

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN MUSEUM STUDIES

Downloaded by [University of California, San Diego] at 15:55 21 February 2017

Museums and Photography

Displaying Death

Edited by

Elena Stylianou and

Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert



Museums and Photography

Museums and Photography adopts a strong theoretical approach in an in-depth investigation of the distinct approaches that different museums employ in displaying photographs of death, considering a broad range of anthropology, history, art, ethnographic, and science collections. These often interrelated approaches include: evidencing the past, death as spectacle, escaping anonymity and instigating empathy, and museums as agents of change. As well as offering fresh insights into the varied museum strategies implemented for the photographic display of death, the editors also critically engage with recent debates concerning the changing role of museums and museums' responsibility in handling an immensely controversial photographic genre.

Engaging with the diversity of photographs displaying death, and assessing their purpose and possible impact, the wide array of international case studies presented in this volume respond to the aesthetic, political, and ethical challenges and dilemmas raised by handling, displaying, and curating such material. *Museums and Photography* will appeal to researchers and museum professionals alike, inspiring new thinking about displaying death, museums, and the nature of photography.

Elena Stylianou is Assistant Professor in Art History and Theory at European University Cyprus and the founder and coordinator of its Cultural Studies and Contemporary Arts Lab. She has taught in well-known museums in New York, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Museum of the City of New York and has been involved in various curatorial projects. She has received several fellowships and awards, including a Fulbright Scholarship (USA) and an Art Table Museum Fellowship (USA).

Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert is Assistant Professor at the School of Fine and Applied Arts at the Cyprus University of Technology and the founder and coordinator of its Visual Sociology and Museum Studies Lab. Her previous books include *The Political Museum* (2016), *Museums and Visitor Photography* (2016) and *Photography and Cyprus* (2014). She has received several scholarships and awards, including a Smithsonian Fellowship in Museum Practice (USA) and a Fulbright Fellowship (USA).

Routledge Research in Museum Studies

For a full list of titles in this series, please visit www.routledge.com

Selected titles:

4 Museum Communication and Social Media

The Connected Museum

Edited by Kirsten Drotner and Kim Christian Schrøder

5 Doing Museology Differently

Duncan Grewcock

6 Climate Change and Museum Futures

Edited by Fiona R. Cameron and Brett Neilson

7 Animals and Hunters in the Late Middle Ages

Evidence from the BnF MS fr. 616 of the Livre de chasse
by Gaston Fébus

Hannele Klemettilä

8 Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice

Decolonising Engagement

Bryony Onciul

9 Introducing Peace Museums

Joyce Apsel

**10 Representing the Nation: Heritage, Museums, National Narratives,
and Identity in the Arab Gulf States**

*Edited by Pamela Erskine-Loftus, Mariam Ibrahim Al-Mulla, Victoria
Hightower*

11 Museums and Photography

Displaying Death

Edited by Elena Stylianou and Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert

Museums and Photography

Displaying Death

Edited by
Elena Stylianou and
Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert

Downloaded by [University of California, San Diego] at 15:55 21 February 2017

First published 2017
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2017 E. Stylianou and T. Stylianou-Lambert

The right of the editors to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-85204-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-72377-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	viii
<i>List of contributors</i>	xi

1 Approaches to Displaying Death in Museums: an Introduction	1
ELENA STYLIANOU AND THEOPISTI STYLIANOU-LAMBERT	

PART I

Evidencing the Past	19
----------------------------	-----------

2 Negotiating Death at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum	21
JM HAMMOND	

3 Honoring the Dead: photography and the Display of the Jewish Necropolis at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki	40
IRO KATSARIDOU	

4 “Death From the Skies” Photographs in Museums of the Aerial Bombing of Civilians During World War Two	62
SHEILA WATSON	

5 Saints, Martyrs and Heroes: “Sacred Displays” or the Iconography of Death in Cypriot Museums	84
YIANNIS TOUMAZIS	

PART II

The Spectacle of Death 111

6 The *War/Photography* Exhibition and the Display of Death 113

JEAN KEMPF

7 Persons Unknown: lynching Photographs in the Museum 130

RM WOLFF

8 Human Skulls and Photographs of Dead Bandits: the Problems of Presenting a Nineteenth-Century Museum to Twenty-First-Century Audiences 150

SILVANO MONTALDO AND ELEANOR CHIARI

9 Our First Murder: exhibiting Evidence Outside the Police Archive 164

STELLA PEKIARIDI

PART III

Empathy and Escaping Anonymity 177

10 A Gallery of Martyrs – the Martyr in the Gallery: public Display and the Artistic Appropriation of Martyr Images in the Middle East 179

VERENA STRAUB

11 What Will You Remember When I'm Gone? Funerary Photography in the Gallery's Public/Private Space 200

ROSANNE ALTSTATT

12 Remediating Death at Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum 216

RACHEL E. PERRY

13 Photography and the Museum: visiting the Sight of Death 238

PAM MEECHAM

PART IV

Museums as Agents of Change 255

14 Double Exposure: absence and Evidence in Ken
Gonzales-Day's *Erased Lynching* 257

REILLEY BISHOP-STALL

15 On *May 1, 2011* (Alfredo Jaar, 2011)—Expanding the
Frame of the Original Photograph 277

MAFALDA DÂMASO

16 Photography as a Form of Taxidermy: Zoe Leonard's
Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman, Musée Orfila 293

