critics was to draw parallels with public understanding, or lack of, of minimalist art – that is, elitist, obscure, non-human and ‘difficult’. Similarities with these works and other minimalist sculptures were however only superficial, clearly evident on completion of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

Instead of being emptied of extrinsic, referential meaning, Lin’s monument clearly possessed a subject outside itself. Instead of being in conflict with its environment, Lin’s monument gently worked with the earth and paid respect to its neighbours. 4

Daniel Abramson argues that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial’s similarities to minimalist sculpture were mainly superficial. While minimalism downplayed materiality and colour in the sense that these characteristics did not denote anything beyond themselves, Maya Lin’s work was executed in sensuous, highly reflective black granite. Rather than being devoid of meaning, the work “clearly possessed a subject outside life.” 5

The understanding and execution of minimalism in architecture, particularly in memorial design it is argued here, is however, overwhelmingly stylistic. Recent memorial design has concerned itself predominantly with the aesthetics of physical and symbolic form - the creation of an object in space rather than a concern for the transaction between the individual, the community and the space of memory. The viewing public, as consumers of memory also operate within a visually dominant context. Memory, particularly as it relates to culturally traumatic events is understood as something to be seen rather than experienced.

Ultimately, the relationship of designers and the viewing public to the memorial space is typically from a visual perspective, rather than one linked to bodily experience.

To a large extent, Western culture continues to be dominated by the influence of the Cartesian paradigm of space as an ideal construct, measurable and reducible to the objects and forms in space. Cultural endeavours such as architecture are still dominated by a perception of space as a visual field, neutral, measurable and geometric. Memorial spaces in particular, when conceived in this dominant conception of space do not allow for possibility for the bodily experience of the users of these spaces to shape memory.

The following chapter “Embodying Memory” examines the potential for the creation and sustaining of memory through the privileging of the body in memorial space.
consuming memory
FOUR
EMBODYING MEMORY

Fig. 40. Detail, Civil Rights Memorial, Montgomery
The design is specifically made so water literally turns the lip and flows alongside the underside of the table, so your feet don't get wet. You can walk straight up to it and put your hands upon the table and move the water around. It's actually asking people to interact with it, and the fact is if you touch it you can make the water flow differently so that your involvement influences how the piece works.  

Maya Lin
Introduction

Maya Lin’s Civil Rights Memorial is sited as part of the entry plaza for the Southern Poverty Law Center’s headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama. The memorial attempts to deal with not only the past but also the ongoing struggle for civil rights. The memorial presents the history of the civil rights movement as a condensed, closed artefact, however, interpretation of it is left open to the memorial participant.

The Civil Rights Memorial is composed of two elements, a round tabletop and a wall. The circular, solid granite tabletop, almost 4 metres in diameter is incised at its perimeter in the manner of a sundial, with fifty three entries, chronologically arranged. The timeline of the tabletop, engraved with the names and events of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, clearly links individuals’ deaths with humanitarian achievements. Rather than naming all the dead, Lin chose to select names and events of significance to the civil rights movement in America, the work becoming more informational than personal. Situated behind the disc is a 3 metre granite water wall bearing an inscription by Dr Martin Luther King Jr. which inspired the work - “until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

The memorial participant is led clockwise around the tabletop in order to read the sequence of history. The work is essentially about time and the pace of time. In Lin’s words, the Civil Rights Memorial:

...teaches a brief history of that era illustrating how a person’s death often is directly related to the enactment of bitter legislation. It describes what was in effect a people’s movement - not just the work of a few well known individuals - showing how people helped to change history.

Like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Civil Rights Memorial places the individual and the memorial participant in the context of historic events, providing the opportunity for private contemplation in a public context. The memorial’s circularity allows for memorial participants to experience private and shared remembrance. On some occasions there appears to be a circular gathering of people. Memorial participants move around the black granite disc, pausing to touch names, but also in conversation, verbally and non-verbally with others around them.

Lin describes the memorial as a ‘water table’, a thin sheet of water flowing over a solid base. The work references natural underground water tables, “metaphorically referring to saturation points in human experience.” The memorial participant is attracted to the slowly flowing water, through which the inscribed text can be traced. Through touch, a ripple is created that interrupts the water’s surface:

The water is as slow as I could get it. It remains very still until you touch it. Your hand causes ripples, which transforms and alters the piece, just as reading the words completes the piece. The sound of the water is also very calming. Sound is important to me as an architect.

The surface of the memorial, combining water and polished granite is both transparent and reflective, allowing the memorial participant to see the names of the dead merging with their own image. The individual is drawn into the work and makes their own connection through time and through the revelation of the cycle of life:

I’m trying to make people become involved with the piece on all levels, with the touch and the sound of water, with the words, with the memories.
The movement of hands dipping in the water makes the presence of those being memorialized real to the visitor. The repetition of the act of touching the names and the water by visitors becomes an act of connection and communion. The film of water is disturbed by the engagement of the body with the work. Trailing a finger through the text and water surface makes the memorial participant a physical part of the history they are reading:

The flowing surface of the Civil Rights Memorial, reacting to each touch of the beholder, goes still further, implying not only that memory is individual but that each beholder affects memory by his or her own presence and relation to it. Continuously welling from the centre, the moving sheen of water also embodies memory as a process rather than a static entity.  

This chapter, "Embodying Memory" explores the potential to ground a rethinking of the spatialization of memory through an understanding of lived, or embodied experience, the aesthetics of minimalism being key to the potential for memorial spaces to spatialize bodily performance through a strategic balance between abstraction and figuration. Lin's design for the Civil Rights Memorial brings into focus the importance of visitor engagement in memorial space and bodily performance in the creation and sustaining of personal and cultural memory.
Bodily Performance and Memorial Space

The Social Construction of Space

Historically, under the Cartesian paradigm, space has been conceived as a visual field, a neutral, mappable void marked by the pattern of inter-relationships between objects.

The work of Henri Lefebvre extends concepts of space beyond the geometric Cartesian view to an understanding of the impact of social relations. For Lefebvre, space is not given but produced as a social construct, a product of social process. Lefebvre argues against a view of space as merely a container of objects or a visual field of object relationships:

For Lefebvre, space has unique status, what he called the materialization of social being. Everything exists 'within' space and yet space does not exist without a subject or a body to live, perceive and conceive that space. 7

Here space is understood as a cultural construct that is socially produced through lived experience – it is both a social product and a means of social control. Lefebvre argues that the production of space occurs at three different levels – physical space (nature, the cosmos), mental space (abstracted, intellectualised) and social (lived space). Physical space is space that can be perceived by the physical senses. Mental space is space that is imagined or conceived. Perception and conception of space, through the body and the mind occurs through lived experience.

Memorial space cannot be considered separately from its everyday and commemorative uses. Lefebvre's theories of the socially produced nature of space has implications for understanding the planning, design and ongoing use of memorial spaces. Whether public or private, spaces of memory are cultural representations that are socially produced – their meanings are negotiated through social action. Spatial relations, both material and symbolic, shape everyday social practices, including those involved in the representation of memory.

Lefebvre argues that in contemporary society the imaginary realm, i.e., the abstract dimension is dominant over the physical realm. The dominance of the mental realm therefore privileges theoretical discourse on space rather than practices within space. He argues that there is a void between these two realms and that the third aspect of space, the lived, could bring them together:

...there is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space and its occupation of space...each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space. 8

Edward Soja, adapting post colonial theorist Homi Bhabha’s notion of ‘third space’, argues for another way understanding and relating to space 9. Soja’s ‘first’ and ‘second’ space coincide with the traditional dualistic thinking of space as either real or imagined. For Soja, ‘third’ space can be explored and constructed by experiencing the real and imagined realms simultaneously. Soja’s ‘third space’ therefore is a merging of the physical and imagined through the living of space.

In a similar vein, Reena Tiwari has argued that contemporary memorial techniques do not frame space as a lived experience:

In the contemporary techniques of memorialisation, the past environment imagined from memories (that forms the mental space) is dragged out of its context and replicated on the
present (physical space). The past dominates the present and is looked upon as an object. Due to the non-relational mental and physical realms, the body, though situated in the space, fails to inhabit it. The 'third space', that is lived space, is not constructed here. 

The body and the space it occupies is therefore linked to the tangible space of architecture and the intangible space of social processes. Memory therefore needs to be understood as an interaction of space, body and object, a process of social and cultural agency located in a space of social relations and mediated by a range of material objects.

Commemorative Ceremonies and Bodily Practice

In On Collective Memory, Halbwachs argues that individual memory cannot exist outside the context of social memory. Halbwachs however does not fully address the question of how collective memories are passed on within a social group from one generation to another.

Connerton, in How Societies Remember, attempts to address this question, arguing that bodily ritual performances are the key to understanding how memories of the past are passed on:

...to study the social formation of memory is to study those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible. I mean to isolate and consider in more detail certain acts of transfer that are to be found in both traditional and modern societies...It is to this end that I have singled out, as acts of transfer of crucial importance, commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices...But I have seized upon commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices in particular because it is the study of these, I want to argue, that leads us to see that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances.

For Connerton, the role of the body in memorialisation is central:

It serves as the primary bearer of the concrete commemorabilia through which such commemorating is effected. The body moves the commemorator into the appropriate ritualistic space, in which it proceeds to perform the gestures by which the commemorative act is accomplished.

In order to understand how social memory is formed, the acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible become crucial. For Connerton, ritual performances such as commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices are the key ways in which memories of the past are conveyed and sustained.

The word 'remembrance' is used to describe a social process – 'memory' both individual and collective is its product. Commemoration is closely related to memory, being the act of remembrance often through some form of observance and public celebration. Memorials and places of commemoration serve to preserve memories of people, communities, places or events.

Connerton argues that to study how social memory is formed, one needs to understand those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible. He suggests that it is through ritual performances such as commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices that memories of the past are conveyed and sustained. Connerton argues that the body as a key aspect of the formation of social memory has largely been
unaddressed, arguing that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past is conveyed and sustained within societies through 'ritual' performances:

Remembrance is active and transitory; it has a beginning and end, an existence in space and time. Its very delimitation is its strength as a heuristic device. Collective remembrance, the process of public recollection, is the act of groups of people who gather bits and pieces and join them together for a public that will express and consume the constructed memory. What such groups create is not merely a cluster of individual memories: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. 14

In Connerton’s account, ritual is described as “rule governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance.” 15 Ritual activities or ‘rites’ are described by Connerton as “formalized acts, and tend to be stylized, stereotyped and repetitive.” 16 Because rites are deliberately stylized, they are susceptible to little or no variation and therefore display a sense of historical continuity. Additionally, because all rites are repetitive, they are further able to make connections with an absolute past:

Commemorative rites...do not simply imply continuity with the past but explicitly claim such continuity. And many of them...do so by ritually re-enacting a narrative of events held to have taken place at some past time, in a manner sufficiently elaborate to contain the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances. 17

Connerton argues that commemorative ceremonies are specific forms of ritual in that they overtly refer to archetypal people or events. Through commemorative ceremonies, a community is reminded of its collective identity as represented through a metanarrative. Images of the past are therefore conveyed and sustained by ritual performances of commemorative ceremonies. For Connerton, the body and its movement through space is the key to these ritual performances:

And this means that what is remembered in commemorative ceremonies is something in addition to a collectively organized variant of personal and cognitive memory. For if the ceremonies are to work for their participants, if they are to be persuasive to them, then those participants must be not simply cognitively competent to execute the performance; they must be habituated to those performances. This habituation is to be found.....in the bodily substrate of the performance. 18

Connerton argues that “memory is sedimented or amassed in the body” 19 through social practices that are either ‘inscribing’ or ‘incorporating’. Inscribing practices are those which involve a cultural means of storing information, for example, the construction of memorial spaces. Incorporating practices are described as the range of bodily actions which “re-enact(s) the past in our present conduct” 20, i.e., through rituals or acts of commemoration.

Inscribing practices ultimately divide and demarcate social space for both the living and the dead and are therefore a key aspect of identity formation. Incorporating practices on the other hand are processes of remembrance and are crucial to understanding how spaces and objects evoke memories. Inscribing practices hold information and through the act of transcription become available to future generations. Incorporating
practices on the other hand are largely traceless are not capable of leaving behind evidence of what is remembered:

In consequence, we commonly consider inscription to be the privileged form for the transmission of a society's memories, and we can see the diffusion and elaboration of a society's systems of inscription as making possible an exponential development of its capacity to remember. 21

C. Nadia Seremetakis suggests a connection between the senses, cultural agency and memory, arguing that while the connection is grounded in embodied performance, the interaction between the senses and memory objects accumulates over time as an “emotional and historical sedimentation” within these objects:

The sensory landscape and its meaning-endowed objects bear within them emotional and historical sedimentation that can provoke and ignite gestures, discourses and acts — acts which open up these objects' stratigraphy. Thus the surround of material culture is neither stable nor fixed, but inherently transitive, demanding connection and completion by the perceiver. 23

Memory is thus seen as a practice mediated by embodied acts through material forms. The material forms are seen as being sensory forms in themselves, “... of having the potential to provoke the emergence, the awakening of the layered memories, and thus the senses contained within it.” 24

In a similar vein to Connerton, Tiwari in Translating Memories into Memorials by a Performing Body, argues that a ‘performing body’ (both physical and psychological) is the key to understanding how memories are translated into spaces invoking memories:

The performing body helps in the conflation of past and present space and the physical setting aids the movement of performing body into liminal state, where a space based on memories is re-constructed. 25

Spatializing Bodily Performance

Ritual as Performance

Inscribing practices, through bodily ritual performance, operate as the link between the body and memorial space. As an area of academic interest, the notion of ritual and its role in the generation of meaning first emerged in the late nineteenth century as a way of describing certain aspects of human behaviour that was believed to be universal across all societies. Most theories of ritual belong to one of two groups -- either defining it as a distinct and independent set of behaviours or as an aspect of all human behaviours. Theories of ritual fall into one of these two categories, either seeing it as distinctly different to other forms of human activity or on the other hand, seeing it as part of other forms of human activity.

