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Spatializing Erasure: Forging a New Commemorative Typology

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Spatializing Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology
Table of Contents

01 Introduction
Thesis Statement

02 Memory Research
Theory Research
Artifact Precedents
Memorial Analysis

03 Historical Research
The Jane Collective
1963 School Boycotts
Chicago Eight

04 Courthouse Analysis
Mies Courthouse
Court Structure Analysis
Courtroom Investigations

05 Site Research
SOURCE Grant Site Visit
Demographics
Immediate Site

06 Design Process
Models
Collages
Spatial Narratives
Catalogs

07 Final Resolution
Narrative and Circulation
Site and Plan
Section
Perspectives

08 Conclusions
Final Contention
Annotated Bibliography
Introduction

Thesis Statement

Spatializing Erasure is an investigation into and a critique of current traditional memorialization techniques and the erasure of counter-historical narratives from the urban fabric. We are seeking to use architecture as a lens to critique our current socio-political climate by employing techniques of memorialization, sensationalism, and certain spatial tactics relating to memory onto the typologies of the courthouse and the archive, actively reinforcing memories of trauma, injustices, and activism onto a typology that has historically been negligent towards its contribution to systemic erasure and oppression of counter-history. This project aims to impose the collective memory of erased narratives onto the city in the form of a courthouse imbued with commemorative and sensational archive spaces for consuming and imposing forgotten memories. Doing so will provide a lens into the past and demand that un-represented histories are not forgotten or reversed.

In an effort to critique the current tendency for conventional memorials to reinforce the dominant narratives of history, we are aiming to enforce elements of memorialization and collective memory onto a different typology completely; by choosing to design a courthouse combined with a public archive, we are not only aiming to make the legal system as public as possible and encourage public investment into its political systems, but we are aiming to impose the often erased narratives of the collective onto the system that is responsible for this erasure, bringing to light the nature of the justice system as a whole.

The main areas of research that culminated in the decision to design an archive and courthouse began with a case study of 3 historical events that exemplify the nature of collective memory and the tradition of counter-history being erased from the dominant narrative of American culture, each of them centered around years of the 1960s and 70s-- an era for social change and civil rights-- and they became the generative factor in the decision to design a courthouse. The 3 events-- the existence of the Jane Collective from 1969 to the passing of Roe v Wade in 1973, the 1968 Democratic National Convention Riots, and the 1963 School Segregation boycotts-- began as means to study and spatialize narratives of protest and resistance and how they are wiped from our understanding of dominant history, but their common factor of stemming from the faults and systemic failures of the American Justice System. Despite these three events having a significant impact on the collective history and culture of the city and the country as a whole, there are no memorials dedicated to them, and the spaces where these events occurred are used without any acknowledgment of their history. Because of this, we decided that instead of attempting to design a memorial that would be bogged down with the history of memorials as structures that often serve as agents for reinforcing the dominant narrative of history, Spatializing Erasure aims to address the common cause of much of the erasure of the counter-narrative: the justice system itself, and it aims to imbue the U.S. court system with the public and collective nature that an element of public service should be held to.
“One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city’s predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge.”

There are several studies into human memory that have begun to inform how we might design for spaces of memory and how we interpret existing memorials. One influential theory of memory known as the multi-store model was proposed by Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin in 1968. This model suggested that information exists in one of 3 states of memory: the sensory, short-term and long-term stores. Information enters the memory from the senses - for instance, the eyes observe a picture, olfactory receptors in the nose might smell coffee or we might hear a piece of music. This stream of information is held in the sensory memory store, and because it consists of a huge amount of data describing our surroundings, we only need to remember a small portion of it. As a result, most sensory information ‘decays’ and is forgotten after a short period of time. A sight or sound that we might find interesting captures our attention, and our contemplation of this information - known as rehearsal - leads to the data being promoted to the short-term memory store, where it will be held for a few hours or even days in case we need access to it.

This understanding of sensory memory and the necessity of rehearsal and re-remembering of forgotten experiences is something that greatly informs how we see the act of memorialization.
As Michel Foucault said, “Since memory is actually a very important factor in struggle ... if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles”. Architectural collective memory thus becomes something that is tangible and leads to the understanding of memory being selectively created and controlled through monuments. From this emerges the dichotomy between history and counter-history, the former being something that is heavily documented by structural powers and linear in nature, and the latter being something that contains multiplicities of narratives and is heavily contested in space—it is largely erased from our concept of history. Narratives of counter-history become marked by periods of resistance and erasure of knowledge, traces, and are largely snuffed out by imbalances in power relations. These are the narratives that we are seeking out and attempting to exhume, memorialize, and force the dominant forces to recognize and re-remember.

Narratives of dominant history are largely related to what is referred to as the 'memory machine' and the popularizing and increased consumption of memory and consciousness in the forms of evidence, monument, and consciousness. The idea of the 'collective memory' emerges as a way of understanding how counter-histories maintain their places in culture. “There is no unitary collective mental set for the nation to possess, no ‘pristine memory’ to recall, only selected memory and numbing amnesia to manipulate as an instrument for better or worse by those in power, or those seeking power (M. Christine Boyer 329)”. The collective can stand in opposition to this 'pristine' memory and offers multiplicities of experiences and resists the erasure of trauma and oppression in the face of power structures.