CHELSEA NICHOLS

Index 313

Figures

2.1	<i>Whirlwinds</i> , Ryushu Tokunaga, oil painting, 1923.	23
2.2	Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, 2015.	26
2.3	Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, Map Charting the Spread of Flames at the Former Army Clothing Depot, 2015.	27
2.4	Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, detail: Map Charting the Spread of Flames at the Former Army Clothing Depot, 2015.	28
2.5	Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, Tokyo Electric Light Company Building on Fire, 2015.	32
2.6	Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, Earthquake Refugees, 2015.	33
2.7	The Imperial Palace Plaza packed with refugees, photograph, 1923.	35
3.1	Exhibition view of the Jewish Necropolis exhibit at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, 2016.	42
3.2	Jewesses at the cemetery, photograph by Hugh Fawcett, ca 1916.	44
3.3	Arriving at the cemetery. Photograph by Hugh Fawcett, ca 1916.	45
3.4	Rabbi reading prayers. Photograph by Hugh Fawcett, ca 1916.	46
4.1	Dead bodies in Hamburg in the Deutches Technikmuseum Berlin. From the film <i>Hamburg im Feuersturm</i> .	68
4.2	Exhibition view of the Deutches Historiches Museum. Polish victims of German Strafe attacks.	70
4.3	Section of World War II Exhibition showing the position of the England's Guilt poster immediately above the Imperial War Museum's film of the bombing of British cities.	73
5.1	Showcase in the museum dedicated to the Greek-Cypriot hero Gregoris Afxentiou at the Machairas Monastery, 2013.	90

5.2	View of the Imprisoned Graves, 2010.	93
5.3	Works for the exhumation of bodies of Greek Cypriot missing persons at the Sychari area, 2011.	95
5.4	Showcase dedicated to Corporal Georgios Savva at the Museum of Commando Fighters in Cyprus, 2010.	96
5.5	The bathroom in Dr. Nihat İlhan's house, now Museum of Barbarism, 2010.	99
5.6	Interior of the Martyrs' Museum near Sandallar, 2010.	102
5.7	Interior of the Museum of Taşkent Martyrdom, 2011.	104
5.8	Exhibition view from the Commando Museum, 2010.	106
5.9	Exhibition view from the Museum of Barbarism, 2010.	107
6.1	Original layout of the exhibition <i>War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict And Its Aftermath</i> at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2014.	114
6.2	Original layout of the exhibition <i>War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict And Its Aftermath</i> at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2014.	114
6.3	Post-it notes on the final exit wall of the exhibition <i>War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict And Its Aftermath</i> at the Brooklyn Museum, 2014.	119
8.1	"Ciccione Band," Bissi, Lombroso Album dei delinquenti n.1. Museo di Antropologia Criminale 'Cesare Lombroso'.	154
8.2	"Guerra Band," Bissi Lombroso Album dei delinquenti n.1. Museo di Antropologia Criminale 'Cesare Lombroso'.	155
8.3	Michelina di Cesare, Migliorato, Museo Centrale del Risorgimento. Rome.	156
8.4	Museo di Antropologia Criminale 'Cesare Lombroso'.	158
9.1	The covers of the photo books <i>Plaats Delict: Amsterdam</i> (left) and <i>Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive</i> (right).	165
10.1	Palestinian boys with martyr posters in Nablus, Palestine, photograph, 2003.	183
10.2	<i>On Three Posters: Reflections on a Video Performance</i> by Rabih Mroué, video and lecture-performance, video stills, 2004.	185
10.3	<i>The Inhabitants of Images</i> , lecture-performance, detail, Hezbollah martyr posters on a boulevard in southern Beirut, Lebanon, 2009.	190
10.4	<i>Three Posters</i> , Rabih Mrouè / Elias Khoury, performance, detail, photograph, 2000.	192
11.1	(untitled), Charles Pansirna, ca. 1916–1936.	201
11.2	(untitled), Charles Pansirna, ca. 1916–1936.	203
11.3	Grandmother's Wall, 2000.	207
11.4	Exhibition view at Purdue University Galleries, 2014.	209

12.1	Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum interior facing Klooga Installation.	219
12.2	Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum interior facing Klooga Installation.	220
12.3	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, U.S. forces at Ohrdruf Concentration Camp, Harold Royall.	223
12.4	Klooga Installation, Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum.	224
12.5	Klooga Installation, Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum.	227
14.1	<i>The Wonder Gaze</i> (St. James Park), Ken Gonzales-Day, wallpaper installation, size variable, 2006-present.	258
14.2	<i>Water Street Bridge</i> , Ken Gonzales-Day, lightjet print mounted on cardstock, 3.8 x 6 inches, 2004.	261
14.3	<i>der Wild West Show</i> , Ken Gonzales-Day, lightjet print mounted on cardstock, 3.8 x 6 inches, 2006.	263
14.4	<i>Franklin Avenue</i> (1920), Ken Gonzales Day 3.7 x 6 inches, 2005.	271
15.1	<i>May 1st, 2011</i> , Alfredo Jaar, two LCD monitors and two framed prints, original White House photograph by Pete Souza, dimensions variable, 2011.	278
16.1	<i>Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfila)</i> , Zoe Leonard set of 5 gelatin silver prints, 1991.	294
16.2	Detail of <i>Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfila)</i> , Zoe Leonard from a set of 5 gelatin silver prints, 1991.	298
16.3	<i>Strange Fruit (for David)</i> , Zoe Leonard 1992–1997.	302

Contributors

Editors

Elena Stylianou is an assistant professor in Art History and Theory at European University Cyprus and the founder and coordinator of its *Cultural Studies and Contemporary Arts Lab*. Her research interests include contemporary art from Cyprus, museums and curatorial studies, and photography. She previously held a research postdoctoral fellowship at the University of London, Institute of Education, UK, and earned her Doctorate (EdD) from Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, with a specialization in art theory. She also holds an EdM from the same school in Art Education with an emphasis in Museum Studies. She has taught in well-known museums in New York, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Museum of the City of New York, lectured widely on a wide range of topics, and has been involved in various curatorial projects. She is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including a Fulbright Scholarship (USA), an Art Table Museum Fellowship (USA), and a Spencer Fellowship, Research Training Grant (USA). Her research work has been published widely in books and academic journals.

Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert is an assistant professor at the School of Fine and Applied Arts at the Cyprus University of Technology and the founder and coordinator of its *Visual Sociology and Museum Studies Lab*. Her research interests include museum studies and visual sociology with an emphasis on photography. She earned her PhD in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester (UK) and her MA in Visual Arts/Museum Education from the University of Texas at Austin (USA). Theopisti has published widely on museums and photography and is the author of *The Political Museum* (2016) and the editor of *Museums and Visitor Photography* (2016), *Photography and Cyprus: Time, Place, Identity* (2014), and *Re-envisioning Cyprus* (2010). She has received several scholarships and awards, including a Smithsonian Fellowship in Museum Practice (USA), a Fulbright Fellowship (USA), and an Arts and Humanities Research Council Award (UK).

Authors

Rosanne Altstatt is an art historian and Dean's Fellow in Purdue Honors College. Her curatorial projects include a broad span of media art and a compendium of short graphic novels. She was the inaugural Artistic Director of the Edith Russ Site for Media Art in Oldenburg and Curator-Director of Videonale in Bonn. Based on these experiences, Dr. Altstatt has written and lectured on the information-filled atmosphere of the media art institution. She has taught curating, art history, and has mentored artists at Carl-von-Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Maine College of Art, and University of the Arts ZHdK.

Reilley Bishop-Stall is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. Her doctoral research concerns the ethics of photography, with a specific focus on the work of contemporary Indigenous artists who address the historical and ongoing processes of settler colonialism in North America. Reilley has held a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC CGS) and the Max Stern McCord Museum Fellowship. Her work has been published in local and international peer-reviewed journals.

Eleanor Chiari is a program convenor for the BA in Language and Culture at University College London (UCL). She is also a teaching fellow in the School of European Cultures and Society at UCL, where she teaches courses in cultural studies, visual culture, and the politics of memory. Her first book entitled, *Undoing Time: The Cultural Memory of an Italian Prison*, focused on Turin's prison Le Nuove and was published in 2012.

Mafalda Dâmaso is a PhD candidate in the department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she has worked as Associate Lecturer. Dâmaso holds a BSc in Sociology from ISCTE-IUL (Lisbon, Portugal), a minor in Philosophy from Wien Universität (Vienna, Austria), and an MSc in Politics from Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve (Brussels, Belgium). Her work focuses on the intersection of contemporary art, international affairs, and political communication.

JM Hammond is a faculty lecturer in the English department at Meiji Gakuin University, Japan, and is currently a PhD candidate at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. He researches various aspects of modernity and modernism in Japan, particular in relation to art, photography, and cinema. His publications include 'The Collapse of Memory: Tracing Reflexivity in the Work of Daido Moriyama' for *The Reflexive Photographer* (Museums Etc, 2013); 'Masaki Kobayashi' and 'Interview with Susumu Hani' for *Dictionary of World Cinema: Japan 3* (Intellect Books, 2014). 'A Sensitivity to Things: Mono no aware in Late Spring and Equinox Flower' in *Ozu International: Essays on the Global*

Influences of a Japanese Auteur (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015). His presentations include conference papers given at the University of Oxford, UK, and the University of Hong Kong.

Iro Katsaridou is a curator at the Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki, Greece (2005-present). She studied Art History at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Museum Studies at the City University of New York. Her doctoral dissertation (Aristotle University; 2010) treats the discourse on contemporary Greek photography. Previously, she has worked for art institutions in Thessaloniki and New York. She has published articles and book chapters on photography and museum policies. Currently, she is co-curator of an exhibition titled “On the margins of war: Thessaloniki under the German Occupation (1941–1944) through the photographic collection of Byron Metos” (January 2016; Museum of Byzantine Culture), which was framed by a conference in April 2016 on amateur photography during the years of the Nazi Occupation in Greece.

Jean Kempf is a professor of American Studies at Université Lumière-Lyon 2. His research concerns American photography from both a visual studies and sociological perspective. He also writes about various aspects of US cultural history. His recent publications include *Les Mots de États-Unis* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2012), *Une Histoire culturelle des États-Unis* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2015), and with François Brunet & alii, *L'Amérique des images. Histoire et culture visuelle des États-Unis* (Paris: Hazan, 2013), as well as numerous journal articles (see <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr>). He is a former director of the Lyon University Press (2004–2009) and CNRS research professor in New York (2012–2014).

Pam Meecham is a professor in Museum Studies at University College London: Institute of Education. She is course leader for the MA in Museums and Galleries in Education and supervises doctoral students working in visual culture, museum education and art history. Her research interests include 18th- and 19th-century museum history, museum education, public monuments, and modern and contemporary art. She has lectured and published widely on a wide-range of subjects including education-, museum-, and art history-related subjects.

Silvano Montaldo is the director of Turin’s Museo di Antropologia Criminale Cesare Lombroso as well as professor of contemporary history in the ‘Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia’ in the University of Turin. He has published extensively on the 19th-century history and culture of the Italian middle classes, the history of science, and Cesare Lombroso. Alongside his long list of scholarly publications and articles, as director of the museum, he is also responsible for all the museum’s publications and relations with the press.