Clifford Gertz regarded ritual as a symbolic system that acts as a model of the way things are and a model for how they should be. 26 In other words, ritual actions and symbols are able to project idealized images that on the one hand reflect the existing social situation and, on the other hand, are able to act as a model for redirecting the social situation. Functionalists such as Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski and early Structuralists such as van Gennep and Turner focussed on how ritual facilitated social life, or the social function
of ritual activities. Victor Turner, for example, argued that ritual acts were transformative. Participation in ritual acts leads to a transformation in the body, a state described as ‘liminal’. In enacting ritual, the body moves from its existing state into a different state of liminality – the movement from one mental state to another. The body therefore is an essential element in ritual acts, situating it in space and time.

These early theorists studied ritual in the context of the community and conceptualized ritual meanings as fixed across time and individuals. These models discounted the possibility of personalized ritual meanings.

Later approaches to ritual theory, however, began to acknowledge the impact of the individual on ritual activities and ritual meaning. In the 1970s, ‘performance theory’ emerged as a new paradigm in ritual theory, one that sought to shift the focus from the community to the individual, from an approach that was objectivist to one that was constructivist. The key outcome of ritual activity is therefore seen as the reproduction or reshaping of an individual’s social and cultural environment:

When returned to the context of human activity in general, so called ritual acts must be seen first in terms of what they share with all activity, then in terms of how they set themselves off from other practices. Ritualization is fundamentally a way of doing things to trigger the perception that these practices are distinct and the associations that they engender are special...Hence ritualized acts must be understood within a semantic framework whereby the significance of an action is dependent upon its place and relationship within a context of all other ways of acting: what it echoes, what it inverts, what it alludes to, what it denies.

Ritual, as defined through performance theory, are those everyday behaviours that are able to be transformed into a structured event through devices such as repetition and rhythm. Susanna Rostas describes ritual as a “way of acting that is habitual”, that is, acts that conform to predetermined conventions and structures.

In terms of our understanding of ritual, performance theory focuses on the similarities ritual has with the performance of theatre, drama and the public spectacle. The link between the two acknowledges that what makes ritual and theatrical performance similar is the deliberate acting out of overtly symbolic actions in public:

The qualities of performance can be analysed in terms of several overlapping features. First of all, performances communicate on multiple sensory levels, usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds, and sometimes even tactile, olfactory, gustatory stimulation...

Hence the power of performance lies in great part in the effect of the heightened multisensory experience it affords: one is not being told or shown something so much as one is led to experience something. And according to anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff, in ritual-like behaviour ‘not only is seeing believing, doing is believing.

The notion of ‘framing’ is also an important aspect of understanding ritual through performance theory.

Intrinsic to any performance is the distinction that what is being communicated is different and significant. Because of this framing aspect, performance is understood to be something distinct from the everyday, creating a “complete and condensed...type of microcosmic portrayal of the macrocosm.”

Ritual as described by performance theory is a medium for social change, with an emphasis on human creativity and the physicality of bodily action. As opposed to earlier theories of ritual, performance theory attempts to deal with the overwhelmingly physical aspects of ritual activity rather than approaching it from an intellectual basis – “ritual does not mould people; people fashion rituals that mould their world.”
Most performance theorists imply that for successful or effective ritual performance, some form of transformation needs to be achieved. Performance theory has proven useful in our understanding of ritual because of its focus on the drama of the process, the focus on the physical and bodily expressiveness of ritual and its ability to explain contemporary and secular forms of ritual such as theatre, sports and public spectacles.

Catherine Bell, the key contemporary ritual theorist argues that ritual is not an in-built or universal character of human behaviour but is “a cultural and historical construction that has been heavily used to help differentiate various styles and degrees of religiosity, rationality, and cultural determinism.”

Bell argues that as practice, ritual is “(1) situational; (2) strategic; (3) embedded in a misrecognition of what it is in fact doing; and (4) able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of the order of power of the world...” For Bell, ritual, like all human activity is firstly situational – it cannot be understood outside the specific context in which it occurs. Secondly, ritual as practice is distinctly manipulative, and expedient – a strategic way of acting. Thirdly, ritual misrecognises its limits and constraints and the relationship between its ends and its means. Finally for Bell, ritual produces a specific microcosm of the world at large.

In *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, Bell considers the characteristics of ritual-like activities that distinguish ritual activities from other human actions. These characteristics are formality, traditionalism, invariance, rule governance and sacral symbolism.

Firstly, in general, the more formal a series of movements and actions appears to us, the more likely we would describe them as ritual-like. Formality appears to be a result of a more rigid and organized set of expressions and actions than the more open behaviour of everyday action.

Secondly, Bell argues that ritual-like behaviour is characterised by the notion of traditionalism, whereby a set of activities is made to “appear to be identical to or thoroughly consistent with older cultural precedents.” This can take the form of the exact repetition of actions from the past, the modification of the same activities in a new setting, to the creation of new actions that are able to make links with the past. Bell argues that a “…ritual that makes no connection with any tradition is apt to be found anomalous, inauthentic, or unsatisfying by most people.”

Thirdly, Bell argues that the notion of invariance is one of the most common characteristics of ritual-like behaviour. Invariance is usually manifested in the display of a specific set of actions that is marked by repetition and precise control - “the emphasis may be on the careful choreography of actions, the self control required by the actor, or the rhythm of repetition in which the orchestrated activity is the most recent in an exact series that unites past and future.” The focus therefore is on controlled precision of movements not just repetitious actions.

Fourthly, Bell argues that ritual-like behaviour is characterised by ‘rule-governance’ whereby orchestrated norms are superimposed on what is seen as the chaos of human life. As rule-governed behaviour, rituals “may define the outer limits of what is acceptable, or they orchestrate every step. In either case, they hold individuals to communally approved patterns of behaviour, they testify to the legitimacy and power of that form of communal authority, and perhaps they also encourage human interactions by constraining the possible outcomes.”

Finally, Bell argues that the notion of sacral symbolism is a key characteristic of ritual-like behaviour. Sacral symbolism assumes a differentiation between a sacred realm and the everyday world of the profane - “in doing so, these activities express generalized belief in the existence of a type of sacrality that demands a special
human response.” Ritual-like behaviour effectively creates the sacred by differentiating itself from the world of the everyday. In terms of objects as sacred symbols, their sacrality is a function of the way in which it is more than the sum of its parts and has the ability to refer to things beyond itself, embodying and evoking connections with greater, more abstract ideas. National symbols such as flags and monuments, for example, are generally regarded more than simply signs representing nationhood but an embodiment of national values and ideals:

Hence, what makes activities around certain symbols seem ritual-like is really two-fold: the way they differentiate some places from others by means of distinctive acts and responses and the way they evoke experiences of a greater, higher, or more universalised reality – the group, the nation, humankind, the power of God, or the balance of the cosmos. 

In summary, ritual-like activity are those actions that recognise and help define the specialness of a site, making it different from other places and from everyday life in a way that is able to evoke highly symbolic meanings. The specialness or difference of these sites defines a sacred world within the profane world of everyday life and gives rise to the experience of the sacral. Most importantly however, all the characteristics of ritual-like behaviour described by Bell acknowledges and highlights the importance of the body and the way it moves in space and time.

Processes of remembrance such as bodily ritual can be seen as an extension of Ochsner’s theory of linking objects in memorial spaces. As such, bodily performances, it is argued here can be regarded as linking processes, offering the potential for identification, projection and meaningful engagement by the visitor.

The NSW Volunteer’s Memorial, in its conceptual grounding in ritual bodily performance, embodies strategies of these linking processes in its design.
NSW Volunteers Memorial, Sydney
On 1 January 1999, the premier of New South Wales announced that a memorial would be constructed to honour the contribution of emergency services volunteers and those who had lost their lives as a result of that service. The memorial, designed by architect Richard Leplastrier and dedicated in June 2001 takes the form of a monumental horizontal block of Sydney sandstone and explores ideas that encourage engagement and use by the community through ritual processes.

The design concept for the memorial originated from George Proudman, Master Stonemason and consultant to the NSW Department of Public Works and Services' sandstone heritage building repair program. Proudman proposed that a 'scunction', a single massive piece of sandstone would eloquently symbolise the strength and durability of the volunteers. The yellowblock scunction measuring 9.5 metres in length is finished smoothly on its top surface while its vertical surfaces are left rough from the tooling processes required to remove it from its bedrock.

The memorial, while evocative of funerary architecture, is designed as a table, a place of communal gathering for both public and private occasions. This idea is taken further by Leplastrier in the design of the details of the memorial. To heighten the sense of communal ceremony, a bowl designed by potter Andrew Halford is intended to be placed on the table, serving as a font. The bowl, along with a poem and musical score is stored in a special box when not being used and is able to be transported to other locations for regional commemorations. Memorialisation is therefore taken beyond the realm of architecture to temporal ritual involving other senses and actions:

Here, the significance of memory and the celebration of public service have been extended beyond the visually monumental, to embrace music, fine craftsmanship, the therapeutic presence of water and the scent of flowers. This serves to intensify the sense of occasion and encourages the feeling that this ritual of human gathering not only honours the dead, but also transcends death through a celebration of enduring human values.

Through ritual and performance, the conceptual design of the NSW Volunteers Memorial extends the act of remembrance beyond mourning to a positive affirmation of communal values and aspirations.
Ritualization

The term 'ritualization' is now the accepted term for studies that focus on ritual in technologically advanced societies. Because practice is both situational and strategic, individuals engage in ritualization as a practical way of dealing with particular, usually significant circumstances. Ritual is therefore "never simply or solely a matter of routine, habit, or the dead weight of tradition." 

Ritualization can be understood as "a particular type of embodied, spatial practice" involving the framing of the differentiation between the everyday and the symbolic, the sacred and the profane. Ritualization gives rise to the sacred therefore, simply because of its differentiation from the profane:

Viewed as practice, ritualization involves the very drawing, in and through the activity itself, of a privileged distinction between ways of acting, specifically between those acts being performed and those being contrasted, mimed, or implicated somehow. That is, intrinsic to ritualization are strategies for differentiating itself - to various degrees and in various ways - from other ways of acting within any particular culture.

In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Bell proposes a treatment of ritual as a form of cultural practice, a critique of the prevailing theoretical discourse on ritual which is based on the opposites of thought and action, between theorist and ritual actors. For Bell, ritual "comes to be understood as that which mediates and integrates all these oppositions, as the sociocultural mechanism by which cultural ideas (thought) and social dispositions (action) are integrated on the one hand, and as the phenomenon that affords theorists (thought) special access to the dynamics of culture (action) on the other."

As the production of ritualized acts, ritualization is therefore a way of acting that sets itself apart from the world of everyday actions by virtue of the nature of the actions themselves. As Bell describes, ritualization is "...the strategic production of expedient schemes that structure an environment in such a way that the environment appears to be the source of the schemes and their values."

Bell argues that there are several common features of ritualization, including differentiation through space and time, the centrality of the body and the creation of an environment where the body is defined by that environment and in turn is defined by it. Ritualization tends to focus on and promote the authority of forces that originate from beyond the immediate situation:

Ritualization is fundamentally a way of doing things to trigger the perception that these practices are distinct and the associations that they engender are special. Hence ritualized acts must be understood within a semantic framework whereby the significance of an action is dependent upon its place and relationship within a context of all other ways of acting: what it echoes, what it inverts, what it alludes to, what it denies.

In the case of memorial sites, if designed effectively with ritual action in mind, these spaces will produce a situation where the activities conducted within it are understood as natural and appropriate responses to that environment. Examples of ritualistic behaviour in memorial spaces include the touching of inscriptions, the taking of rubbings of inscriptions, the laying of floral tributes and the leaving and/or taking of personal mementoes.