Several theorists and writers have explored the idea of aesthetic consumerism as it relates to memory. Susan Sontag touches on notions of image as it relates to construction of national identity and propaganda-style manipulation of viewership. Sontag's novel goes deeply into ideas of image-memory and propaganda as it approaches her interpretation of propaganda in American media, defined as politicizing and manipulating information in order to provoke a response in favor of a certain party, can be applied to notions of wartime media and how it manipulates viewership using imagery to 'sanitize' American military atrocities in foreign conflicts in order to reify the patriotic notion of the citizen-solider, thus reinforcing the standard of an aggressive and dominant patriotic narrative. Memorials can be designed and built to function in a similar manipulative way. This is heavily related to notions of consumerism and propaganda as the politicizing and manipulating information works to provoke a response in favor of a dominant narrative, which we are seeking to critique.

The increased phenomenon of aestheticization of memory in the form of memory tourism is also a topic of interest as it relates to trauma and conflicting historical narratives. How do we overcome aesthetic consumerism and the dangers of memory tourism where memory and memorials could be considered a sort of capital that the government pushes?
Sensationalism

Sensationalism as a tactic for tapping into memory is something that many architects have explored, as the multi-store model evaluates the importance of the senses in accessing repressed or forgotten memories and evoking emotional responses. The idea of multiplicity of sensory elements innate in many architects like Peter Zumthor' and Daniel Libeskind’s projects: the process used by Zumthor and Libeskind to reach the memory is the ‘architectonic dramatization’, which suggests that senses are the only possible way to remember, because it’s only through emotional responses that mankind can remember. The monument, as a symbol, is not conceived by Zumthor, who imagines the building as a real place, not a content falsification. “To build a monument”, – as he said – “where every politician put up his plaque or his wreath, is the first act of forgetfulness.”

Elements of lighting, sound, materiality, temperature, and a multiplicity of other factors come together to inform multiple sensory reactions to spatial qualities in order to invoke feelings and memory.
Artifact Precedents

“Modern memory is first of all archival. It relies entirely on the specificity of the trace, the materiality of the vestige, the concreteness of the recording, the visibility of the image. The process that began with writing has reached its culmination in high-fidelity recording. The less memory is experienced from within, the greater its need for external props and tangible reminders of that which no longer exists except status qua memory—hence the obsession with the archive that marks an age in which we attempt to preserve not only all of the past but all of the present as well.”

We began the semester by looking at collections of artifacts that highlight the crux of our project, which started with research into and an aim to memorialize the work of the Jane Collective and Chicago Women’s Liberation Union during the period of Second Wave Feminism. The artifacts that we collected were distributed by the CWLU during the time period when the Jane Collective was active and they took the form of posters and buttons designed by the Chicago Women’s Graphic Collective. These pins and posters were used to raise awareness for the presence of Jane and the work of the CWLU through a collective process and increased visibility.

It was a very important part of the CWLU in general and helped give the organization a national presence. The posters and buttons gave the CWLU a credibility, a presence and an image. The CWLU had a distribution network that was fairly extensive. They shipped their posters out to organizations, political bookstores and women’s groups all over the world, sometimes as many as 20,000 posters. Some of them were physically really big, so when people put them up on walls, they were hard to miss. As artifacts, the exemplify the mentality of the collective as well as the network.
Another series of artifacts that we looked at that applied to another event we are seeking to draw attention to was the presence of media in the form of newspaper publications and also the physical presence of ‘Willis Wagons’ the pejorative term for portable school classrooms used by critics of Superintendent of Schools Benjamin C. Willis (1953–1966) when protesting school overcrowding and segregation in black neighborhoods from 1962 to 1966. The presence of these wagons and the research of them as an artifacts adds a spatial component to understanding Chicago’s history of segregation and civil rights.

The existence of these Willis Wagons resulted in the 1963 school segregation boycotts that were endorsed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and involved over 200,000 protesters. The boycott protested the arrival of six portable units to house students until a new school building opened in October of 1963. Personalizing school segregation and overcrowding dramatized these issues and later drove Willis from office and eventually resulted in progress for civil rights in Chicago, but school districts still remain heavily segregated in our current decade. The artifact of the ‘Willis Wagon’ as an oppressive semi-architectural typology that no longer exists is a tangible reminder of the historical boycotts.
Memorial Precedents

“When a gap in time appears between the memory of an event and its actual experience, attempts are made to write these absent moments down, to preserve all the little known facts as much as possible, to erect monuments and establish commemorative celebrations. A gap in time enables memory to act as resistance to the acceleration of time or to be used as a tool in search of moral redemption for past grievances and regrets, or to provide a source of identity in an increasingly alienating and modernizing world.”


One exemplary form of counter-monument that we were originally inspired by was Ian Paul’s “Negative Monument Provocation”, which is an open invitation for the audience to engage in the participatory action of negation of a monument. “As a speculative proposal, practical intervention, and anti-monumental gesture, the work aims to unsettle the privileging of publicity over clandestinity, preservation over defacement, and consensus over dissensus that have structured contemporary debates concerning the role of monuments in political and everyday life. When installed in a space, visitors are invited to take a copy of “Negative Monument” to disassemble, disseminate, and disperse the work into a range of unanticipated contexts.” (https://www.ianalanpaul.com/). Ian Paul’s “Negative Monument Provocation” was a useful starting point to look at how artists engage the idea of the counter-monument and counter-history in active ways, merging activism with opposition to dominant narratives of history.
Type II: Collective Memorial

The collective memorial is the most tangible example of how collective memory can be spatially manifested as a way to oppose dominant narratives of history and structures of power. While the monument is usually considered something permanent, the collective memorial can be something that is temporary, archival, and multi-material. The collective memorial may also apply mentalities of activism and civic engagement, as it is a collection of narratives, not the assertion of a singular, dominant one.