Chelsea Nichols is a curator and art historian specializing in the history and display of curious bodies in 20th-century art. She works as Curator of Modern Art at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, New Zealand, where her current projects focus on the intersection of art and medicine in the 20th century, and the traces of surrealism in New Zealand art. Nichols also recently completed her doctorate at the University of Oxford, researching the representation of human curiosities in contemporary art and their relationship to the history of exhibiting monstrous bodies. She is currently working on a book of the same topic and writes the blog *The Museum of Ridiculously Interesting Things* in her spare time.

Stella Pekiari was born in Athens in 1980. She studied Medieval and Modern Greek Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Literary Translation at the European Translation Centre of Literature and Human Sciences in Athens. She holds a master's degree in Cultural Management from the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. She is an independent researcher, writer, translator, curator, and educator. Her research interests include Visual Culture, Visual Literacy, Media Archeology, the use of Photography in Old and New Media, and American Popular Culture. She splits her time between Greece and the Netherlands.

Rachel E. Perry is a lecturer in the graduate program in Holocaust Studies at Haifa University in Israel. A scholar of French art during the Occupation, she has published a number of articles on Jean Fautrier and Jean Dubuffet, most notably “Jean Fautrier’s Jolies Juives” in *October* (2004) and “Paint Boldly! Jean Dubuffet’s DIY Manual” in *October* (2015). A recipient of a CASVA Senior Visiting Fellowship, she is currently completing a manuscript entitled *Things That Matter: French Painting in the 1940s*. Her article “Holocaust Hospitality: Michal Rovner’s *Living Landscape*” will appear in *History and Memory*, fall 2016.

Verena Straub is an art historian, working as research associate at the collaborative research center *Affective Societies* at Free University Berlin and at the Cluster of Excellence *Image Knowledge Gestaltung* at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (2013–2016). She studied in Toronto and Berlin, where she received her master's degree in Art and Visual History. She is currently completing her PhD thesis on video testimonies of suicide bombers and their adaptation in contemporary art. Besides her academic career, Verena Straub is a freelance journalist, contributing to national daily papers and art magazines.

Yiannis Toumazis is an assistant professor at the Department of Architecture, Fine and Applied Arts of Frederick University, Nicosia, Cyprus, the Director of the Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre and of the Pierides Foundation, and Chairman of the Board of the Cyprus Theatre Organization

(THOC). His work focuses on issues of art theory, museology, and curating of exhibitions. In 2011 he was the curator of the Cyprus Pavilion “Temporal Taxonomy” at the 54th Biennale of Venice in Italy. He has also designed several museums in Cyprus and Greece, amongst which the awarded THALASSA Museum of Ayia Napa, Cyprus. In 2013 his book on Marcel Duchamp, entitled *Marcel Duchamp: Artiste Androgyne*, was published by Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest. He is one of the co-authors of the book *Cyprus Art of the 20th Century*, and is the editor of numerous contemporary art exhibition catalogues, articles, and publications.

Sheila Watson is a senior lecturer in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. She worked in museums before she joined the School in 2003. Her research interests include museums and communities, the democratization of history, the uses of the past in heritage sites and emotional histories in museums and heritage. She has a keen interest in the political aftermath of the Second World War and the way in which this affects historical interpretation of this event, an interest that is reflected in her chapter.

RM Wolff is a PhD candidate in the Department of Art History at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and earned a double master’s in Art History, Theory, and Criticism and Arts Administration and Policy from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Wolff’s dissertation, entitled “All We Have: Performance Photographs and Artist Interviews in the Contemporary,” considers the methods and responsibilities of using historical evidence to write art history about the present and recent past. Previous publications include a section of Wolff’s Master’s thesis “We bought a virgin: The Issue of the Artist in *No Ghost Just A Shell*” in *SHIFT: Graduate Journal of Visual and Material Culture*.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

1 Approaches to Displaying Death in Museums

An Introduction

*Elena Stylianou and
Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert*

Most recent theories view both museums and photography as socio-cultural constructions that are highly selective and prone to influences by various stakeholders and socio-political forces. Their selective processes are often defined by—as much as reflect—a complex set of parameters: what is available to use, what is considered most appropriate for a museum narrative, what is socially acceptable or aesthetically pleasing, or what is assumed to be effortlessly perceived and consumed by the visitor. These selections form a crucial, but also invisible, photographic ecosystem in museums¹; an ecosystem that defines what is exhibited and how, what becomes present, visible, evidential and influential.

But, if photography as well as its museological display are both culturally controlled and regulated practices that are highly selective, then questions are raised regarding the kind of “presences”² (and thus “absences”) exhibited and the kind of witnessing performed by museum visitors in their engagement with photographs. This edited volume is interested in this exact paradoxical and continuous exchange between presence and absence, in its consequent effect on curatorial and museological decisions, the implications and challenges that derive from it, and in visitors’ cognitive and emotional processes when faced with displays of death.

The individual chapters of this book adopt a strong theoretical approach in their discussion of a wide array of international case studies of museums that display photographs of death. These photographs propose a visual language of possible trauma, victimhood, violence, the afflictions of scientific experimentation or false rationality. The case studies deal with a variety of photographs of death, such as appalling images of the consequences of war, shocking images of murder found in police archives, funeral photographs found in personal albums, studio portraits of people who are no more or photographs that simply allude to the idea of death through various other signifiers. Faced with the diversity of such photographs, their purpose and possible impact, the museum is called to respond to a number of challenges and dilemmas in its handling, displaying and curating; dilemmas that are aesthetic, political and ethical. Collectively, then, the chapters offer an in-depth investigation of the varied approaches of displaying photographs

of death—and subsequently of presence and absence—in various types of museums (anthropology, history, art, ethnographic and science museums). In doing so, the book offers insight not only into the wide-ranging strategies museums adopt for the display of photographs of death, but also into the museum’s responsibility when explicitly dealing with a photographic genre that can be immensely diverse and controversial.