Bell argues for the recognition of the primacy of the body and the body in movement and its relationship to space, "simultaneously defining (imposing) and experiencing (receiving) the values ordering the environment,"
yet the agents understand themselves as reacting or responding to this environment." The end product of ritualization is the 'ritualized body', a body invested with the processes and sense of ritual. The ritualized body is produced by the process of ritualization through the interaction of the body with its environment:

It is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to mythic-ritual oppositions that one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the embodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world. Through bodily movements therefore, ritual practices construct an environment both spatially and temporally that is organised according to defined oppositions. The construction of this spatio-temporal environment and the activities within it at the same time works to impress the oppositions upon the bodies of the participants:

...the moulding of the body within a highly structured environment does not simply express inner states. Rather, it primarily acts to restructure bodies in the very doing of the acts themselves. Hence, required kneeling does not merely communicate subordination to the kneeler. For all intents and purposes, kneeling produces a subordinated kneeler in and through the act itself. Through ritualization, the human body plays a crucial role in the production of sacred space. Ritual-like behaviour manipulates basic spatial dimensions, for example, between up and down, near and far, right and left, inside and outside. All these dimensions centre on the axis of the living body. Spatial practices, bodily performance and the direction of movement, contribute significantly towards the distinctive quality and nature of sacred space – "In all its gestures and motions, its rhythms and workings, the body is necessarily an integral part of the ritual production of sacred space." Ritual space as sacred space are locations for formalized, repeatable symbolic actions. As sacred space, it is set apart from everyday environments to produce a setting for the performance of controlled, symbolic patterns of action. Ritual acts such as worship, formal ceremonies and pilgrimage work to consecrate sacred space. At the same time, through the distinction created by the demarcation of sacred space, the site itself provides ritual acts with their essential character as highly charged symbolic performances.

In The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Mircea Eliade develops three basic criteria as defining characteristics of sacred space. Firstly, sacred space is differentiated in the horizontal dimension from everyday space. Secondly, sacred space allows for the passage of the individual from different levels of reality, through the concepts of omphalos, or axis mundii. Thirdly, sacred space is a manifestation of the Sacred itself, a hierophany. Mircea Eliade argues that profane space embodies amorphous meaning, where individuals have fragmented life experiences. Sacred space on the other hand, embodies distinct spiritual meanings and this sacredness is beyond individual life experiences:

Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different. The form that memorial spaces take marks them as different to the objects and buildings of our everyday experience. They are usually set apart from the ebb and flow of everyday life to allow for the enactment of ceremonies and rituals of both a private and public nature. In many ways they can be seen as sacred space:

The designation of a spot in the landscape or the culturescape as 'sacred' results from human decision-making, a result flowing from perceptions of the special, spiritual meanings associated with the site.
Janet Jacobs notes the ways in which the sacred assumes a key role in memorializing violence and mass trauma. The discovery of metal beams in the shape of a cross in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center site, for example, “... contributed to the almost immediate sanctification of the site, a turning toward the sacred that was evident not only in the worship at the cross but in the creation of the many other popular shrines and ritual spaces that spontaneously appeared in and around the wreckage.”

Similarly, Holocaust sites throughout Europe have become marked by the placement of sacred objects such as rosaries, religious candles and medals. Beyond the recognition of these sites as graveyards or burial grounds, Jacobs argues that:

...the sacralisation of these sites also serves to connect survivors to the victims, creating a shared terrain of suffering, grief, and mourning. Thus, particularly in Western culture where theories of secularization tend to prevail, it is significant to note how collective trauma and social devastation have led to a return to the sacred – especially in those places where the actual violence occurred.

Similarly, Erika Doss argues that problematic pasts recognized in public spaces are valued because they support understanding and reflection of those events as well as catharsis and emotional healing:

An American public that is often hesitant and fearful about death and dying has equated the visual and material culture of grief with the transformative milieu of the sacred...

Approaches to defining the sacred in relation to place such as proposed by Belden C. Lane, can be divided into three distinct trajectories – ontological, cultural, and phenomenological. The ontological approach, based on anthropological investigations, sees sacred place as radically set apart from the everyday, a place where “supernatural forces have invaded the ordinary”. Cultural explanations of sacred place attest that sacrality derives from human attribution and is always socially constructed. The phenomenological approach argues that sacred place is derived from the physical and material character of the place itself.

All three approaches are necessary in understanding the character of a sacred place. Memorial spaces, as socially constructed spaces, can be categorised as culturally sacred:

...no space or place is intrinsically sacred, that the sacrality of a place, sensible or symbolic, is a function of human recognition or attribution, that the sense of the sacred is always implicated in local forms of culturally conditioned sense-making, and that, as Belden Lane argues, any space, so transformed into ‘place’ by discovery, experience, communal decision, mythic prescription, royal decree, ritual action, or perceived numinal modifier, can become an ‘emplacement’ of the sacred.

Through their creation, and in some cases through their design, memorials therefore have the capacity to inspire actions that are akin to those associated with sacred spaces. The sacredness of a memorial space is fostered by the ritual activities that are performed there.

Spatializing Ritual

An important question for the design of memorial spaces however, is how do objects and spaces inspire and sustain ritual practices?
Anthropologist Sherry Ortner provides a key understanding here through her investigation of symbolic meaning and social practice. For Ortner, ‘symbolic systems’ are the basis for human action. Rituals are a class of human actions.

Ortner emphasizes ritual as “first and foremost a system of meanings – goals, values, concerns, visions, world constructions.” Secondly, Ortner considers rituals as providing a strategy for action, “a matter of shaping actors in such a way that they wind up appropriating cultural meaning as personally held orientations.” Thirdly, Ortner notes that societies often contain central contradictions that are seldom eliminated but usually mediated through rituals. Symbolic systems such as rituals provide guidelines for action, action which is often directed to the central contradictions of human life.

In her earlier work, Ortner argues that symbolic systems serve as “a guide, or program, or plan for human action in relation to certain irreducible and recurrent themes or problems of the human condition as conceptualized in particular cultures.” Ortner argues that we need to understand the concept of ‘key symbols’ – phrases, behaviours, signs, or entire events, that are crucial for the understanding of another culture.

Key symbols is an anthropological term that describes certain phenomena that have an effect on human thought and action. Ortner notes that it is not a new idea that a given culture has identifiable elements within it which, in an unstructured way, are critical to the structure of that organization. This notion has persisted in anthropology under a variety of descriptors. Almost anything, from concepts, to things, to events can be ‘key’, for example, “the cross of Christianity, the American flag, the motorcycle for the Hell’s Angels, ‘work’ in the Protestant ethic...”

Ortner suggests a way of subdividing and ordering key symbols using a continuum where at one end there are ‘summarizing’ symbols and at the other ‘elaborating’ symbols, ideal types at two ends of a spectrum.

Summarizing symbols, combine several ideas or viewpoints, some potentially in conflict with each other, into a single symbol or sign that the participant perceives as the defining object of that concern. Summarizing symbols have the power to bring together disparate meanings in “an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way”. Summarizing symbols act as a type of catalyst and impact on the participant’s future actions:

Summarizing symbols, first, are those symbols which are seen as summing up, expressing, representing for the participants in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, what the system means to them.

Ortner defines summarizing symbols as those that we might recognise as ‘sacred’ symbols i.e., “objects of reverence and/or catalysts of emotion.” Summarizing symbols primarily help to define attitudes, “to a crystallization of commitment.” The thought/action divide is therefore not relevant as commitment is neither thought nor action. The key way in which summarizing symbols work is that they have focussing power i.e., they are able to draw together and intensify aspects of experience that has a “catalysing impact on the respondent.” This is why summarizing symbols tend to take on sacred symbolic status, they refer to a higher order of orientation on the part of the actor, “...a broader context of attitude within which particular modes of thinking and acting are formulated.”

Elaborating symbols, on the other hand have the ability to organize “complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas, making them comprehensible to oneself, communicable to others, and translatable into orderly action.” They provide a way to make complex and potentially competing ideas coherent and meaningful to
the individual. Elaborating symbols gain particular significance in a culture because of their ability to order experience. Unlike summarizing symbols, elaborating symbols are seldom sacred in that they are rarely objects of devotion or catalysts for emotion. As Ortner notes, “their key status is indicated primarily by their recurrence in cultural behaviour or cultural symbolic systems.” 77

Memorial spaces, particularly national, officially sanctioned ones can be understood as key symbols – they are phenomena that are crucial to the structure of a culture. Successful memorial spaces, it is argued here, need to operate as both summarizing and elaborating symbols.

As a summarizing symbol, a memorial space needs to be ‘summative’, it must focus the attention of an event, gathering all its meanings together. Successful memorial spaces therefore need to be able to be open to many levels of interpretation. Through abstraction, the aesthetics of minimalism allows for the memorial participant to project their own interpretation of the memorial’s meaning, allowing for many understandings of the past to be represented and made meaningful. To operate on a summative level, however, a successful memorial space needs to operate at both public and private levels. While abstraction allows multiple interpretations at a public level, it is the incorporation of figuration, however, that allows the memorial to be summative on a personal level – to allow it to operate, in Ochsner’s terms as a linking object, engendering identification, projection and engagement in the memorial participant.

As an elaborating symbol, a memorial space must have the capacity to be ‘additive’ through human action. Successful memorial spaces are therefore ones that are able to be added to by the individual, through ritual action. Here the aesthetics of minimalism need to be understood and employed beyond the stylistic. Rather than focussing simply on the formal conventions of minimalism, an understanding of its corporeal basis, its grounding in sensory experience focuses attention on the potential for bodily processes to be key in the design of memorial space.

Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial and its success as a memorial space can be read therefore as a result of it being able to be both summative and additive. It is summative in the sense that it successfully captures all the contradictions of the Vietnam War and allows for multiple interpretations on both public and private levels. Despite the multitude of state Vietnam Memorials, the Washington Memorial, due to its location in the national capital it is also the Vietnam Memorial.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is additive in the sense that, through specific design strategies such as the format of naming and the reflective surface of the memorial, it is able to inspire ritual action. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial has thus become a setting for private acts of commemoration in which some visitors leave physical traces of the personal cost of war and others bear witness to these participatory acts. These physical traces in the form of letters, dog tags, teddy bears, boots and other personal items have now become part of the experience of the memorial for visitors and are “...not only poignant individual memories but also part of a noisy, unsolicited conversation at the Wall about post-Vietnam America.” 78

Spatializing ritual, in terms of the design of memorial spaces, is therefore achieved by consciously allowing for the possibility of ritual action. The focus of memorial design therefore becomes one based on human action within space rather than object making.

Mark W. Graham argues that effective memorial design dealing with painful or divisive memories requires a conceptualisation of the memorial site “as a kind of choreographer, of movement and thus meaning.” 79
Memorial spaces have the potential to shape emotions and understanding through choreographed movement, where visitors are invited to perform a ritual:

This would be a kind of memorialisation that opens up into inquiry and dialogue. It requires a combination of some economical assertion that arrests attention – that causes the visitor to slow down, to pause, to stop. This is done by providing some information in a space that focuses and stimulates thought and feeling, but that does not foreclose too quickly on the meanings of these engagements. Most important however, is the visual and spatial use of the interrogative mood. This choreographed process of inquiry and reflection. After one leaves such a site, the site (if effective) never really leaves the visitor. The site as choreographer becomes a kind of conversation partner – a fellow citizen – who prompts and shapes the ongoing reflection on the events that are memorialised, and the meaning and activity of participation in this culture. If such sites are ever sites of ‘collective memory’, it is because such memory is created and evoked by bodily, emotional and cognitive engagement with the events the memorials mean to call to attention.

The opportunity for ritual however, requires the design of spaces that offer or provide a grounding for opportunities for bodily performance rather than specifically determining what will take place. Bodily performance can be seen as ‘linking processes’ in the same way that Ochsner’s linking objects offer the opportunity for identification and projection in the memorial participant. Like linking objects, these linking processes of bodily performance must however not be ‘overdetermined’. As additive processes therefore, opportunities for bodily action need to be implied rather declared.

Edge of the Trees, a sculptural installation located in the forecourt of the Museum of Sydney deliberately explores the potential for sensory and bodily involvement in the meaningful making of memory.
Edge of the Trees, Sydney
In recognition of its cultural significance, the site of Sydney's First Government House was listed in the Register of National Estate in 1983. The official listing describes the site as "the most tangible link with the foundation of white settlement on this continent and, as such, of the greatest symbolic importance..." The site represents the defining moment of contact between two cultures and the design of the building and its forecourt seeks to expose the charged nature of the site and the contested memory of the place.

Naomi Stead argues that museums dealing with contested pasts characteristically display a "complex and sophisticated overlap between the roles of museum, monument and memorial, and a meditation on the museum's role in both embodying and containing memory." In the museology of contested pasts, the function of memory is often made explicit and the interlinked themes of museum, monument and memorial resolves itself into "the museum as archive, for the collection and display of historical objects, the museum as memorial, for the provocation of memory in its visitors, and the museum as monument, the physical embodiment of memory." The most significant aspect of the Museum of Sydney site is its symbolism, representing the defining moment of contact between two cultures when "the discovers struggling through the surf were met on the beaches by other people looking at them from the edge of the trees." This idea of First Contact is taken as the concept for Edge of the Trees, an artwork that symbolises the meeting of cultures that is the central theme of the Museum and helps to form the entry sequence into the Museum proper.