Type III: Memory as Evidence

Evidence and memory are inherently tied together, and memorials and different forms of memorialization have the opportunity to engage evidence as a trace of memory or history rather than something that has been erased.
The need for Sensory Memory as a structure originated in a study of visual information processing done by Atkinson and Shiffrin, and many architects employ this tactic through means of sensationalism and dramatization. Dramatic combinations of light, sound, and touch allow multiple sense to be involved in the recollection of certain memories and the evocation of certain emotions. Many use various levels of abstraction of memory in order to translate it into sensory memory that can be contained in architectural spaces.
One exemplary form of memory architecture that translates the idea of ‘rehearsal’ of stimulus to encapsulate memory is the ‘memory machine’, as seen in the form of the German Wunderkammern or the Italian Theatre of Memory. Both examples took form in order to serve as physical ‘loki’ for memory, or a form of archiving personal and historical memory. In the memory theater, all human knowledge would have been archived on the different levels of the half-circle, referring to a projection of the human mind and could have been retrieved through mental associations with images and symbols. Giulio Camillo described his theatre as a mens fenestrata, a “mind endowed with windows”, a structure providing the possibility of looking inside the human mind. The Wunderkammern behaved similarly, as artifacts would take specific locations as the viewer circumnavigated the room.
The banal and the everyday are important components of memory and memorialization in the way that they bring out memory and erased narratives through other means than the isolated monument are able to contribute successfully to the collective memory of the city. The sense of the ordinary subliminally pushes narratives into the day-to-day experiences of people that would otherwise be subject to forgetting.

Several architects oppose the Aldo Rossi approach to contextual monuments and use the tactic of the acontextual object as a way to employ program and ‘normalize’ the memorial. Peter Eisenman has said that “what [he] wanted was to normalize the idea of memorial. So when they go home they can say, ‘Where were you today, Hans?’ ‘Oh, I was at the Jewish Memorial, the Holocaust Memorial. We had a great time!’” What the object can do, he proposes, can avoid prescribing a certain narrative. “I wanted that possibility, that it didn’t prescribe. When you walk in the field, what are you doing? You’re not going anywhere. There is no place to go to; it doesn’t have a center; it doesn’t have some inscription.”
Overall, the memorial that we wish to oppose in our chosen site city of Chicago behave similarly to traditional and conventional monuments and memorials across the globe; they emphasize dominant narratives with monumental and permanent structures that enforce histories that are already heavily coded into our current climate and historical understanding. Looking at the monuments and memorials that populate various areas of Chicago, it presents itself as an extremely historical city with multitudes of memorials that celebrate dominant narratives of history and their place in U.S. culture. However, the locations of these monuments, many of which are found in and around Grant Park, are also the locations of incredibly important and historical instances of civil rights, protest, resistance and progress towards equality in many respects. We are choosing to oppose to conventional understanding of the monument in order to re-assert these narratives onto these historical sites.
Spatializing Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology

Three Movements

The Jane Collective
School Boycotts of 1963
Chicago Eight
Spatializing Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology

The Feminine Mystique

1968 Riots

1963
- LBJ signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the most comprehensive civil rights legislation in U.S. history.

1968
- President Lyndon B. Johnson announces his candidacy for re-election.

1969
- Street demonstrations take place throughout the city, particularly in response to the police riot in the West Side.

1970
- The Chicago Police Department creates the Community Relations Unit to improve police-community relations.

1990
- The Chicago Park District opens the Museum Campus, featuring exhibits on the history of Chicago's parks.

2000
- The Chicago Public Library System launches an initiative to increase library access in underserved communities.

2010
- The Chicago Bulls win the NBA championship for the first time since 1991.

2020
- The city of Chicago celebrates its 250th anniversary with a series of events and exhibitions.
The Jane Collective

“But when they found the Jane number, the Service number, our number, women found something neither entrepreneurial nor impersonal, neither medicalized nor professionalized. When women found the Jane number, they found women working together with, for, because of, and among women, however ancient and unique that seemed in 1970, or now. (8)”
What is Jane?

The Jane Collective created by the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union at the height of Second Wave Feminism was a covert organization run by women for women seeking abortions before the passing of Roe vs. Wade. Apartments, rented out two at a time, served as an alternative network of abortion spaces for women during a time where women’s bodily autonomy was legally regulated. This process of renting out spaces for alternative use that contested abortion laws created a network of feminist memories that existed outside the typical linear patriarchal narratives of Chicago’s history. By using urban planning and mapping of contested feminist spaces during the Second Wave of feminism, we speculate on Chicago’s current urban condition as a way of proposing new spaces where memories of intersectional women’s liberation can be reconstructed. Doing this will actively combat the anxiety of the disappearance of feminist narratives in urban space.
Spatializing Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology

Event Narrative

Collages based on women’s transcribed recollections

Twenty years ago, Eileen Glicker and her husband, Max, were living in a small apartment in a building that had once been a factory. They had just moved in when they heard the sound of footsteps outside their door. They opened it to find a group of people with signs that read “Women Working.” They asked if they could come in and share their story.

The group consisted of women who had been working in the factory and who were now unemployed. They told Eileen and Max about the struggles they had faced and the discrimination they had experienced. They also talked about the important role that the factory had played in their lives.