More specifically, the chapters that follow demonstrate that museums and galleries seem to employ at least four different approaches when it comes to the photographic display of death that are often interrelated and not necessarily exclusive of each other.³ The first approach—*Evidencing the Past*—is perhaps the most common, especially in history museums, and uses photography as a form of evidence for predetermined narratives that are ideologically and politically charged. Photography, text and museum objects support each other to narrate the past as a single, often uninterrupted, narrative. The second approach—*The Spectacle of Death*—asks of photography of death to speak for itself, bare of any explanatory material. With minimal text and objects to contextualize and “remote-control”⁴ photography’s meaning, photographs of death often appear controversial by fetishizing and aestheticizing death. The third approach—*Empathy and Escaping Anonymity*—tries to avoid the pitfalls of re-victimization and anonymity that are often evident in the previous approaches. It tells the story of the victims from the victim’s point of view and not that of the perpetrator (as is often the case) making anonymous suffering personal and public. Finally, the fourth approach—*Museums as Agents of Change*—sees the museum as a space for critical reflection and tries to challenge ideological structures by proposing new readings of both the past and the present. The chapters of the book are organized into four sections, each one illustrating one of the above museological approaches and discussing their advantages and challenges. This introduction in turn, attempts to contextualize the book’s diverse chapters, grounding them in a common theoretical framework.

Evidencing the Past

Museums, and especially history museums, often display a significant number of photographs of death as visual evidence and as documents of atrocious historical events that are otherwise well described by texts and other exhibition media. In these cases, museums seem to rely on these photographs to further illustrate and support particular narratives in a forceful and convincing manner. Barthes mentions that “the photograph is violent: not because it shows violent things, but because on each occasion it fills the sight by force, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed.”⁵ In the case of photographs of death in such displays, we argue that photography is violent twice: it displays violence and it fills the sight by force.

Apart from photography’s visual force, though, there is also a false sense of transparency bestowed on what is classified as documentary photography.

Documentary photography is still often considered, by both museum professionals and visitors alike, as a transparent, unmediated mechanical reproduction of reality, despite the wider acknowledgment that a number of selective processes direct and alter its appearance and meaning. Moreover, photographs displayed in museums borrow from the credibility and authority of the museum in the process of becoming visual evidence for museum narratives. For this reason, photography in museums constitutes a vulnerable and thus dangerous medium that can be easily manipulated.⁶ Vulnerable because it changes according to the museum's context, and dangerous because it can help construct or activate an imaginary one-sided collective memory, or "collective instruction,"⁷ which excludes the "other."

Indeed, more often than not, photographs of death in history museums are enveloped by explanatory textual information that directs meaning and narrows down individualized interpretation. This first section examines how the museum's context and surrounding content can influence photographic meaning by favoring one interpretation over others regardless of the original context of a photograph. It also examines the selective processes that might take place when deciding which images of death to display and how.

In Chapter 2, JM Hammond presents the case of the Metropolitan Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, in which photographs are used to chronicle the struggle for the visual representation of the momentous earthquake that vastly devastated the region of Kanto in Japan in 1923. The images selected for the museum display are much less graphic than those in the museum's archives, revealing a museological strategic decision of self-censoring, a type of restraining from overtly showcasing death. Instead, photographs of dead bodies are chosen when no faces are clearly visible or when objects stand for the dead bodies, while smoke—a deliberate added manipulation on images that responds to viewers' expectations (and even morbid curiosity)—was chosen as the most appropriate visual vehicle for constructing this part of Japan's history.

In the case of the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, images might not be of bloody dead bodies, but they are still haunting in that death is implied. This is similar to the images captured in what Susie Linfield calls the "waiting room of death" in concentration camps.⁸ She mentions that "these photographs are of terror," not because of what they show, but because of the histories to which they testify.⁹ Certainly, there is a fundamental difference between death caused by a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, and massive death caused by human cruelty, such as is the case of the Holocaust. But, nonetheless, the museum's use of images of dying people or of people who are soon to die is equal to the display of "death-in-process,"¹⁰ an almost always powerful form of visualized human anguish. The suggestive power of these photographs raises what Barbie Zelizer considers the important question "of whether the 'as if' of visual depictions may at times work better than journalism's fuller documentation of the 'as is'" and whether "a trope of visualization that draws from the imagination, the

emotions and contingency to show less than what is known” might be more effective in capturing the public’s attention.¹¹

When Iro Katsaridou (Chapter 3) discusses the Jewish Museum in Thessaloniki, she similarly proposes that a museum that wishes to escape a certain Holocaust iconography fixated on death—which is often the case with Holocaust museums—should present a differentiated narrative that diverts from the overt iconography of a massacre. Although she is critical about the degree to which the specific museum has managed to show the extent of the city’s responsibility for the deportation of Thessaloniki’s Jews to their ultimate death or for the destruction of their necropolis, she nonetheless acknowledges that the museum was created on the assumption that empathy and the restoration of the victims’ individuality would only be achieved through showing the lives lived.

A preference towards the display of images of everyday life, instead of death, might also be the result of a recent acknowledgement that “no representation can even begin to communicate the truth of the traumatic experience”; to represent that which remains unrepresentable.¹² Although different in their intention from the “as if” images discussed above, there is considerable doubt whether these photographs manage to do anything more than still reinforce mainstream narratives and textual discourse around the devastating results of Nazi brutality. Instead, in the context of a Jewish museum and indirectly charged with the burden of the Holocaust, even photographs of the life lived often fail to escape the future of their protagonists and in effect are deemed inadequate “to remember or redeem the experience of the traumatized victim”;¹³ they always remain photos of the victims’ ominous future, of their death.