Edge of the Trees, created jointly by Janet Laurence and Aboriginal artist Fiona Foley in consultation with architects Denton Corker Marshall, consists of 29 weathered wood, sandstone and steel columns that evoke memories of burial poles and totems and make reference to the contested history of the site, both indigenous and European. The number of columns refers to the 29 Aboriginal clans who originally inhabited the area. The timber columns were once the original ironbarks and tallowwoods of the Sydney basin, a recycled memory of the industrial history of Sydney. Housed in the timber columns are traces of the earlier life of the site - honey, bones, shells and ash. Edge of the Trees engages the viewer, immersing them in the work. Both past and present are interwoven. The viewer is dwarfed by the tall columns of steel and timber that suggest a dense grove of trees, drawn to move within the work, to explore its tactility, to read its inscriptions and to be absorbed by the soundscape within. The inscription of names - of signatures of First Fleet convicts, of the Eora people, the roll call of botanical names, creates an environment of engagement. The work allows for multiple projections and readings of the past. As a space of memory, it prepares the viewer for the pluralist approach to memory presented inside the museum:

The MoS thus operates in the ambiguous space of overlap between the aesthetic and historical realms. The Edge of the Trees is also emblematic of the MoS approach to commemoration - the work is an evocation of the immaterial, of loss, through materials as carriers of memory. It is on this level that the installation is a memorial, and that the dialectical relationship between the monumental building and the installation is most clearly drawn - the building is a discrete monumental object, whereas the installation is a memorial space, the building is defined, public and authoritative, while the installation is private, subjective, and unbounded. Their relative approaches to commemoration are inseparable from their method of engaging with the beholder.

In Ochsner's terms, the materiality, naming strategies and soundscape used in Edge of the Trees are the linking objects that allow for viewer identification and projection. While located in the open forecourt of the museum, the work is set to one side and establishes its own micro-place, effectively removed yet still connected to the forecourt. The work is designed as an experiential space, grounded in visitor engagement.
Bodily Performance and Minimalist Aesthetics in Memorial Space

Successful memorial spaces, it is argued here, are those that are designed from the basis of bodily and sensory engagement with the memorial space and the events that are represented within it, rather than those that are designed with a focus on the material artefact of memory.

The aesthetics of minimalism are key to the potential for memorial spaces to spatialize bodily performance. Minimalism, if understood and employed as an art practice that is more corporeal than visual, has the potential to engage the memorial participant on a sensory, embodied level, rather than simply a visual one. The memorial participant then becomes part of an embodied experience of memory, mediated by architectural form. Minimalist aesthetics are therefore seen as stressing a concern with the embodied presence of objects, rather than the objects themselves.

Consciously allowing for the possibility of ritual action in memorial space enables the spatialisation of bodily performance and of memory. Memory, rather than an end product, is reframed as remembrance, a process.

The key to this spatialisation of bodily performance and memory it is argued here, is the balance between the collective and the personal, between abstraction and figuration.

While the abstract qualities of minimalist aesthetics allows for multiple and often conflicting versions of the past to be made meaningful simultaneously, it is argued here that it can only operate as a grounding for successful memorial design. The abstract qualities of minimalist design are therefore most successful on a public level, where many interpretations of the past need to be negotiated. Through the use of abstract and reductive forms and an emphasis on the materiality of the artefact, minimalist aesthetics have the power to prevent the memorial participant from being absorbed into the illusory qualities of the artefact itself, to avoid 'telling people what to think'. Instead, the ambiguity of meaning conveyed through the abstract nature of minimalist aesthetics allows for many interpretations of the past to be validated. At this public level, the abstract qualities of minimalism allow it to operate in Ortner's terms partially as a summarizing symbol, by being summative, focussing the attention of an event and gathering all its often contradictory public meanings together.

To operate more completely on a summative level, however, a successful memorial space needs to operate at both public and private levels. On a private level, the abstract qualities of minimalism potentially prevent any personal connection between the memorial participant and the meaning of the events being memorialised. Against the abstraction of minimalism it is therefore argued, a form of figuration is required to provide an empathic link with the memorial participant and the meaning of the memorial. Figuration, foregrounded against the aesthetics of minimalism is in Ochsner's terms the linking object that allows for the potential for positive engagement, allowing for identification and projection in the memorial participant. The form of figuration employed however is most successful when it is not overdetermined, where it is able to leave open a space for projection by the memorial participant to take place.

The linking object achieved through figuration is then extended through the linking processes of bodily performance in memorial space, in Ortner's terms as an elaborating symbol, allowing for additive processes that spatialize and sustain memory. Successful memorial spaces are therefore ones that are able to be added to by the individual, through ritual action. Here the aesthetics of minimalism need to be understood and employed beyond the stylistic. Rather than focussing simply on the formal conventions of minimalism, an
understanding of its corporeal basis, its grounding in sensory experience focuses attention on the potential for bodily processes to be key to the design of memorial space. The opportunity for additive processes, like the extent of figuration employed, needs to be implied rather than directed. The memorial participant 'discovers' these opportunities in the process of engaging with and taking physical and psychological ownership of the space.

The aesthetics of minimalism employed in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial achieves an effective balance between the collective and the personal, between abstraction and figuration. Its success as a memorial space is grounded in its focus on bodily and sensory engagement rather than simply the material object of memory. Typical strategies of minimalist design such as the abstraction and reduction in form and a muteness of expression of meaning employed in the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial foreground embodied experience over visual experience. Rather than focus attention on visual codes of representation, the minimalist aesthetics of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial focuses attention on a range of senses – sight, sound, movement, touch. Through the formal qualities of the work, the memorial participant's direct experience of the work becomes focal, the memorial participant becoming part of the experience of the work.

The understanding and execution of minimalism in memorial design post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is however, overwhelmingly stylistic. Recent memorial design continues to concern itself predominantly with the aesthetics of physical and symbolic form - the creation of an object in space rather than a concern for the transaction between the individual, the community and the space of memory. The design for the recently completed Australian War Memorial, London, for example, shows how the potential for communicative aspects of naming through Ochsner's concept of 'linking objects' can be subverted by a focus on a formal rather than an experiential approach to memorial design.
Australian War Memorial, London
On Armistice Day, November 11, 2003, a new Australian war memorial was dedicated in the centre of London. The memorial is located at Hyde Park Corner, effectively a large traffic island, located on a key ceremonial route linking the Admiralty Arch and the Mall, Buckingham Palace, and the Marble Arch. As part of the brief requirements, the memorial design required the incorporation of a wall to provide shelter from traffic to the south and water as a key element.

The memorial, designed by Janet Laurence and Peter Tonkin appears as a 44-metre long curved wall commemorating those Australians who died alongside British servicemen in two world wars.

The built form evokes the structure of landscape. The wall curves fragmentally to form the pavement, a moulding of the site rather than a simple addition onto it. The curved form of the memorial is composed of planar granite slabs. Some blocks protrude to form places for floral tributes and seating for viewers. Rather than using Portland stone as required by the initial brief, the design incorporates Australian granite, a literal translation of the Australian landscape into the heart of London. Water as a symbolic purifying element, flows in a programmed sequence from the top of the wall in sections.

The key feature of the memorial is its visual basis, grounded in the play of naming and inscription. At a distance the names of 47 battles are read – Gallipoli, The Somme, Darwin. Most appropriately, this scale of naming responds to its public context, including large ceremonial gatherings such as Anzac Day. At a closer scale, the battleground names lose their legibility and the randomly arranged names of 23,844 Australian towns come into focus. The supertext of the battlefields are therefore constituted by the subtext of the Australian locales.

The wall carries the names of the birthplaces of two generations of the men and women who served in the Australian armed services. The listing of the birthplaces rather than individual names is symbolic of the national sacrifice. The towns represented include names from countries other than Australia, including locations such as East London and Des Moines. The naming suggests complex family histories and migration patterns, a human geography presented in stone. The most evocative names however are those that are iconically Australian – places such as Woolloomooloo, Upper Horseshoe Creek, Coolangatta, Moree and Never Never.

The naming of these birthplaces evokes both personal and national identities, creating the potential to act as linking objects, allowing for identification and projection in the memorial participant. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, however, the names inscribed on the Australian War Memorial cannot be reached or touched. The sloping rampart-like walls of the Australian War Memorial separate the memorial participant from its most significant element, the names.

In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the intimate relationship between the names inscribed and the memorial participant creates a place for ritual performances. Touching names, taking rubbings of names, leaving personal objects and participating in communal gatherings are ritual behaviours that are an essential part of the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Human interaction however, is denied in the Australian War Memorial. It is argued that the names cannot function as linking objects because they do not offer any possibility for engagement beyond the act of looking.
Summation: The Embodiment of Memory

The tangible space of architecture and the intangible space of social processes are linked together by the body and the space that it occupies and choreographs. Memory is thereby seen as a process of social and cultural agency mediated by material objects through the performance of the body.

Acts of transfer such as commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices allow for collective memories to be passed on within a social group from one generation to another. Ritual action through bodily performance is therefore a key way in which memories of the past are conveyed and sustained.

Memorial sites it is argued, are constructed by the body both subjectively and objectively. The relationship between meaning and action – the process of grasping meaning is mediated by the body through bodily performance. In this regard, Mieke Bal argues that “cultural recall is not merely something of which you happen to be a bearer but something that you actually perform, even if, in many instances, such acts are not consciously and wilfully contrived.”

Ritual action through bodily performance in memorial spaces recognise and codify the separateness of these memorial spaces, defining the sacral within the contemporary. Spatializing ritual and hence effective memorial design involves the design of space that allows for the possibility of bodily performance, of additive or linking processes based on human action rather than simply a focus on the making of material objects.

The following chapter “Designing Memory” examines the potential for the reconceptualization of memorial space through the process of design enquiry grounded in embodied experience.
embodying memory
FIVE
DESIGNING MEMORY
Some think of it as six candles,
Others call it a menorah.
Some a colonnade walling the civic plaza,
Others six towers of spirit.
Some six columns for six million Jews,
Others six exhausts of life.
Some call it a city of ice,
Others remember a ruin of some civilization.
Some speak of six pillars of breath,
Others six chambers of gas. Some think of it as a fragment of Boston City Hall,
Others call the buried chambers Hell.
Some think the pits of fire are six death camps,
Others feel the shadows of six million numbers tattoo their flesh.

Stanley Saitowitz
Introduction

The New England Holocaust Memorial project came into being in order foster memory and reflection on the Holocaust. Following initial ideas from a group of Holocaust survivors from Boston, an open international competition was conducted in 1990 to establish a memorial to the Holocaust on a site in the centre of the city. Located alongside the highly touristed Freedom Trail, the site was effectively a long strip of land bounded by traffic on both sides. Its location adjacent to the Freedom Trail marks the memorial as part of a continuum of American revolutionary history in both a spatial a conceptual sense.

The winner of the competition, architect Stanley Saitowitz proposed six 20 metre tall towers of steel and glass, aligned in a row on the site and lit from below by a black granite path composed of electronically heated volcanic rocks.

The memorial appears as six transparent steel and glass towers. Six million numbers are etched onto the glass panels of the towers, representing the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. The anonymous numbering is also suggestive of the practice of number tattoos inflicted on many of the victims of the Holocaust.

Visitors to the memorial approach the towers along the black granite path which passes through each of the towers. At the beginning of the path is located a black granite panel recording the historical events that lead to the Holocaust. As visitors enter the first tower, the word ‘Remember’ is inscribed in the pathway in English and Yiddish, the language of Eastern European Jewish people most familiar in the American context. At the base of each tower is located a 2 metre deep chamber covered by a steel grate. Smouldering coals at the bottom of each pit create an unearthly breath of warm air and light the names of the death camps. On each of the six towers is inscribed the name of one of the six main Nazi death camps- Majdanek, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Personal statements from survivors of the death camps are inscribed at the base of the memorial towers. Historical information and factual statements also provided along the edges of the pathway between each tower.

The interplay of personal and historical narrative encourages visitors to remember the history of the Holocaust through the individual stories of the victims and survivors. At the conclusion of the pathway is again inscribed the word ‘Remember’, in English and Yiddish.

The design of the New England Holocaust Memorial successfully negotiates complex contextual and conceptual issues:

The jurors were struck by both the experiential and the symbolic potential of the design. They felt that the scale of the towers and their material would mediate between soaring steel and glass skyscrapers on one side and the older, colonial brick architecture of Faneuil Hall on the other, between new Boston on the west and old Boston on the east. The jurors were also moved by its abstractly symbolic references to Jewish culture, the way its universal forms and light would include, rather than exclude, other groups. By suggesting a number of possible references – including a menorah, a colonnade, candles – the six pillars would not insists on any single meaning. By remaining open in significance, the space’s forms would sustain their liveliness in the minds of both the present and later generations.

Saitowitz’s design for the New England Holocaust brings into focus the complexities of design intent and resolution required for the meaningful representation of memory in built space. Chapter Five, “Designing Memory”, a personal record of and reflection on memorial design investigations, synthesizes the key themes of the preceding chapters through the process of design inquiry.
Designing Memory: Towards Understanding

My interest in the design of memorial spaces began with two memorial competitions in 1994, a winning proposal for the Gay and Lesbian Memorial in Darlinghurst, Sydney completed in 2000 and a runner-up proposal for the Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial, Wollongong. Since that time and prior to the commencement of this dissertation, I have participated in a number of other memorial design competitions leading to both built and unbuilt outcomes. A number of these projects are briefly documented in the following section, including the NSW Police Memorial, Sydney and proposals for the National Emergency Services Memorial, Canberra, the World Trade Center Site Memorial, New York City and the National Police Memorial, Canberra.