Eileen and Max were moved by the women’s stories and decided to help them. They arranged for them to come to their apartment to share their story with others. They also invited them to stay with them for a while.

The women stayed for a month and Eileen and Max helped them find new work. They also organized a rally to support the women’s efforts.

Eileen and Max’s apartment became a hub for the women and they worked together to create a new community. They also started a non-profit organization to help other women who were facing similar struggles.

Over the next few years, Eileen and Max continued to support the women and their organization. They also worked to raise awareness about the issues that the women had faced.

Today, Eileen Glicker is still involved in the organization and continues to work to help other women. She is grateful for the opportunity to have made a difference in the lives of others.
School Boycotts of 1963

On October 22, 1963, one of the biggest and least known events in Chicago’s history took place as hundreds of thousands of people boycotted and protested the overcrowding of black schools. Instead of moving black children from over-crowded schools to white schools, students were moved to aluminum, portable classrooms called “Willis Wagons.” About 400,000 people boycotted schools and took to the streets of Chicago. Benjamin C. Willis, the Superintendent of Schools, was approved to purchase 150-200 20ft x 36ft mobile classrooms to be placed in the vacant lots of over-crowded schools. Willis avoided combining white and black students because public school attendance depended on the neighborhood. Neighborhoods were very segregated. Chicago was a very segregated city, and it still continues to be today.

3. Guggenheim Elementary School protests. Chicago Tribune
5. Here is Mobile Classroom History. Paul West. Chicago Tribune

Spatializing Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology

3. Guggenheim Elementary School protests. Chicago Tribune
5. Here is Mobile Classroom History. Paul West. Chicago Tribune
Chicago remains a very segregated city in terms of housing and education relating to income and race. In 1962, black schools were overcrowded, and in order to solve the issue, black students were either relocated to warehouses or placed in aluminum, mobile classrooms. Today, schools are being shut down, and students are forcibly relocated to other low income schools. Schools located in higher income areas with a higher population of caucasian individuals remain some of the best in not only Chicago, but also in the state of Illinois. The red areas mark caucasian neighborhoods, yellow marks Hispanic, and blue marks black neighborhoods. The red pin points mark the worst schools in Chicago today, and the yellow ones mark the best schools in Chicago today. Using this map, one can see how Chicago neighborhoods continue to be segregated. On October 22, 1963, a boycott of 400,000 students occurred in the city of Chicago. People took the streets and protested for their civil rights. This event is one of the biggest to occur in the history of Chicago; however, it is not something many talk about or know about. The city remains extremely segregated.
Event Narrative

1. Public school originally held in school buildings
2. Children at majority black schools sent to other buildings
3. Warehouse used as classrooms to replace closed black schools
4. 6 “Willie Wagons” introduced to replace classrooms
5. 200,000+ children massed school to protest segregation
6. 400,000+ people gathered to protest school segregation
7. Protestors marched to Chicago Board of Ed, Willie Range
Chicago Eight

“The 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago is most-remembered for what happened on the streets outside of it. Before the convention began on August 26, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley refused protest permits to most anti-war demonstrators and deployed 12,000 police officers, 5,600 members of the Illinois National Guard and 5,000 Army soldiers on the streets to meet any who showed up. These police and military forces violently clashed with Vietnam War protesters, resulting in hundreds of injuries and 688 arrests during the four-day convention.”

Chicago Eight and the Courthouse

The Chicago Eight were tried in one of the three federal buildings designed by Mies. In the article, “What the Mies?” David Shanks argues how Mies disrupted the power relationships that would typically be present in the “performance of jurisprudence.” Shanks claims that the courtroom space removes the “bar” that removes spectators from the trial participants. He describes the courtroom space as being theatrical and a public place in which all spectators are part of the theatrical performance.
Event Narrative

Democratic National Convention held in Grant Park

10,000 people gathered for protest demonstration

Riots to protest U.S. occupation of Vietnam grow violent

Violent conflict ensued between protesters and police

The “Chicago 7” were arrested for inciting riots

The Chicago 7 were charged with various federal offenses

The Chicago 7 were tried and acquitted of conspiracy
By choosing to design a courthouse combined with a public archive, we are not only aiming to make the legal system as public as possible and encourage public investment into its political systems, but we are aiming to impose the often erased narratives of the collective onto the system that is responsible for this erasure, bringing to light the nature of the justice system as a whole. After coming to this decision, we did a significant amount of research into and testing of the different regulations surrounding courthouse design and the different legal restrictions that courthouses must have, but we also experimented with ways in which sensory and spatial qualities can potentially destabilize the court system without breaking these restrictions. Beginning with studying the dynamics of the Mies van der Rohe Dirksen courthouse and analyzing the federal structuring and regulations of federal codes, and moving towards cataloging potential ways to destabilize the courtroom power structures without breaking the code requirements, the courtroom research serves as the basis for the later design strategies and exposes the dominant hierarchies within the justice system.
Dirksen Courthouse Analysis

Court System Hierarchies

The Trial Process During Criminal or Civil trial

Supreme Court
- Constitutional questions
- Capital Cases
- Bond Validations
- Public Utility Cases

Appellate Courts
- All matters not directly appealable to Supreme Court
- Final actions of state agencies

Circuit Courts
- Felonies
- Family Law
- Civil Cases (Over $15,000)
- Probate/ Guardianship/ Mental Health Jurisdictional dependency and delinquency Appeals from County Court

Municipal
- Misdemeanors
- Small Claims (up to $5,000)
- Civil (up to $15,000)
- Traffic
Courtroom Program Diagrams

Adjectives: Appellate Court

Adjectives: Magistrate Judge Court

Courtroom Program Diagrams

Adjectives: U.S. District Court

Adjectives: U.S. Court of Appeals
SOURCE Grant Trip

Our aim during our trip to Chicago was to continue our historical research as well as investigate the sites we were focusing on. We hoped to gain a better understanding of our site while also gathering more physical information on our topics of interest. We also wanted to get a better understanding of the architecture involving our typological studies.