The absence of photographs of the dead is also evident in Chapter 4, where Sheila Watson discusses the display of photographs of World War II aerial bombings. Watson argues that images of civilian deaths were often avoided in World War II museums in different countries and this was a decision based on different political choices. This was done as a means of building a collective memory of a unified Germany, as in the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the Deutsches Technikmuseum in Berlin, or as evidence of national superiority and ability to persevere as in the National War Museum, Scotland and the Imperial War Museum, London. Despite the museums’ best efforts to avoid passive voyeurism, however, documenting crimes without at least opening up the space for discussing multiple perspectives can also become problematic. The museum that chooses to avoid showing multiple perspectives or opening itself up to institutional critique also needs to consider addressing its own role in reiterating violence through the display and circulation of images of death, both explicit and implicit.

This is even more evident when examining the photographic material in museums in Cyprus, a divided island where a decades-long political conflict penetrates all facets of life including museum displays. Yiannis Toumazis, in Chapter 5, discusses different memorial sites and museums in Cyprus that

aim to stir historical memory by both glorifying and sanctifying victims and martyrs, whose iconic representation serves to build a personal and collective sense of belonging and martyrdom. In his chapter, Toumazis argues that photographs in these different sites—either of corpses in the museum’s glass cases or children’s portraits of children displayed in what once used to be a school—along with personal belongings of the deceased and other objects, gain a macabre materiality that may move the visitor emotionally. However, affective responses are not here utilized for critical reflection. They are instead viewed as a means for validating a tailored historical consciousness and nationalism, thus raising a series of significant questions regarding the museum’s ethical responsibility in allowing images of death to become a semi-religious iconography that supports ethno-national narratives and identities.

What becomes apparent then in the chapters of this section is that photography can become malleable material for highly selective, politically and ideologically charged one-sided narratives. Photography is often used as evidence or documentation to support textual discourse, while the museum context influences the meanings and narratives produced. These museums seem to acknowledge that photography, and especially documentary photography, still holds sway over visitors as it is seen as a truthful, unbiased documentation of what has been. It goes without saying that selective processes and political aims that are camouflaged and rendered invisible in such displays retain many dangers. Museums in these instances can easily turn into places of horror, pain and shame rather than dialogue, empathetic engagement or critical consideration. They can also reinforce and construct, rather than deconstruct and challenge, narratives that are one-sided, exclusive and thus highly problematic. More so, it appears that the relationship between contextualization and photographs of death is not a straightforward one: too much information can lead to photography being subsumed by predetermined mainstream narratives, while no information might lead to the spectacularization and fetishization of death. The chapters in the following section deal with issues raised when photographs of death attempt to stand alone, “liberated” from the museum context or their historical affiliation.

The Spectacle of Death

The chapters in this second section discuss four different case studies of exhibitions where images of death, removed from their original context of time, place and intent—as postcards/souvenirs, war and disaster photography, medical or police documentation—are presented in the museum or gallery context and assume a new life of their own. Photography is neither treated as evidential “visual text” here, nor is digitally manipulated to fit gallery spaces. On the contrary, it retains its original size, material form and traces of usage. Attention is given to the materiality and aesthetic

attributes of the photograph, instead of its assumed documentary nature. In this approach, the photograph gains great potency, as it is the “material forms, enhanced by its presentational forms, that are [seem to be] central to the function of photographs as socially salient objects.”¹⁴

However, it soon becomes apparent that this museological strategy also presents various tensions brought forward by the long-standing division between the evidential/documentary and the aesthetic nature of photography; between image and material substance; between looking at images of violence/death and appreciating the aesthetic qualities of these images. Although some have questioned this distinction by suggesting that *all* visual representation is aesthetic,¹⁵ repeatedly showing death with an emphasis on photography’s aesthetic qualities and possible assumptions about a disinterested judgment come with certain challenges.

Thus, the first issue raised by this museological approach relates to the effects that repeated showings of death without substantial contextual information has on the visitor. Horror, fear, even repulsion caused by photographs of death could not be potentially transformed into responses of empathy, agency or critical reflection, as these photographs often simply distance the viewer from that which they represent, especially if the represented is distant and anonymous. Marianne Hirsch, discussing the latter position, suggests that repeated viewing of an image, simply enforces distance by building up “sufficient psychological resistance to become desensitized, just in order to survive the horror of looking.”¹⁶ When discussing Hal Foster’s *The Return of the Real*, Jill Bennett, in her book *Empathic Vision*, also points out that “[t]he experience of trauma paradigmatically encapsulates both direct, unmediated affective experience and an absence of affect, insofar as it is resistant to cognitive processing and includes ‘psychic numbing.’”¹⁷ Similarly, Julia Kristeva attests that spectacles of horror can disturb our mechanisms of perception to the point of annihilation and emptiness.¹⁸ Susan Buck-Morss, discussing Walter Benjamin, argues slightly differently, that while our sensory system is subjected to constant stimulation of images that might shock us, it is through cognitive processes that this system simultaneously protects the viewer from being traumatized, leading to desensitization.¹⁹

What these authors all suggest is that shock and trauma can rarely lead to empathetic engagement or to motivated action. As Sontag similarly argues, “the gruesome invites us to be either spectators or cowards, unable to look.”²⁰ In effect, engagement that is void of affective response may also result in passive voyeurism or a “pornography of death” that often dehumanizes and re-victimizes the people depicted, along with their families or communities, introducing an ethical predicament. More so—and as the chapters of this section point out—the viewer’s participation in a dehumanizing process, could also potentially result into a form of collusion with the perpetrators.