The projects represent an intuitive understanding of processes of memorialisation primarily inspired by a limited understanding of the aesthetic, communicative and experiential aspects of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The projects are documented briefly as an introduction and preamble to the design investigations concurrent with the dissertation.
Gay & Lesbian Memorial, Sydney, Australia

Competition Winner 1994
Dedicated 2000

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo, Chris Matthews and Jennifer Gamble
Documentation: Urban Art Projects, Russell Rodrigo and Kathleen Ng

Background

The Gay and Lesbian Memorial was initiated in order to commemorate not only the tens of thousands who were tortured and murdered during the Nazi Holocaust and the untold number who perished in other incidents of persecution throughout history, but also victims of ongoing assaults and murders in Australia and elsewhere. The memorial is also intended to serve as focus for the gay and lesbian community and as an educational device to help overcome prejudice, fear and discrimination. The memorial occupies Stonewall Gardens, a triangular platform in Green Park, facing Darlinghurst Road, a significant site in terms of the history of gay and lesbian communities in Sydney.

Design

The Gay and Lesbian Memorial is a symbol and a marker of a specific community and its place in history. In effect, the memorial is an iconographic symbol, summarising a community’s image of itself. The memorial plays contradictory roles, being both celebrative and contemplative, didactic and silent.

The memorial draws from symbols originating in the Holocaust. The pink triangle, originating from the witch hunts during the middle ages and used to identify male homosexuals by the Nazi regime, is transformed into a glowing pink triangular prism, an iconographic symbol of the gay community, linking identity, pride and the past together. Printed onto the glazed panels is text and an archival image from the Holocaust showing the faces of victims wearing the pink triangle and situating the memorial in a broader global context. The black triangle, the symbol used to identify lesbians by the Nazi regime, is translated into a triangular grid of black steel columns intersecting the prism. The columns can also be read as sentinels, symbols of individual resilience and strength.

The surfaces of both the pink triangle and black columns are highly reflective, mirroring their surroundings and drawing the memorial participant into the memorial itself. The glazed triangle is segmented into smaller panels, the steel armature allowing for the placement of candles and flowers.

The design makes reference to the context of the Holocaust in the way in which the two triangles have been shifted apart, seemingly from the original Star of David.

The memorial is sited so that it is capable of being used on a number of levels. As a political and cultural symbol, the design presupposes the need for space for larger gatherings. To this end, the space containing the memorial is designed so that it is capable of holding large numbers of people, as well as those there for individual contemplation.

The overriding concern in the design of the memorial was the need to create a symbol that was capable of being read on a number of seemingly contradictory levels. It needed to be politically and publicly overt but capable of being read on a very personal level. At the same time it needed to be dignified and serious but not obviously morbid, capable of being a symbol of pride and celebration for the gay and lesbian community.
Fig 45, Plan - Gay & Lesbian Memorial

Fig 46, Elevation - Gay & Lesbian Memorial
Reflection

The Gay and Lesbian Memorial is a symbol of a distinct yet diverse community, its identity and place in history. The memorial is a political and cultural statement that the gay and lesbian community is part of the rest of the world, that it does not exist in isolation and that it is prepared to symbolically claim space which is both historical, contemporary and forward looking.

The memorial uses memory as a means of forging identity through a strategy of iconography, both figurative and abstract. A real historical and public context is recalled through the use of the figurative image from the Holocaust while abstract representation seen in the form of the two triangles, works on an iconographic level to suggest a common identity and to allow for multiple interpretations on more personal levels.

A key design strategy, the incorporation of the archival Holocaust image reveals in hindsight, an intuitive understanding of Ochsner’s theory of the linking object. In the memorial, a real photographic image, showing potentially identifiable individuals is used primarily to ground the design in a real historical context and to humanise the meaning of the work. Intuitively, the incorporation of the image was understood as a means for the visitor to engage with the meaning of the memorial. In Ochsner’s terms, it is a linking object because of its power as a site for projection. The image works firstly to establish a sense of identification - real individuals are portrayed, deliberately at life size. As Ochsner notes, through the Holocaust image “we are able to connect with our own internalized ‘living’ representation of the person being recalled.”

As Hirsch has noted, the use of photographic images in memorials can “...lend themselves to the incorporative logic of narcissistic, idiopathic, looking.” Here the challenge is to create a balance that allows the memorial participant to engage with the image, to imagine its context but at the same time to not allow too close an identification which may lead to an easy familiarity with the past. Hirsch notes the work of Kaja Silverman in elaborating this idea through the description of the process of ‘heterotrophic memory’ and ‘identification’ or “a way of aligning the ‘not me’ with the ‘me’ without interiorizing it...”:

Thus the subject can engage in what Silverman calls “identification-at-a-distance”:
identification that does not interiorize the other within the self but that goes out of one’s self and out of one’s on cultural norms in order to align oneself, through displacement, with another.

The image used on the Memorial is not a direct photographic image but has been abstracted through techniques of flattening and silhouette. The relative abstraction of the original image, in hindsight therefore, contributes to it being able to operate ‘at-a-distance’, allowing for identification but not over-familiarity. In relation to Ochsner’s theory of linking objects, the abstraction of the image also avoids ‘overdetermination’, allowing for a space in which identification and projection may occur in the memorial participant.
Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial Proposal, Wollongong, Australia,
Competition Finalist 1994

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo

Background
The Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial seeks to commemorate and depict the significant contribution the coal mining industry has made to the Illawarra Region, including the contribution and sacrifice of individual miners and their families. The memorial is sited in Civic Plaza, a major public space bounded by Wollongong's most important arts and administrative institutions including the Wollongong City Gallery, the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre and the Commonwealth Offices.

Design
The design of the Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial is based on the idea of 'the seam'. Physically, the coal seam has created the foundations of the Illawarra community, culturally it ties the past with the present and the future.

In the design, a great sandstone wall is lifted from the earth, representing the underlying rock strata. Through the wall runs the black coal seam in which are recorded the memories of Wollongong's coal mining history, its identity as a community and its hopes for the future. The seam consists of real photographic images, text and poetry, highlighting the identity of the Illawarra as a community conceptually and physically grounded in the coal mining industry. The highly reflective surface of the seam mirrors the faces of those who look upon it, thereby making the memorial participant part of the memorial itself. Visitors are drawn to engage with the work, touching the sandstone panels and the contrasting black glass etched with text and images.

The siting of the memorial attempts to make a 'place', rather than accept the traditional idea of a memorial as an object on a plinth. The intention is that people can walk around the monument, physically experiencing its scale, texture and detail. Positioned at the entrance to the Commonwealth Offices, it acts as a portal, spatially and temporally. The moving body symbolically completes the portal entry, tying the seam together.

With its long axis facing east-west, the memorial takes advantage of the movement of the sun, the glistening black coal seam changing its appearance throughout the day.
Fig 50, Perspective view - Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial Proposal
Reflection

The design for the Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial is implicitly grounded in the idea of space as socially formed and hence the potential for it to be an image of collective memory. The memorial therefore acts as a symbol of a community, an iconic marker communicating its identity, values and place in history. The memorial uses the idea of memory as a means of forging identity in a specific way. By representing historic memory through the use of real photographic images, the now is grounded in a real historical past. In locating the present in a historical context, recent personal memory also becomes contextualised. Personal identity is thereby linked to community identity on both a commemorative and celebratory level.

As a development of ideas explored in the design of the Gay and Lesbian Memorial, the design for the Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial also intuitively incorporates real images as the basis of conveying historical information while at the same time, personalising history. The images are reproduced on the glazed panels using a ‘Ben-dot’ system, as employed in newspaper images.

In Ochsner’s terms, the use of the image and its abstraction allows for the potential for them to act as linking objects, facilitating identification and projection. In addition, it is argued in hindsight, that the conceptual idea expressed in the work, the idea of ‘the seam’ has the potential to work as a symbolic linking object in terms of cultural identity and memory.

The physical form of the work, while an abstraction of a coal seam, clearly expresses an idea of the community at a public scale. As an icon therefore, the design of the memorial has the potential to act as a linking object through collective identification and projection.

The placement of the work, acting as a gateway, reinforces its public agenda. The Illawarra Coal Mining Memorial is deliberately sited in order to influence bodily interaction and the form of public life around it.
NSW Police Memorial, Sydney, Australia

Competition Winner 1998
Dedicated 1999

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo and Jennifer Gamble
Documentation: Russell Rodrigo, Tasuli Gango, Giusseppe Antonini, Ian Morris and Jennifer Gamble

Background

In February 1999, the Premier of New South Wales announced the Government would fund the construction of a memorial to honour the memory of police officers killed on duty while serving the community since the NSW Police force was established in 1862. The siting of the memorial in the Domain, one of Sydney's most dignified and historic places signifies the importance of this notion of civic duty within the fabric of the city.

Design

The memorial is designed in a gentle arc, three curved black granite walls rising from the fall of the earth, creating a place for remembrance. Conceptually, the memorial is designed as a place in the landscape, to be approached from any direction. The three walls offer different opportunities for engagement with the work and provide different points of gathering within the broader landscape. All three walls maintain the same height datum and as the land falls, gradually become taller, removing the memorial participant from their immediate surroundings. The highly polished surface of the black granite draws the memorial participant into the work. The arc of the walls produces a faceted image of its surroundings, the present symbolically interrupted by the past. A lower wall in front of the wall of names is designed to act as seating and on formal occasions for the laying of wreaths.

Black polished granite panels are etched with the names of the fallen, reflecting their surroundings and drawing the memorial participant into the space of memory. The names of over 230 police officers are etched in the memorial's largest wall and will be joined by the names of officers who give their lives in the future. The names of the fallen are listed in chronological order according to the date of death. The memorial allows for the addition of names in the future, without appearing to be 'waiting for names'.

The memorial is conceived as part of the fabric of its garden setting, its design allowing for passive use by park users as well as those visiting the wall of names. Blue flowers (Teucrium fruiticans) are featured in a garden bed surrounding the wall and bloom each September for National Police Remembrance Day ceremonies. Flowering plants are a key element of the memorial, symbolic of the cycle of life as well as offering the potential for ritual through the taking of plant cuttings as a keepsake and for domestic propagation.
Reflection

As a setting within a larger landscape, the NSW Police Memorial is sited in a liminal zone, between inside and outside, between city and park, between private space and public space. The site establishes a place of reflection in a place of recreation. Through its design, the NSW Police Memorial seeks to make a place apart but still connected to the fabric of its surroundings.

The design therefore seeks to avoid being a place simply about mourning, a place of "petrified grief". Instead, it recognises the inherent blurring of the boundaries of the individual and the state, the profane and the sacred implicit in its location. The memorial creates a number of places in the landscape, those parts of the wall that are located away from the wall of names are capable of being used simply as seating or places to view the landscape.

Above all, however, the design for the NSW Police Memorial is overtly grounded in an understanding of the performative aspects of Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial. While superficially similar in its formal characteristics, for example, the use of polished black granite and the focus on the naming of individuals, the NSW Police Memorial attempts to reinterpret key understandings of Maya Lin’s work and apply them in new ways.

The reflective appearance of the memorial seeks to work in a similar way to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial by acting as both a screen and a mirror, merging past and present and bringing the memorial participant directly into the work. The arrangement of the panels in the form of an arc however, produces a faceted image where the present is symbolically interrupted by the past. As a living memorial, capable of being added to over time, the present is therefore continually disrupted by the bracketing of time through the naming of the fallen.

The understanding of the importance of visitor engagement through design strategies such as the reflectivity of the black granite surface is taken further in the central idea of the NSW Police Memorial, as a garden within a garden. The annual cycle of growth and flowering is used as a central metaphor, linking the site with the commemoration of the fallen. *Teucrium fruticosum,* a flowering medicinal plant is used for its ability to flower at the time of Police Remembrance Day in September each year. The blue flowers symbolically refer to the identity of police as a community of people. The flowers hold the potential for visitor engagement on a personal level, through the taking of cuttings for propagation or pressing.

The memorial is inspired by strategies of viewer participation through the notion of keepsakes in the work of artist Felix Gonzalez Torres, strategies of “generosity and mutual exchange.”

The idea of taking something away from the memorial, as opposed to leaving something behind as in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, can in hindsight be seen as a process of identification and projection through performativity. In this case, rather than a linking object, the ritual of taking a cutting becomes a linking process.
World Trade Center Site Memorial Proposal, New York, USA

Competition Entry 2002

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo, Ka Wai Li and Jennifer Gamble

Background

The World Trade Center Site Memorial is intended to remember and honor the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and act as a symbol, inspiring an end to hatred, ignorance and intolerance. The memorial site is a 6.5 hectare city block, bounded by Fulton, Greenwich, Liberty and West Streets.

Design

The memorial is comprised of three key elements, a field, a wall, and a room.

A field of stone stretches across the ground of the memorial site. Placed into the grey paved granite are glass tablets, representing the number of individuals lost in the attacks September 11 2001. Each tablet is symbolic of a life lost. Stone columns rise from this field, representing the number of countries of origin of the individuals lost in the attacks of September 11 2001. Each column is constructed from layers of concrete and soil oxides taken from each of these countries. As the 92 stone columns rise to the sky, they are transformed into glass beacons, enduring symbols of hope and inspiration. The glass beacons form a ceiling of light over the memorial site, sheltering the memory of those who lost their lives. At night, the beacons glow softly, inspiring an end to intolerance, ignorance and hatred and reaffirming respect for life. The beacons rise 3 metres above the datum created by the stone columns, engaging the city and passers-by. The field establishes a common ground, linking individual and collective loss and private and public grief. It is a space that will change spontaneously over time, where people place their own memorials, tell their stories and hear others' stories. The footprints of the original World Trade Center towers are voids within this field. The voids recognize that the memorial is on the site of one of the attacks. Through absence, they memorialize the lives lost and the enormity of that event.