Monday: We visited Grant Park and walked around the site where the Democratic Convention is typically held (Site where Chicago Eight were arrested). We visited the Federal Center and entered the building where the Chicago Eight were tried. We went to Hyde Park and saw the Jane apartment building where women would go and wait. We were able to enter the building and see the long hallways the women in the transcribed interviews were talking about.

Tuesday: We visited the National History Museum, and had the opportunity to look for resources in the Research Center. We found and scanned images and transcripts. We were able to visit the Art Institute of Chicago and get more information on the topics we are researching in the Library.

Wednesday: We visited the Soldier Field where Martin Luther King led a group of protesters during the school boycotts of 1963. We were able to see what became of the site. It became a site dedicated to veterans. We also visited the Chicago Architecture Center, where we were able to gather more information on typologies specific to Chicago. We hope to further study these typologies as we continue our studies.
Jane Apartments in Hyde Park

Bears’ Football Field

Front of the Soldier Field Plaque to Veterans

Back of the Soldier Field Plaque to Veterans

Spatializing Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology

Soldier Field
Official Site: 155 West 51st St

Our last area of research was the site itself, and the way courthouses have been a part of the longstanding and prevalent redlining of several areas of the city, resulting in nearly all of the courts in the city residing above the interstate, and parts of the south side of the city being cut off from resources and ultimately further segregated. This research led us choose the site of the former courthouse at 155 West 51st Street, one of the only courts in the Southern part of the city, its forced closing in 2019 leaving the residents who would normally rely on that court to have to travel a full hour North or South to attend court and have access to the resources they would normally be provided. We chose to adopt the site of the closed courthouse to bring the resources back to that portion of the city and to combat the Lack of Courts below I-290 and the Closing of Municipal courts, as well as provide the opportunity to connect to various forms of public transportation to allow for accessibility.
These maps show the train lines as well as demographics of Chicago and the routes one would take in order to get to courthouses throughout the city. Many courthouses on the southside have been shut down or relocated, making it difficult for people to commute to those parts of the city. One would have to commute an hour to an hour and a half in order to make it to court.
Spatializing Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology

06

Design Process
Models

Our aim in casting plaster models was to experiment with texture and light and shadow as methods of creating effects involving the senses, using research done on the psychology of sensationalism and its effects on memory and how we perceive memories. We experimented with blue foam and foam core as molds to hold the plaster as we waited for it to harden. We used smaller pieces of foam and foam core in order to create voids in the casted models once they were dry; however, even after using vaseline and Dawn dish soap to prevent sticking, the plaster models did not create the effects we were looking for. Most models hardened to the point where it became impossible to unstick them without completely breaking the model. This method of experimentation proved to be unsuccessful. We hope to try other methods of creating the effects and textures we are looking for.
After our unsuccessful attempts at casting plaster models, we decided to try and get the effects we were looking for in digitally modeled cubes. We designed six different iterations of textured, dense objects that could potentially create the effects of sensationalism for the person experiencing the spaces.
The object was designed and built for the final thesis exhibition. The object was meant to be a symbol of our project. We took inspiration from the museum in a box and modeled the Jane apartment waiting room. We added a strip of images of the original apartment living room space on the top.
Plastering

Etching

Encasing

Shelving

Burying

Encasing

Archive

Technique

Models

Memory

Technique

Type of Object

Private

Public

Old

New

Courtroom

Social Spaces

Entrances

Communal

Archive

Solitary in public

Solitary in private

Miller's Magic

Number

(Miller, 1956)

Flashbulb

Memories

(Brown & Kulik, 1977)

Working Memory Model

(Baddeley & Hitch, 1974)

Levels of Processing

(Craik & Lockhart, 1972)

Interference

(Underwood & Postman, 1960)

“Traces of memory”

“Collective trauma”

“Chunks of memory”

“Overlapping memories”

“Rehearsal of stimulus”

Carving

Aggregation

Excavation

Layering

Repetition

Spatializing

Erasure: Forging A New Commemorative Typology
Collages

Collage, as a representational technique, makes use of existing materials with their own contexts and intentions and ultimately utilizes the collective as a means for creating a whole. In these sections and plan collages, we explored different methods for understanding the relationship between program, light, sound, and archive techniques, and they became generative factors in our final design decisions.
Plan Collages

Site Plan Collage
Collaged Spatial Narratives

These narratives were the preliminary tests of how the different archive techniques might play out in a spatial sense; furthering the use of collage as a technique, these perspectives allowed us to create different moods surrounding the different archive spaces in regards to public and private natures, narrative, and circulation from entry, through the archive, and to the courthouse.
Archive Process

The differing forms of archiving are intended to bring in elements of differing sensory experiences as well as varying aspects of memory, as they relate to the research of memory theory and psychology. As the building circulation travels downwards, the varying techniques become representative of the need for excavation and uncovering that is often associated with erased or systematically negated parts of history.