In Chapter 6 Jean Kempf examines the traveling exhibition *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath*, first shown at the

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 2012, which includes photographs from different countries ranging from daguerreotypes to the most contemporary war images. This exhibition normalizes and exposes something that is considered by its curators as unavoidable: war and death. The curators seem to adopt a neutral, quasi-scientific approach to the arrangement of photographs according to “stages” of war, thus providing an ahistorical, timeless and placeless process of conflict. According to Kempf, as the *Family of Man* (first shown in 1955) exhibition was an ahistorical representation of humanity that argued for peace, the *War/Photography* exhibition is its darker cousin because it reveals the inevitability of war and suffering.

At the same time, this exhibition of more than 280 photographs that span more than a century and a half, displays war conflict, atrocities, suffering and human courage in equal measure and suggests that the museum is a credible medium through which the impact of war can be communicated. In a sense, these chronologically and thematically diverse photographs attest more to the history of photography as a medium than to the history of human suffering. Yet, they remain a powerful example of how such images, stripped of both context and critical intentions, can cater to our morbid curiosity. In such a massive display of death, the photographs evade their documentary and evidential nature, as the viewers can hardly identify with the characters or their individual stories represented. Thus, any affective responses are triggered not out of identification or compassion, but by “direct engagement with sensation”²¹ produced by photographic exhibitions that emphasize such a spectacular demonstration of death.

In RM Wolff’s (Chapter 7) discussion of the exhibition *Without Sanctuary*, which displays explicit images of lynching practices in the United States, the author offers an unequivocal example of how the museum, historical or art, can turn into a space for normalizing and reiterating atrocity as spectacle. More so, Wolff also acknowledges that this spectacle is one for white audiences alone, based on the problematic assumption that the public demands and desires to look at such images as a means of redemption. A museum’s lack of affinity with the individual victims and an approach to display that instead favors a collective and spectacular representation of death might be the result of a misguided assumption that this is the best way to respond to feelings of shame and guilt²² and to a sense of responsibility for crimes committed in the past. Beyond sentimentality, disgust, fear or even trauma, and the ethical implications of the elicitation of such feelings in a museum, there appears to be another ethical dimension in the dilemma of displaying explicit images of death: the question of who is the assumed audience.

Chiari and Montaldo, in Chapter 8, discuss photographs of dead bandits—southern Italians criminalized by Italy’s newly unified state in the mid-19th century—and a particular example of a dead famous brigade fighter, half naked and pregnant. This photograph exemplifies the pornographic scorn implicit in the war against brigandage, for it was one fought both

physically and through the media. Such images were used to demonstrate a link between cranial features and criminal tendencies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The image of this woman in the Museo di Antropologia Criminale Cesare Lombroso in Turin today, however, has acquired a different status—the woman becomes an unknown murder victim violated once by her killers, then by the camera and, finally, by her transformation into a museum object (or the subject of one). Beyond discussing the danger of such images becoming pornographic and consumed by a scopophilic gaze, this chapter also questions the difficulty of presenting historical material to contemporary audiences. Whereas images of dead bandits were once considered anything but brutal or gruesome, today they are often perceived as being inappropriate and problematic. Museums, in cases like this one, are faced with the challenge of deciding whether they should or could select, censor and tailor the exhibition according to contemporary audiences' sensibilities.

In Chapter 9, Stella Pekiariide gives voice to similar concerns in relation to crime scene photography from police archives that became the material for two exhibitions and books: the *LAPD archives* exhibition at the Fototeka Gallery in Los Angeles (2001) and the *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam* at Foam Gallery in Amsterdam (2007). In *Pekiariide's* case studies, the photographs were never intended to be seen by the public. They are photographs that show the police force at work or graphic scenes of violence that raise immediate reactions. One cannot but wonder here whether any explicit images of death are appropriate for exhibiting and whether photographs as material objects without any contextual information can remain relevant visual records with cultural meanings.

Decontextualized displays of gruesome, shocking or traumatic images, often of nameless suffering and death, seem to fail to serve as documentary evidences, while also failing to activate and promote affect, sympathy or action regardless of any other disquieting and instinctive responses they might elicit. However, what *Pekiariide* shows in this museological approach is that photographs as material and/or aesthetic objects should never be understood to be isolated at any given moment, but instead should be considered part of “a continuing process of production, exchange, usage and meaning.”²³ In other words, as Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart acknowledge, an image's materiality is inextricably connected to social biographies, which in turn are often institutionally imposed and entangled with discourses of knowledge and power.²⁴ Perhaps a museum has the responsibility to reveal, not only the material presence of photographs of death, but also their “social bibliographies,” thus engaging in institutional critique. So, even in an attempt to display photographs of death without textual discourse and separated from their original source of production, these photographs always remain interlocked with the museum's specific curatorial choices, narratives and economies of truth.

Empathy and Escaping Anonymity

The chapters in the previous two sections mainly discuss examples of documentary photography produced by press photographers for the media (see especially Chapters 2, 4 and 6), by traveling photographers as *memento mori* for horrendous events (see, for example, Chapter 7 for lynching photographs) or by police photographers as documents for crime scenes (see Chapter 9). In all these examples, bodies are anonymous and become signifiers for something else: the horror of war or natural disaster, a warning or reminder for revenge, forensic evidence from crime scenes etc. As viewers, we see through the eyes of the perpetrator or the impartial evidence provider and never through the eyes of the victim. As a result, the exhibitions discussed in the previous two sections either encourage an understanding of a very particular—often single and one-sided—narrative, or a mere spectacularization and aestheticization of death that barely allows personal involvement or empathy toward the people depicted.