An opaque glass wall sits within the field and holds the names of the individuals lost in the attacks of September 11 2001. Deeply etched into the glass, the names are located at person height to invite touch. The structure of the wall invites the temporary placement of photographs and mementos of loved ones. Individuals are remembered in groupings of families, loved-ones, friends and co-workers. Surrounding the wall is a clearing in the field of columns. The clearing marks the destination point of the processional ramp entry into the site and is a space for larger gatherings and ceremonial events. Within the clearing, the exposed slurry wall acts as a backdrop to the glass wall of names, reasserting the strength of democracy as the foundation of individual freedom.

A ramp descends from the clearing to a room underground, a quiet space of reflection below the field of stone. Access to this space is controlled to allow for private visitation and for families and loved ones of victims. The room holds the final resting place for the unidentified remains from the World Trade Center site. The remains are held within a 9 metre long polished black granite block within the darkened room. From above, the glass wall of names acts as a skylight, casting the names of those lost in the World Trade Center attack onto the granite block.
Fig 54. Plan - World Trade Center Site Memorial Proposal, New York City

Fig 55. Section - World Trade Center Site Memorial Proposal, New York City
Fig 56. Perspective view - World Trade Center Site Memorial Proposal, New York City
Reflection

The World Trade Center site is effectively a cemetery, a burial site for more than 1,000 of the 2,792 people killed in the September 11 attacks. Their remains have not been able to be identified and are dried and vacuum sealed in the hope that identification techniques in the future will allow closure. The memorial includes a private space of reflection where relatives of the victims may gather. A focal point of the space is a vessel containing the unidentified remains. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the World Trade Center site is a literal burial ground and tomb. It will list names but it will also house the remains of some of those individuals named. The memorial is both symbolic and corporeal.

The design therefore operates on two levels, the symbolic public space of the field of stone and the corporeal private space of the subterranean room for relatives of the victims.

At the public scale, the stone columns mark the place as a site of global loss. Each column is constructed using soil oxides taken from each of the countries of origin of the victims. On a performative level, the columns are designed to allow for the temporary placement of photographs, in the same way that the urban spaces of Lower Manhattan were transformed in the immediate aftermath of the attacks:

These posters were the first stage of many small, individual acts of mourning and memorialisation that have taken place throughout the city...these objects and messages resist the transformation of the individual identity of the victims into a collective subjectivity, and thus resist the mass subjectivity of disaster in general. 9

The public face of the memorial therefore seeks to memorialise that which is most important now, the lives of those lost and allowing for the memorial’s meaning to evolve over time to encompass wider historical meanings. It recognises that the site is a scarred place, a physical wound in the city fabric. In hindsight, in Ochsner’s terms the potential for the ritualistic placement of photographs and posters of the missing in the field of stone, acts as linking process offering the possibility for identification and projection. The field of stone therefore works at a private level, allowing the potential for spontaneous memorialisation. At a public level, the void of the twin towers within the field of stone is a reminder of their absence, an absence that can be occupied and experienced physically by the visitor.

At the corporeal level, the design recognises that the site is also a tomb and a place of death. Linking this space and the field above are the shadows of victims cast from the wall above onto the granite block holding the unidentified remains of the victims. The shadows of the names become the linking object in Ochsner’s terms, allowing for identification and projection in the memorial participant.
National Emergency Services Memorial Proposal, Canberra, Australia
Competition 2nd Place 2003

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo, Ka Wai Li and Jennifer Gamble

Background

The National Emergency Services Memorial is intended to provide a national place to honour the thousands of men and women who serve and have served in Australia's emergency services and provide a place to reflect on those who have fallen or perished while carrying out their duties for the benefit of the wider Australian community. The site for the memorial is located in parkland beyond the trees bordering the eastern side of Anzac Parade. The site forms a part of the western edge of Kings Park and enjoys a primary vista across Lake Burley Griffin to the High Court of Australia.

Design

The memorial is designed as part of the public setting of Kings Park. Acting as a viewing platform, the podium setting of the memorial allows for a range of passive recreational uses as well as functioning for those visiting the memorial itself. A sandstone ramp ascends slowly from the existing park path system, a transition zone between the everyday and the sacred, helping to establish a space of contemplation for the memorial.

The memorial is sited on a new datum in the landscape, a rock emerging from the earth, a refuge in the landscape, protecting the memory of those who serve. Four beacons rise toward the sky, symbols of strength and the spirit of those that serve in the emergency services. The steel and glass beacons are etched with images and text highlighting acts of heroism and bravery, silent sentinels of sacrifice. The glazed panels of the columns reflect its surroundings, drawing the memorial participant into the work. The cruciform arrangement of the columns creates an ever-changing mirror of the present.

The beacons embody the four elements, earth, air, fire and water and the never-ending threat of natural and man-made emergencies. They are oriented to the four cardinal points, a symbol of the universality of emergency situations. During the day, the beacons reflect their surroundings, the past and the present becoming one. At night, the beacons glow softly from within: orange, white, red and blue, a symbol of the life within and beyond.

The cruciform placement of the four beacons forms an external public space for larger commemorative gatherings as well as everyday use by visitors enjoying the landscape. Commemoration becomes part of everyday experience rather than being removed from it. In contrast, the interior space formed by the four beacons is a place for individual reflection, honouring those who have fallen.
Fig 57. Plan - National Emergency Services Memorial Proposal, Canberra

Fig 58. Elevation - National Emergency Services Memorial Proposal, Canberra
Fig 59. Perspective view - National Emergency Services Memorial Proposal, Canberra
Reflection

The National Emergency Services Memorial continues a series of ideas peripherally explored in the NSW Police Memorial, including the integration of memorial space in the fabric of a recreational landscape and the fostering of a 'communal' identity through symbolism and iconography.

The design of the memorial in the landscape of Kings Park recognises that its site is set in a zone mediating between public and private space. As a place of contemplation within a larger urban park, the memorial seeks to integrate itself within its surroundings, rather than become a site simply concerned with mourning. It recognises that its siting represents the threshold between the ceremonial landscape of Anzac Parade and the recreational landscape of Kings Park. The memorial is therefore conceptualised as a gateway as much as a commemorative place, acting as a viewing platform for everyday use as well as a place of contemplation.

The memorial space of the platform however, while within and connected to the life of the park, is established also as a place apart from it through the strategy of a long processional ramp entry. The entry marks the transition between the everyday and the sacred, preparing the visitor for the space of the memorial. In hindsight, this strategy can be seen in Ochsner’s terms as preparing the ground for the potential for identification by removing the visitor from their surroundings.

In attempting to foster a sense of communal identity as a key design strategy, the memorial recognises that it is more a symbol of a group, its values and place in society, rather than a space concerned with mourning. Through the symbolic use of the four elements, this undefined group is given an identifiable image and place. In Ochsner’s terms, the elemental columns can be seen as symbolic linking objects in terms of group identity. The expression of the identity of emergency services personnel through the use of the symbolism of the four elements clearly identifies the group at a public level. As an icon therefore, the design has the potential to act as linking object through collective identification and projection.

The memorial works on both an abstract, iconographic level as well as a figurative level through the use of real photographic images. Public and private memory co-exist within the design of the memorial.
National Police Memorial Competition Proposal, Canberra, Australia

Competition Entry 2005

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo, Ka Wai Li and Jennifer Gamble

Background
The National Police Memorial is intended to commemorate those who have been killed on duty or have died as a result of their duties and recognise the contribution of police to the Australian community. The memorial site is located in Kings Park near the National Carillon. Kings Park is a key element of the Central Basin Parklands contributing to the continuous waterfront public domain of Lake Burley Griffin.

Design
The memorial is designed as a room embedded in the landscape, open to the view of the lake and the National Carillon. A stylized drift planting of Eucalyptus cinerea marks the place of the memorial, linking the two main directions of approach from the east and west. Here the colour blue, generally associated with Australian police services, is echoed in the distinctive blue-grey aromatic foliage of Eucalyptus cinerea.

A processional ramp marks the main approach to the memorial from the proposed access road within Kings Park. The beginning of the ramp signifies the threshold between the landscape of Kings Park and the sacred space of the memorial. The ramp is open to one side, framed by the plantings of Eucalyptus cinerea and bounded on the other side by a wall of images and text. Etched in a polished finish along the wall are images and text that interpret and celebrate the vital role that policemen and women play in the Australian community.

Two curved granite walls cut into the earth and fold around the visitor and the landscape, creating a special place of reflection honouring and commemorating the sacrifice of those who have fallen in the line of duty. The embracing walls offer a sense of security and shelter in the open landscape, creating a space for acknowledging individual and collective loss. The strong, protective character of the walls symbolise the strength, unity and common purpose of police and the perpetual need to serve the community. The external surface of the embracing walls is unadorned, faced only with exfoliated blue-grey granite panels. The internal surface of the walls is smooth in contrast, faced with honed panels of blue-grey granite and inscribed with the names of the fallen. The walls are deeply etched and invite the touch of the visitor. The listing of the names avoids chronological or alphabetical order. Names are placed without hierarchy, reflecting the unpredictability of life and the uncertain nature of police duty. Where individuals have fallen with colleagues, their names are grouped together, allowing their stories to be revealed.

The walls are fractured in parts, making reference to the ever-present threat of danger faced by police in their day-to-day duties. The fracturing of the walls allows for the creation of discrete seating areas within the walls, separate yet part of the wall of names.

The walls form a distinct room in the landscape, capable of containing both small and large gatherings. Cutting into the earth, the embracing walls form a balustrade relative to the higher ground level to the east and open up to the vista of the lake to the west. Areas of relatively flat ground adjacent to both these areas provide for larger gatherings such as Police Remembrance Day.

Encircling the room are eight glass columns, blue torches of light symbolic of the courage, strength and valour of policemen and women. The torches represent the eight Australian police services and stand as a frame, completing the arc of the walls. On each column are etched the Police crests for each jurisdiction.
Fig 60, Plan - National Police Memorial Proposal, Canberra

Fig 61, Elevation - National Police Memorial Proposal, Canberra
Fig 62. Perspective view - National Police Memorial Proposal, Canberra
The design for the National Police Memorial extends ideas explored initially in the NSW Police Memorial, including the fostering of group identity, the potential for ritual and the creation of a place for memory rather than an object.

As a key design strategy, the memorial is focused on an expression of group identity and the communication of its values, rather than simply addressing a need for individual mourning. References to the colour blue, initially explored in the NSW Police Memorial are taken further in the National Police Memorial. *Eucalyptus cinerea*, chosen for its distinctive blue-grey foliage and commonly used in commercial floristry, is central to the design. The tree plantings extend the landscape of Kings Park into the memorial space and are intended to be closely associated with National Police Remembrance Day ceremonies through their use in floral tributes. In the same way that poppies and rosemary are associated with commemorations of the First and Second World Wars, it was intended that *Eucalyptus cinerea* with its distinctively coloured and aromatic foliage, would similarly mark commemorative ceremonies associated with police services in Australia.

In Ochsner’s terms, the use of *Eucalyptus cinerea* can be seen as a symbolic linking object in terms of group identity. As a marker of remembrance in the context of the police services, it has the potential to act as a linking object through collective identification and projection. At the same time it can be considered as a linking process, as it facilitates a performative ritual of the bringing of floral tributes of *Eucalyptus cinerea* as well as the taking away of cuttings.

The memorial therefore seeks to establish a metaphorical place for the identity of Australian Police services. At the same time, it seeks to create a physical place, rather than an isolated object. Conceptually, the memorial is a room in the landscape, distinct yet embedded in its context through strategies that blur the boundaries between commemorative and recreational space. The processional ramp entry, a development of ideas explored in the National Emergency Services Memorial is used to establish a transitional space between the everyday and the space of reflection of the memorial. The formality of the approach, directly on axis with the National Carillon, also makes reference to the order and structure inherent in Police protocols and ceremonies. On formal occasions the sound of the Carillon bells will signal the beginning and end of proceedings.

The curved granite wall of names, cutting into the earth fold around the visitor and the landscape, creating a place of reflection honouring and commemorating the sacrifice of those who have fallen in the line of duty. Inscribed on the walls are the names of the fallen. The names are incorporated as an integral part of the wall rather than objects on it, each individual becoming part of a greater story, rather than being seen in isolation. As in Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the names are the linking objects in the memorial, offering the opportunity for individual and communal identification and projection in the memorial participant.
designing memory
Designing Memory: A Conceptual Approach

Memorial design projects undertaken prior to this dissertation primarily reveal a focus on the design of space rather than object, the emphasis on visitor engagement and a concern for the mediation of meaning through a combination of abstract and figurative aesthetics.

Two further design projects, Cook's Landing Site National Monument and the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial, undertaken through the course of this dissertation build on this intuitive understanding. The projects investigate the potential for memorial spaces to be imagined and created from the basis of bodily and cognitive engagement with the memorial space and the events that the space brings into focus, rather than simply a focus on the material object of memory.