The type of technique that each of the object is archived with is determined by the condition of it; if a donated object is newer or representative of a recent memory or event, it is shelved, but the older and more worn the object, the further into the surface it is submerged, signifying that it requires more excavation to be uncovered or fully remembered. The building is designed as a participatory form of collective memory in which the public is able to donate objects and decide how they want those objects to be exhibited and archived.
Techniques

- Burying
- Encasing
- Plastering
- Shelving
- Etching

Text and Documentation

- Personal Memorabilia
- Domestic Objects
- Evidence

Catalog of Items
The design decisions for the site stemmed from the surrounding city context itself, most of it being for industrial use, despite the fact that there are several schools that used to be in the area several years ago before they were closed. The landscaping and pathways of the site mimic the surrounding transportation that leads to the site: the railways, the highway and the subway, all of which flank the site on different sides. The slight stepping up and down of the pathways ties into the overall form of the building and the “iceberg effect” that it has; very minimal portions of the building protrude above ground, giving glimpses of something occurring under the surface, but the majority of the program is revealed below the shallow exterior volumes and ramps that lead into it.

The courthouse typology is being used in this scheme to design a building in which memories and historic events are embedded within spaces to enforce the display and archive of objects that represent a counter-historical narrative of time. There are four entrances to comply with security regulations of a typical courthouse and broken up the circulation into four different sections that comply with the required programmatic elements of each sector, the pathways leading up to each of these four entrances. The four sectors/programmatic divisions include: public/jury, judge, prosecution, and defendant. There is a fifth circulation type within the atrium that brings the public down the buried building through a series of ramps that open up to archival spaces organized and broken up into five different types: etching, encasing and shelving, plastering, and burying.
Site Plan
Narrative and Archive Process

As one travels further down the building, the objects within each archival space become less articulated and more buried. Beginning with shelving, the objects are safely encased and placed atop shelves protruding from the archive walls, being the only element that is fully above the surface of the archive wall. Below the shelving portion of the archive is etching, where the words written are clear and distinguishable, but as one goes further down, the objects start becoming more deep-seated within the surface, going from being plastered and partially embedded into the archive walls, and eventually buried in a way that is less obvious and articulated and requires more excavation to completely uncover them.

The building is designed as a participatory form of collective memory in which the public is able to donate objects and decide how they want those objects to be exhibited and archived. This allows the public to feel as though their personal experiences are part of the collective memory of the city. The narrative of the building follows this gradation of surface down to the courthouse, encouraging the public to engage in the democratic process and in hopes of merging the collective with the system that has a long history of being singular and dominant. The participatory aspect of the donations ties together with the multi-sensory aspects of the building, actively attempting to enforce the collective memory and history of the city into all of the spaces surrounding and leading up to the courtroom, which resides at the lowest point of the building.
Longitudinal Section
View of Etched Walls
View of Plastering
View of Donation Space and Classroom
Burying
Over the course of the academic year, we sought to use architecture as a lens to critique our current socio-political climate regarding gender inequity and political regression. In today’s political climate, where Roe v. Wade is facing reversal in the Supreme Court and LGBT protection laws are being contested, school districts are the most segregated they have been since before Brown v. Board, and there is a tendency to forget the progress that has been made, we must recall specific instances of memory of Second Wave Feminism and Civil rights when women made strides for LGBT legal protection, female bodily autonomy, opposition to sexual violence, and sexual liberation, and black Americans made strides against systemic oppression and segregation.

The melding of the collective memory archive and the courthouse on a site where counter-history has been historically erased from the urban fabric is our aim at architectural sizing the inherent issues within the U.S. Justice System and its tendency to consistently reify the dominant narratives that have held power in the U.S. since the conception of this country. Overall, the aim of Spatializing Erasure has been to impose the collective memory of erased narratives onto the city in the form of a courthouse imbued with commemorative and sensational archive spaces for consuming and imposing forgotten memories. Doing so, we have aimed to provide a lens into the past and demand that un-represented histories are not forgotten or reversed.

KEY CONCEPTS: historical materialism, constructed memory, alternate narratives

This text closely connect the theory of historiography – narrative-- with the theory of history-- the nature and transformation of human society-- in the same way in which history itself is referred to its political praxis. For Benjamin, it is necessary to have a certain conception of the present that allows us to generate an interrelationship between history and politics. The concept of history intended by Benjamin is meant to support our position on the idea of history as a constellation rather than a linear progression of events-- something that stands in opposition to the dominant narrative of history. Benjamin attempts to establish "the discontinuity of historical time" as the foundations of the materialistic view of history. Understanding history as a constellation of events that exists simultaneously parallel and outside of traditional linear narratives of history allows us to form our position of which events we are seeking to document, understand, and potentially memorialize.

Boy, Onur, "Strategic Memorialization in the U.S. is an interesting one when considered in regards to memorialization and its relationship with advertising and marketing. His implications that align with government and nationalist agendas as well as contributing to the cycle of greed capitalism and consumerism. And in fact, much of the intent behind the collection of these images is surveillance: The government retains our images in order to media and the sensory overload that we experience on a daily basis, that photography has become "difficult to distinguish from surveillance. But photography is a medium which, when the last witnesses of these atrocities and their memories were disappearing… The Holocaust of World War II has been positioned as the generator of the 'memory machine'". (326) In this sense, the 'memory machine' has become a way for dominant forces to control historical narratives through memorial. Boy also analyzes the importance of collective memory as something that is tangible and leads to the understanding of memory being selectively created and controlled through monuments, leading to phenomena like memory tourism and commercialized memorialization.


KEY CONCEPTS: propaganda, image memory, construction of narrative, consumption, photography, framing of memory

Teju Cole, as a photographer and art historian, offers an analysis into how photography is used and curated as a kind of media that not only encapsulates memory, but is inherently tied to the body. He argues that with the endless amounts of photography that are circulated by the media and the sensory overload that we experience on a daily basis, that photography has become "difficult to distinguish from surveillance. And in fact, much of the intent behind the collection of these images is indeed surveillance: The government retains our images in order to fight terrorism, and corporations harvest everything they can about us in order to sell us things." (Cole). This idea of photography as having implications that align with government and national agendas as well as contributing to the cycle of greed capitalism and consumerism in the U.S. is an interesting one when considered in regards to memorialization and its relationship with advertising and marketing. His analysis of photography as a type of art that can be manipulated for consummation and xenophobic intentions heavily implies the notion of the perpetuation of a dominant historical narrative.


KEY CONCEPTS: image memory, archival memory, spatial memory, traces, construction of narrative, consumerism, selective memory

Nora offers a compelling theory on the need for spatial memory as opposed to archival memory. His work approaches the nuanced relationship between memory and history, emphasizing that modern memory is primarily archival and relies entirely on the concreteness of the recording, image, or object. He also discusses the ever-growing field of written archival history that is becoming too large to process in a way that is not tangible. His main argument parallels our own, as he states that "The fear that everything is on the verge of disappearing, coupled with the anxiety about the precise significance of the present and uncertainty about the future, invests even the humblest testimony, the most modest vestige, with the dignity of being potentially memorable. Have we often enough deplored the loss or deconstruction of what might have enabled us to know those who came before us, and so wish to avoid a similar reproach from those who will come after us? Remembrance has become a matter of miraculously minute reconstruction… What we call memory is in fact a gigantic breathtaking effort to store the material vestiges of what we cannot possibly remember, thereby amassing an unfathomable collection of things that we might someday need to recall." (Nora 62). With the accumulation of written history continuing to grow, Nora argues that we must look to representative samples of source histories in order to preserve erased narratives.


KEY CONCEPTS: non-visual memory, spatial witness, place, “silent and reflective contemplation”

Hetherington offers an important position on the relationship between senses and memory and the significance of non-visual forms in architecture. He begins to understand spatial experiences through bodily ‘presence’ and touch as a force of knowledge that informs memory. Movement, smell, hearing, taste, as well as sight, are things that Hetherington poses are important components of ‘the making of places’ and how we remember them and have direct effects on how we process presence: “the experience of mirroring” (1943) the senses. Sensory memory also has the ability to link the past and the present with a sense of continuity and forms the basis of how we inhabit our surroundings and our senses of home, routine, and ordinariness, and potentially their opposites– the strange, irregular, and traumatic.


KEY CONCEPTS: photography as technique, propaganda, re-actualization/re-presentations of history, superimposition of memory, montage, collage, post-production, hybrid techniques

Ingrid Holzé defines the "photographic now" as the connection between the current state of history and the current state of photography, and how photography’s altered relation to time through digital post-production: montage, collage, and animation. With the advent of digital post-production, photographic images are no longer tied to a specific past but show a possible present. This text looks at David Claerbout’s video installation, Vietnam, 1967, near Duc Pho, reconstruction after Hirohito Mine (2000), and questions the “photographic now,” as it pertains to media and consumerism of dominant narratives. The piece reproduces, or more exactly recomposes, a press photograph of an American airplane shot down by friendly fire. Claerbout travelled to the site of the accident and took a series of photos of the landscape and then installation, Vietnam, 1967, near Duc Pho, reconstruction after Hirohito Mine (2000), and questions the “photographic now,” as it pertains to media and consumerism of dominant narratives. The piece reproduces, or more exactly recomposes, a press photograph of an American airplane shot down by friendly fire. Claerbout travelled to the site of the accident and took a series of photos of the landscape and then assembled these stills into a video animation onto which he superimposed the still image of the exploding plane, resulting in an image whose temporality is hybrid and whose mediality is unclassifiable. This study investigates the processes of digital reconstruction and animation, and the "becoming-signal" of the image, and questions the possibility of re-actualizing the photographic past through digital screening and begins to question the ability of space and art to contextualize and simultaneously re-present erased memories. Claerbout’s work relates heavily to Walter Benjamin’s theory of history as something that is inherently tied to the present and can only be seized as an image, something that "flashes" as part of a constellation.
http://www.susannekeimann.info/pechblende/

KEY CONCEPTS: photograph, assemblage, archive, disaster, invisibility

Bringing together an assemblage of archival materials, photo documents, literature and found objects, Pechblende investigates concepts of scale, proximity and distance in relation to radioactivity and the body. Centred on the mineral Pechblende (the German word for a type of uranium), the work traces a history of scientific and photographic processes narrated through the interconnected sites of laboratory, archive, and museum. Keimann’s work is concerned with the political and physical invisibility of radioactive disasters and the ability of photography to potentially capture invisible or erased histories. Her highly abstract but archival images are examples of how abstraction can be used to recall memory and traces of history that would otherwise remain invisible.