Spatializing bodily performance is achieved by consciously allowing for the possibility of ritual action. Memory is therefore reframed and recontextualised from what is an end-product to a process, that of remembrance, with its associated notions of bodily ritual performance and incorporating memory practices. Memorial spaces are seen as sacral space with ritual action through bodily performance codifying the separateness of these spaces from the everyday. The design of the memorial space allows for the possibility of bodily performance, of additive or linking processes based on human action rather than simply a focus on the making of material objects. The opportunity for additive processes, however, are implied rather than directed. The memorial participant ‘discovers’ these opportunities in the process of engaging with and taking physical and psychological ownership of the space.

The grounding of memorial design in the aesthetics of minimalism, as both an aesthetics of reception and ambiguity are linked to this spatialization of bodily performance. Minimalism, if understood as art practice that is more corporeal than visual, has the potential to engage the memorial participant on a sensual and phenomenal level rather than a literal or simply aesthetic one, the memorial participant becoming part of a bodily experience mediated by architectural form. Minimalist aesthetics, through the use of abstract, reductive forms and materials also prevent the memorial participant from being absorbed into the illusory qualities of the work. The ambiguity of meaning in the aesthetics of minimalism invites the memorial participant to project their own experiences and understandings onto the memorial, allowing for multiple and often conflicting understandings of the past to become meaningful simultaneously.

Within the abstraction of minimalism, figuration is employed in order to evoke an empathic link with the memorial participant. Figuration, foregrounded against the aesthetics of minimalism is, in Ochsner’s terms, the linking object that allows for the potential for positive engagement, allowing for identification and projection in the memorial participant.

Effective memorial design, it is argued, is a balance between abstraction and figuration, between ambiguity and specificity. For identification and projection to occur in the memorial participant, figuration needs to be foregrounded within the abstract aesthetics of minimalism. The linking object achieved through figuration is then extended through the linking processes of bodily performance in memorial space, additive processes that spatialize and sustain memory.
Cook's Landing Site National Monument Proposal, Sydney, Australia

Competition Entry 2007

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo, Ken Baird, Daniel Fink and Gabriel Ullacco

Background

Cook's Landing Site National Monument is intended to commemorate the first recorded contact between Britain and eastern indigenous Australians, where the scientific exploration of Australia commenced and the site that represents the birthplace of a nation. The monument site is located on the shores of Botany Bay National Park, New South Wales.

Design

Cook’s landing site at Botany Bay is of significance to the nation as the site of the first recorded meeting between indigenous Australians and European settlers, the defining moment of contact between two cultures. The site represents simultaneously the birthplace of the nation and the dispossession of Aboriginal people.

The proposal seeks to acknowledge Cook’s landing site as a charged place — historically, culturally, spatially and emotionally. The site is seen as a place of contested histories, memories and many voices, a symbol of different perspectives on how we see ourselves as Australians today. Conceptually, the monument is seen as a meeting place - between cultures, between land and water, between nature and culture and between the past and the future.

In establishing a setting for the monument, a new interpretative path is established linking both land and water arrival points on the site, shifting the perspective to the indigenous experience of the place. Movement to the landing site is framed by the experience of landscape, the shadows of trees, the coolness of the gully, the trickling of the stream, bird calls in the grove, the sound of the surf.

The monument is designed as a field, a series of horizontal frames carefully inserted into this landscape, stepping down from the ridge to the shoreline. An interpretative field is created rather than an isolated monument, an open-ended narrative resonating with many stories and many voices. The frames establish a series of ground datums, referencing the interdependence of both the Eora and Europeans on a common, but different reliance on the land. The field unites the existing cultural objects of the site, weaving them into the landscape in a new experience of sensory and interpretive richness. The frames are aligned on axis, linking the landing point with the commemorative obelisk and beyond, towards the site of a new Visitor’s Centre. 1770 is seen not seen simply as a point of contact, but as one significant event in a continuous history.

The frames hold memories of the shared history of the site, containers that record and interpret the site as a place of historical and scientific exploration and discovery. The seaward frames hold memories of Cook’s arrival, documenting the epic nature of the voyage to map the transit of Venus, the landing at Botany Bay and the encounters with a new land and people. The landward frames hold memories of the indigenous flora and fauna of the site and records of its Aboriginal occupation. Eora and European experience of the site is merged within the frames through an interweaving of text, images, materials and sound, reflecting the shared history of the site.

The frames create an interpretive field, allowing for personal as well as collective engagement and reflection. The frames document the cultural and environmental memory of the landing site, commemorating, evoking and naming the absent. Visitors will be drawn to explore the work, to read the inscriptions, to touch the textured surfaces, to listen to the whispers in familiar and unfamiliar languages. An unpredictable patina will develop on the work, human and environmental contact will age and modify the materials over the seasons. The work is completed only when people occupy the spaces in-between, creating a shared narrative of identity, an anchorage point of a shared history.
Fig 63, Plan - Cook's Landing Site National Monument Proposal, Botany Bay
Fig 64. Elevation - Cook's Landing Site National Monument Proposal
Fig 65, Perspective view - Cook's Landing Site National Monument Proposal
Reflection

All new nation states seek to develop a sense of national identity through a process of selective reading and remembering of the past. Monuments and memorials become significant opportunities for the selective presentation of the past and the moulding of a society’s perception of its identity and purpose.

The design for the Cook’s Landing Site National Monument is a countermonument to the prevailing Anglo Saxon view of the founding of the Australian nation. A ‘foundation myth’ is a term that has been used to describe ideas about historical events, including those in the recent past, that may not necessarily be untrue, but are believed by a large number of people:  

Every new nation forges a new group identity through a process of selective remembering and invention of useable pasts. The most significant aspect of this process is the forging of a compelling foundation myth, which traces the roots and defines the beginning of the new order.  

The intent behind the establishment of a monument celebrating Cook’s landing is to reinforce this dominant foundation myth. As a counter to this view, the proposed design for the monument recognises the landing site as a charged place, a place of contested meaning with many voices. Conceptually, the monument is seen as place rather than an isolated object, an interpretative field capable of amplifying the contested cultural, historical and spatial dimensions of the site.

The monument is seen as a meeting place, a field open to interpretation and occupation by many voices. Directly influenced by Janet Laurence’s and Fiona Foley’s Edge of the Trees, the monument can be seen, in effect, as a horizontal version of that work. Like Edge of the Trees, the design seeks to map the shared memory of the site. The frames are containers that record and interpret the site as a place between cultures, holding memories of the indigenous flora and fauna and Eora habitation as well as recording and interpreting the site as a place of historical and scientific discovery.

In Ochsner’s terms, the content of the frames are the linking objects that allow for identification and projection. The interweaving of text, images, materials and sound establish an interpretive field that facilitates personal and collective engagement and reflection. The work is seen as an anchorage point of a shared history between peoples. Only when the space of the work is occupied is it complete. The work is a setting for the identification and projection of a shared narrative of identity.

Linking processes of bodily performance are also key to the design of the monument. The field of frames offers opportunities for the leaving of physical traces by memorial participants through interaction with sand, water and other site materials contained in the frames. Memorial participants may also remove elements from the frames – shells, seeds and twigs may be taken away as ritual mementoes.

The linking object achieved through figuration is therefore extended through the linking processes of bodily performance in memorial space, additive processes that spatialize and sustain memory.

As a key symbol, the memorial design operates in Ortner’s terms as a both summarizing and elaborating symbol. As a summarizing symbol, it is summative in the sense that it focuses the attention of the memorial event and attempts to gather all its conflicting meanings together, communicating many interpretations of the past. The aesthetics of minimalism is key to this mediation of memory, allowing for the memorial participant to bring their own perspective to the meaning of the work. As an elaborating symbol the memorial design is ‘additive’ in the sense that it is capable of spontaneous addition by the memorial participant, through bodily performance and ritual action.
Australian Peacekeeping Memorial, Canberra, Australia

Competition Entry 2008

Concept Design: Russell Rodrigo
Design Development: Russell Rodrigo, Ken Baird and Arthur Tsang

Background
The Australian Peacekeeping Memorial is intended to commemorate and celebrate Australia's history of peacekeeping throughout the world and honour those individuals who have lost their lives in the line of duty. The site for the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial is situated amidst the tree band flanking the eastern side verge of Anzac Parade, between the New Zealand Memorial and the Rats of Tobruk Memorial.

Design
The Australian Peacekeeping Memorial commemorates and celebrates the contribution and commitment of Australian peacekeeping efforts to resolve international conflicts and build the basis of civil societies. The design of the memorial interprets this nation-building role through two interlocked elements – frame and foundation.

From Anzac Parade a ramp ascends to a granite podium, forming a transition space between the ceremonial space of Anzac Parade and the commemorative space of the memorial. The memorial appears as a steel and glass scaffold, a symbolic interpretation of the role of international peacekeeping in establishing order and building the framework for civil societies. Reflecting the nature of international peacekeeping, the frame is a work in progress, a living memorial. Only partially in-filled, the structure of glass panels allows for future peacekeeping operations to be commemorated as well as visitor approach to the memorial from all directions. The frame is open to the sky and forms a room in the landscape depicting the evolution of international peacekeeping from past to present. Images and text are laminated and etched onto the glass panels, interpreting and celebrating the courage and professionalism of Australian peacekeepers in maintaining international peace and stability. The room created by the frame is a space of transparency and luminosity, changing through the day and the seasons. Reflections and shadows cast by the glazed images and text fall within the space and the faces of those who pause, the past and the present becoming one.

Intersecting the frame, a stone gabion wall forms the focus of the commemorative space of the memorial, symbolically interpreting the role of international peacekeeping in building the structure and foundation for civil societies. The gabion wall is orientated to the vista of the Australian War Memorial and defines a strong edge to the memorial space in both plan and section. The steel structure of the gabion units allows for the informal placement of personal tributes and mementoes. Entering the memorial space, visitors experience the strong protective character of the wall, symbolic of individual commitment, sacrifice, resourcefulness and courage. The gabion units are comprised of stone sourced from all Australian states and territories, symbolising the unity and common purpose of Australian peacekeeping forces. The gabion wall creates a special place of reflection honouring the sacrifice of those who have fallen in the line of duty. Within the wall, a sandstone recess, etched with the words "In the Service of Peace" is the focus for personal remembrance and the placement of formal tributes. Visitors are drawn to the power and tactility of the wall, a special place of reflection to honour and commemorate the sacrifice of those who have fallen.
Fig 67. Plan - Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Proposal, Canberra.
Fig 68. Section - Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Proposal, Canberra
Fig. 70: Perspective view - Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Proposal, Canberra
Reflection
The design for the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial extends ideas explored in the National Police Memorial, including the fostering of group identity, the potential for ritual and the creation of a place of memory rather than the creation of an object.

Conceptually, the memorial is focused on the expression of a group identity and the communication of the role of Australian peacekeeping, rather than focusing on the space as one of mourning. The iconography of the frame and foundation is used to express an idea about the nation-building outcomes of peacekeeping as well as foster a space of identification for the group and the broader Australian community.

The frame idea is expressed through the scaffold-like armature that creates the room of the memorial space. The role of nation-building through the act of international peacekeeping is given abstract expression in the form of the scaffold frame. The frame is therefore designed as a symbolic linking object in Ochsner’s terms, with the potential of collective identification and projection. Within the frame, figuration in the form of images and text act further as linking objects, offering the potential for identification and projection on a personal level. The memorial therefore seeks to create a metaphorical place for the identity of a group currently with no identifiable collective identity.

The foundation idea is expressed through the gabion wall structure, the focus of the design for private contemplation. The wall is designed as a space for spontaneous memorialisation as well as the focus for formal commemoration. The stone units within their steel cages allow for the placement of flowers, photographs and other momentoes. The wall, while not designed as a linking object, is designed to facilitate personal and public ritual. By making a place for acts of remembrance, the gabion wall can be seen a focus for linking processes that offer the potential, in Ochsner’s terms for identification and projection.

The linking object achieved through figuration is therefore extended through the linking processes of bodily performance in memorial space, processes that spatialize and sustain memory through physical engagement.

As a key symbol, the memorial design operates in Ortner’s terms as a both summarizing and elaborating symbol. As a summarizing symbol, it is summative in the sense that it focuses the attention of the memorial event and attempts to gather all its potential meanings together, communicating many interpretations. The aesthetics of minimalism is key to this mediation of memory, allowing for the memorial participant to subjectize the meaning of the work. As an elaborating symbol the memorial design is ‘additive’ in the sense that it is capable of being spontaneously added to by the individual, through ritual action and bodily performance.

The potential for ritual action however, is not overdetermined, allowing a space identification and projection to occur in the memorial participant, for unexpected, spontaneous ways of experiencing and engaging with the memorial.
Summation: The Design of Memory

The memorial design projects documented in this dissertation are both a record of a body of work and a personal narrative of a developing understanding of how memorial spaces can be designed as meaningful places of remembrance. It is in effect a memorial, a record of an exploration of the potential for rethinking the spatialization of memory based on the aesthetics of minimalism and the performance of the body in memorial space.