KEY CONCEPTS: propaganda, image memory, construction of narrative, consumerism, photography, framing of memory, media

This source is a collection of short narratives written by photographers. The section of interest is Teju Cole’s, in which he responds to “to a recent article on “seeing machines” by contemporary photographer Trevor Paglen. Cole argues that photography cannot be separated from the political moment of the photograph. This notion that the photograph and the photographer cannot be divorced from each other, and that neither can exist in a vacuum without the political implications of the context that they’re in, directly links to Susan Sontag’s “Regarding the Torture of Others” and Regarding the Pain of Others. Cole makes the link between photography and political rhetoric, arguing that photography is not a divorcable moment from context, but rather a ‘particular kind of seeing’. This interpretation of photography can be applied to media in general when questioning the idea of viewership and consumption, specifically when considering who or what is the dominant force that is constructing these images and framing them in a way to establish a certain dominant viewpoint.


KEY CONCEPTS: ‘re-presentation’, monument vs. sculpture, national memory, collective, public space, dark/memory tourism, de-monumentalization, consumerism

Odawara’s writing details out the specifics of the history of sculpture in Japan and how it relates to the flock of peace sculptures following the “Peace Statue” in 1955 in Peace Park. Attempting to reconcile the relationship between “war, peace, and sculpture”, recurring symbols of male versus female statues and how Japan faced a symbolic shift between the 2 after 1960, and the introduction of ‘statanimattan’ into Japan. The author’s thesis hinges on the following understanding of sculpture, as quoted from Charles Baudelaire: “The phantom of stone seizes you for a few minutes, and commands you, on behalf of past, to think about things that are not of the earth. Such is the divine role of sculpture.” (E45). This idea is one that recognizes monuments as tools to enlighten or bring memories back to light, immortalizing them in sculpture even after they have left the earth physically. Thus, the idea of erecting and removing sculpture and memorial as a reflexive cycle of history is one that is damaging to the way we interpret memories, which leads us to understand monuments as potential parts of an oppressive system, which drives ideas of ‘anti-monuments’ or ‘de-monumentalisation’. Within all of these pieces to the essay, the thesis lies in the idea of the statue existing somewhere in the realm of statue and monument, and how parting from this context of the ‘monument’ makes the statue unfit to be a memorial. Odawara also approaches the dangers of “Forgetting, disguised as healing” (E15) and the important distinction between attempts to evoke the reality of an event instead of its idealized version.


KEY CONCEPTS: propaganda, image memory, construction of narrative, gendered memory, photography, caption, framing of memory, war

Regarding the Pain of Others touches on notions of image as it relates to construction of national identity and propaganda-style manipulation of viewership. Sontag’s novel goes deeply into ideas of image-memory and propaganda as it approaches her interpretation of propaganda in American media, defined as politicalizing and manipulating information in order to provide a response in favor of a certain party, can be applied to notions of wartime media and how it manipulates viewership using imagery and ‘shock-pictures’, as well as how image and caption are used to ‘sanitize’ American military atrocities in foreign conflicts in order to reify the patriotic notion of the citizen-soldier, thus reinforcing the standard of an aggressive and dominant patriotic narrative. She argues heavily that captioning of images is a commonly-used tactic that reinforces imperialist notions of war and reasserts anti-foreign sentiments through American media; Sontag states that “by captioning a photo ‘who was killed by whom’, the image becomes propagandistic. Captions create a fee (the killer) and a victim (the viewer), downplaying one’s own involvement in any act of violence and creating a dichotomy of good vs evil. The viewer is always good and the fee is always bad; violence the viewer committed is either unarmed or self-inflicted” (Sontag, 11). Memorials can be designed and built to function in a similar manipulative way. This is highly related to notions of consumerism and propaganda as the politicizing and manipulating information works to provoke a response in favor of a dominant narrative.


KEY CONCEPTS: collective memory, activism, who controls historical narrative, identity, recording memory, heritage terrorism, monuments, memory tourism, consumerism, counter-monument

This text analyzes the phenomenon of recent decades known as the ‘counter-monument’, which have suddenly emerged as a new mode of memorializing trauma and criticizing the dominant narrative of history. The phenomenon can be seen as a definer of a growing opposition to traditional monumentality which has begun to reinvigorate public action and commemorative activism in current urban landscapes. This paper distinguishes between two kinds of projects that have been called counter-monuments: those that adopt anti-monumental strategies, counter to traditional monument principles, and those that are designed to counter a specific existing monument and the values it represents, both of which are critical in understanding how our thesis fits into the narrative of the ‘counter-monument’.


KEY CONCEPTS: forensic architecture, international justice, construction/deconstruction of memory, spatial evidence, material evidence, witness and memory

In his work, Eyal Weizman describes how the built environment now represents an important source of evidence bearing witness to the events when international justice is sought. This pertains to certain spaces of heritage or memory that have been strategically destroyed as a political or military tactic and various forms of erasure that have been wiped from the dominant narrative of history and forcibly forgotten from cultural memory and archival history. As Weizman states, “Losses relating to the built environment are entering the courts and media forums of international justice with increasing frequency. This is because the built environment is both the means of violation and a source of evidence that can bear witness to the events that traverse it… Too often, these structures or ruins are considered self-evident illustrations of atrocity. The field of forensic architecture must now emerge to attempt to transform the built environment from an illustration of alleged violations to a source of knowledge about historical events—or rather, as a complex methodology aimed at narrating histories from the things that it saturates” (60). Through this, Weizman underscores the idea of spatial witness and the ability of memory and erasure to serve as evidence—as digital models, maps or simulations. In this way, activism and memory overlap in nuanced ways that center around the ability of space to contain physical traces of erasure and trauma.
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