The abstract qualities of the aesthetics of minimalism provide the grounding for the communicative and experiential aspects required for effective memorial design. Through abstraction, the memorial participant is invited to subjectize the memorial design, to introduce their own autonomy or identity. Minimalism therefore provokes the self into reflexivity. The ambiguity of minimalist aesthetics calls for self-awareness and performance, transforming the memorial participant from spectator into performer. Through figuration, or in Ochsner’s terms the linking object, the memorial participant is able to develop an empathic link with the meaning of the memorial space, allowing for identification, projection and positive engagement.

The performance of the body in memorial space is focussed on the potential for ritual action, recognising lived space as the key component in spatializing memory. The linking object achieved through figuration is then extended through the linking processes of bodily performance in memorial space, consciously allowing for the possibility of ritual action.
designing memory
CONCLUSION
RETHINKING THE SPATIALIZATION OF MEMORY
The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it. The passage itself is gradual; the descent to the origin slow, but it is at the origin that the memorial is to be fully understood. At the intersection of these walls, on the right side, is carved the date of the first death. It is followed by the names of those who died in the war, in chronological order. These names continue on this wall appearing to recede into the earth at the wall’s end. The names resume on the left wall as the wall emerges from the earth, continuing back to the origin where the date of the last death is carved at the bottom of this wall. Thus the war’s beginning and end meet; the war is ‘complete,’ coming full-circle, yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle’s open side, and continued within the earth itself. As we turn to leave, we see these walls stretching into the distance, directing us to the Washington Monument, to the left, and the Lincoln Memorial, to the right, thus bringing the Vietnam Memorial into an historical context. We the living are brought to a concrete realization of these deaths.

Maya Lin
Within the next generation, the time will come when the names of those individuals commemorated on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial will not be known to any living persons. At a point in the future therefore, the Wall will no longer have the power to evoke the intensity of emotion that it does now. Those experiencing the Wall in that time will feel its connection less acutely, approaching it with curiosity rather than sacredness.

What will sustain the life of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial beyond its direct connection to individuals? What will prevent it from becoming, in Musil’s terms, ‘invisible’?

The dissertation has argued that conventional ways of conceiving and designing memorial spaces inevitably lead to a state of invisibility unless they are conceived and designed through the experience of the lived body, in particular through the performance of the body in rituals of remembrance and commemoration.

Chapter One, “Placing Memory” examined key questions that underpin the dissertation including the nature of public and private memory and its relationship to collective and national identity and contemporary responses and representations of memory, particularly those relating to problematic pasts. The public at large is seen as the major force in the pursuit and celebration of cultural memory, gripped in a collective fear of losing its memory, “a fear that is awkwardly expressed in the taste for the fashions of earlier times, and shamelessly exploited by nostalgia-merchants; memory has thus become a best-seller in a consumer society.”

To a large extent, the memories ascribed to a society are a reflection of the powers that control and own information. Our experience and understanding of the present therefore, is always in relation to our understanding of the past. When we experience the present, it is in the context of connected events in the past. As Halbwachs argued in “On Collective Memory”, it is through the membership of social groups and affiliations that individuals are able to acquire, sustain and recall memories:

> Every recollection, however personal it may be, even that of events of which we alone were the witnesses, even that of thoughts and sentiments that remain unexpressed, exists in relationship with a whole ensemble of notions which many others posses: with persons, places, dates, words, forms of language, that is to say with the whole material and moral life of the societies of which we are part or of which we have been part.

Nations depend on a sense of shared experience and memory as the basis of shared societal relationships. National monuments and memorials convey a sense of a shared past and through their presence in the physical and symbolic landscape, a community’s shared ideals and common identity is forged.

Chapter Two, “Producing Memory” examined the complex interplay of political, personal, cultural and aesthetic forces involved in the production of memorial objects and the emergence of minimalist design strategies as a means of mediating public and private memory.

The exemplar of public memorial design, Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, creates a place for embodied practices and ritual memories. Visitors descend into the earth, into a space separate from the everyday to re-emerge on the other side in a renewed state. Touching names, taking rubbings of names, leaving personal objects and participating in communal gatherings are ritual behaviours that are an essential part of the design of the memorial. Maya Lin describes her approach to the design of memorials as a focus on place:

> I consider the work I do memorials, not monuments; in fact I’ve often thought of them as anti-monuments. I think I don’t make objects; I make places. I think that is very important – the places set a stage for experience and for understanding experience. I don’t want to say these places are stages where you act out, but rather places where something happens within the viewer.
The legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial it has been argued however, has over time, been reduced to an aesthetic influence in contemporary memorial design, primarily in terms of the formal conventions of minimalism, its original historical context. The more subtle but critical understanding of how memorial spaces need to be designed to create opportunities for positive engagement and foster both spontaneous and formal acts of remembrance have for the most part, been ignored in favour of the aesthetic response.

The effectiveness of Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial lies in its ability to frame an aesthetic response in terms of the experiential, to address issues of identity construction both personal and national and to create a place of remembrance capable of holding multiple interpretations and meaningful memory making.

Chapter Three, “Consuming Memory” defined the visual nature of memory in late modernity and its implications in terms of the consumers of memory - the designers of memory spaces and the viewing public.

The key concern for designers of spaces of memory is how to give form to memory. The dissertation argues that designers tend to be more able to articulate and define the aesthetic purpose of memorial architecture but have an inability to understand, predict and design for the cultural and experiential response.

This inability to understand the human response to memorial spaces is indicative of an underlying paradox in memorial design itself. On the one hand contemporary architecture by its very definition seeks originality, uniqueness and the new, while on the other hand memorial architecture needs to be able to invoke and sustain tradition and create spaces that are culturally memorable, moving and specific:

> Although memorials can be considered works of (commemorative) public art and although it would be desirable to develop more creative solutions for commemorating the past, memorials cannot simply be judged solely on the basis of originality and artistic sophistication. In fact, it must be considered that it is often the familiarity of its conventionality that might make a memorial ‘proper’ and meaningful in the eyes of many viewers or ‘users’.

A critical factor in understanding why memorial design invariably focuses on object making rather than the interaction of space, body and object is the way in which designers of memorial spaces post-Vietnam Veterans Memorial have adopted the stylistic conventions of minimalism without understanding its grounding in bodily experience.

Minimalism as originally conceived in art is based on an ‘aesthetics of reception’, a shift away from the focus on the way a work of art is produced to how it is received. Minimalist sculpture, a key influence in contemporary memorial design, operates on a more corporeal than visual level. The viewer becomes part of a bodily experience of space and object, mediated by minimalist sculpture.

Minimalism therefore attempts to dissolve the Cartesian dualism of subject and object through phenomenological experience. While based in the realm of ideas, it is contingent on perception, in particular in perception as experienced by the lived body in a particular place and time:

> To me, the new trend is indicative of the loss of power not only over the object but of the object itself. There is no rigidity which is associated with objecthood. The object is de-objectified. The air is out of the balloon. No longer does the compulsive need for object-control prevail, but a much more relaxed attitude of letting it be. A less forceful statement of the Cartesian Gap. The subject – the perceiver – is less alienated from the understated object.
With personality and individuality removed from the work, the viewer is invited to subjectize the work, to introduce their own autonomy or identity. Minimalism therefore provokes the self into reflexivity. The ambiguity of minimalist sculpture calls for self-awareness and performance. The minimalist experience transforms the viewer from spectator into performer.

The silence of abstraction as seen in the aesthetics of minimalism therefore invite the visitor to project their own experiences and understandings onto the memorial, allowing for multiple and often conflicting understandings of the past to become meaningful. Within the abstraction of minimalism however, some form of figuration is required in order for projection and identification to occur in the memorial participant. Figuration, it has been argued is, in Ochsner’s terms the linking object that allows for the potential for positive engagement, allowing for identification and projection in the memorial participant response.

Linked to the consumption of memory in terms of the designers of memorial spaces, the dissertation has argued that the context of our visually dominant contemporary culture also needs to be understood in the way in which the other consumers of memory, the viewing public, respond to memorial spaces. The complex motivations of visitors to memorial sites may range between the extremes of participatory pilgrimage to spectacular voyeurism. Within these extremes however, visitor response operates within a context of modern memory as essentially grounded in the visual over the experienced. Contemporary memorial design it has been argued continues to reflect the paradigm of the spectacle, of memory as something that is visually contemplated rather than experienced.

Chapter Four “Embodying Memory” focused on an understanding of memorial space as experiential space, the importance of bodily performance in the creation and sustaining of cultural memory and the potential for rethinking the spatialization of memory through an understanding of lived, or embodied experience.

Fostering both spontaneous and formal acts of remembrance have for the most part been ignored in favour of the aesthetic response in contemporary memorial design. Ritual action, through bodily performance, it is argued, is a key way in which memories of the past are conveyed and sustained:

Memorializing is accomplished – the past is concretely honoured – by taking action together. Rather than paying tribute in one’s mind by recollection, or in conversation by reminiscence, one creates a common object. This object, however, has neither the mute visibility of the monument nor the articulate fixity of a text....At once perceptual in status and accessible in principle, the ritual is a strictly composite object; it is the cojoint creation of its participants.

The construction of officially sanctioned memorial spaces always risks encouraging this process of forgetfulness. Memory making therefore needs to be understood as an ongoing process, constructed and re-constructed through the engagement and participation of the memorial participant in acts of remembrance.

Spatializing ritual, in terms of the design of memorial spaces, allows for the recognition of lived space as the key component in spatializing memory and is achieved by consciously allowing for the possibility of ritual action. The focus of memorial design therefore becomes one based on human action within space rather than the making of the material object.

Successful memorial spaces, it has been argued, need to operate in Ortner’s terms as both summarizing and elaborating symbols. In order to operate as a summarizing symbol, a memorial space needs to be ‘summative’ in the sense that it must focus the attention of the memorial event and successfully gather all its meanings.
together. Successful memorial spaces are therefore summative in the sense that they are able to gather
together and communicate many interpretations of the past. The aesthetics of minimalism, it has been argued,
is key to this mediation of memory. To operate as an elaborating symbol, memorial spaces need to have the
potential to be 'additive' through human action. Successful memorial spaces are therefore ones that able to be
added to by the individual, through ritual action.

The potential for ritual action however, requires the ability to incorporate opportunities rather than determine
visitor behaviour. Bodily performance in memorial space is therefore seen as a linking process, an extension
of the way that Ochsner's linking objects offer the opportunity for identification and projection in the memorial
participant. Like linking objects, it has been argued that these linking processes of bodily performance must
not be 'overdetermined' and hence implied rather declared.

Chapter Five, "Designing Memory" is a personal record of and reflection on memorial design investigations
and synthesized the key themes of the preceding chapters through the process of design inquiry. The work
documented prior to and during the course of the dissertation is a record of the exploration of the potential
for rethinking the spatialization of memory based on the aesthetics of minimalism and the performance of the
body in memorial space.

Finally, this concluding chapter, "Rethinking the Spatialization of Memory" provides a summation and a
rethinking of the spatialization of memory in terms of the aesthetics of minimalism and the potential for bodily
performance in memorial space.

This dissertation has sought to address these issues through a questioning of the basis of the way we think,
if at all, about how memory is spatialized in the design of officially sanctioned memorial spaces. Existing
understandings based on concepts of space and memory are insufficient in understanding how memorial
spaces can be designed as ongoing, meaningful places of engagement in late modernity.

The dissertation has argued that the aesthetics of minimalism have the potential to establish the grounding
for the communicative and experiential aspects required for effective memorial design. Through the use of
abstraction, the memorial participant is not engaged in the illusory qualities of the work and is able to project
their own meanings and understandings onto the memorial. Through an understanding of the corporeal basis
of minimalism, its focus on the sensual and the phenomenal level, memorial design becomes focussed on
the exchange between participant and space rather than the making of the material object. Effective memorial
design, it has been argued, is ultimately a balance between abstraction and figuration, between ambiguity and
specificity. For identification and projection to occur in the memorial participant, the linking object of figuration
needs to be foregrounded within the abstract aesthetics of minimalism.

The linking object achieved through figuration is then extended through the linking processes of bodily
performance in memorial space, additive processes that spatialize and sustain memory. This dissertation has
argued that the body, through rituals of remembrance and commemoration is able to construct and inhabit
a space of memory, becoming one with it. It has argued that memorial spaces are incomplete without the
participation of the body through ritual performance. The performance of the body in memorial space is
focussed in the design through the potential for ritual action, recognising lived space as the key component in
spatializing memory. The linking object achieved through figuration is extended through the linking processes
of bodily performance in memorial space, consciously allowing for the possibility of ritual action.
In many ways, this dissertation is grounded in a rejection of the hegemony of the visual that has created a paradigm in architectural design of distance and detachment. Conventional ways of conceiving and designing memorial spaces it is argued, tend toward object making rather than space making and ignore the participation of the body in the construction of memory. Where memorial design does make space, it is almost always conceived in the traditional architectural sense, as a Cartesian space exterior to the body.

The dissertation has argued that the production of memory is a performative process and embodied practices are crucial to understanding how built objects and spaces evoke and sustain memories. In the context of the memory boom in Western culture, the dissertation provides the potential for countering Nora’s ‘deritualisation’ of our contemporary world and responding to new ways in which the past can be invoked and sustained meaningfully in built form.
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