In this section, the chapters address different case studies of museums which emphasize sentimentality and empathy. This is achieved through processes of reframing the past, by escaping anonymity with personalized displays and, finally, by shifting our understanding of the photographic display from one of victimhood to one of life's celebration. Furthermore, all the chapters in this section provide examples in which people soon to die or their families were involved in the production of the exhibited photographs. In effect, the photographs are more personal and respectful of the individuality of the deceased. Of course, the personal is almost always linked to the collective, and the collective, through a process of empathetic viewing, can become personal. This seems like an ethical, responsible and desirable approach and, as the chapters of this section testify, it is an approach that indeed "touches" people and encourages personal connections and reflection. However, the main challenge of this approach is that this re-telling of the past and the facilitation of affiliation and affect do not necessarily lead to critical thinking and a possible political action or change.

Verena Straub, in Chapter 10, investigates the image and video culture of martyrs—men and women who purportedly died for their country—in Palestine and Lebanon. She argues that such images serve as both an indirect obituary to those who lost their lives and as a celebratory announcement of death. However, this understanding is uniquely place-specific and changes when these images are viewed in the context of other countries. While these images assist in creating a collective identity of martyrdom when displayed in the public arena of the streets of Palestine and Lebanon, similarly to the images of dead heroes in Toumazis's chapter (Chapter 5), they instead have the potential of opening up a reflective and critical space for the museum visitor when displayed in a gallery in the "West."

Straub discusses the photography exhibition by Palestinian photographer Ahlam Shibli titled *Death* (2011–12) that documents martyr images as they

appear in private and public spaces in the city of Nablus, Palestine. This exhibition in the gallery Jeu de Paume in Paris has been extremely controversial because, due to the lack of contextual information and a solid museum narrative, it runs the risk of perpetuating the visual culture of suicide bombing and glorifying Palestinian militants. However, viewing a group of young Palestinian boys with a background of “pop star”-like martyr posters forces the viewer to confront another alternative reality: martyrdom operations as a form of celebrated sacrifice and one that the young boys in the photographs might inspire to. If not empathizing with the people in the picture, this reframing offers the possibility of understanding a phenomenon, the point of view of the “enemy” and possibly of critical reflection. The idea of a continuous reframing of these images by contemporary artists such as Ahlam Shibli and even more so by Rabin Mroue, as discussed in Straub’s chapter, allows for these images to be reviewed differently in different places of the world.

In Chapter 11, Rosane Altstadt discusses Charles Pansirna’s photographs, which now reside in the collection of Purdue University Galleries. While Pansirna’s photographs show the funerary customs of Lithuanian immigrants in America, they also demonstrate how these photographs become part of the ritual of mourning, a practice that was adopted across disparate cultural groups in the early 20th century. In her chapter, Altstadt also argues that when these historical images are displayed today, the museum needs to find ways to reframe them for relevance. In this case, constructing family narratives and wall labels that are fully subjective, and contrary to the conventional authoritative voice, might reinforce visitors’ embodiment of both the past and the present, the private and the collective. Altstadt argues that when exhibitions are made in a manner where personal readings and interpretations are allowed to overlay historical truths, then a process of “adoption” and empathy is achieved, granting private meaning to anonymous images.

Most importantly, the museums discussed in this section attempt to establish a process of interaction between various museum audiences and their displays in order to avoid a mere sensationalist exploration of the past, which re-victimizes the victim. Passive voyeurism as the result of death as spectacle is eliminated when exhibitions manage to restore the individuality of the victims. Similar to Katsaridou’s suggestions (see Chapter 3) about the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, Rachel E. Perry’s discussion on the Klooga installation at the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum (Chapter 12) brings to light how a different telling of the Holocaust—from the perspective of the Jews, not the perpetrators—through personal stories, names and photos, tends to diminish the distance possibly felt when the display focus is on death made explicit. In effect, what Perry suggests is that the past is mediated through the creation of new frames through which to view, understand and engage with it.

Pam Meecham, in Chapter 13, discusses the collaboration between the journalist Beate Lakotta and the veteran photographer Walter Schels that

generated the exhibition *Life before Death*, a traveling, temporary exhibition of photographic portraits of 24 terminally ill patients in North German hospices right before and after their death. The photographs were displayed at the Wellcome Collection in London in 2008 along with a personal statement about how impending death feels. As Meecham argues, this written intervention prevents an entirely aesthetic reading of the photograph that would pathologize and objectify the dead body and instead offering something new. Both the exhibitions described by Meecham, in Chapter 13, and Altstatt, in Chapter 11, attempt to re-introduce the unavoidability of death into everyday life. While in the turn of the 20th century, funerary photography was common and present as home decorations, Meecham explains that nowadays death is often managed by professionals and kept away from the public eye. Re-introducing death from the point of view of the deceased and their relatives elicits empathetic responses and personal recollections on life and death. A point that Meecham's chapter also raises is that, despite the museum's best efforts to direct both emotional and/or intellectual responses, visitors have an agency of their own and make their own connections with death.

Museums as Agents of Change

If a museum display aims at active engagement, critical reflection and change, then the question remains about what strategies museums could adopt to stimulate critical inquiry. Bennett argues that we should consider “the affective transaction in terms other than those of the identificatory relationship” as in the examples presented in the previous section. Instead, she proposes that we consider art that is “able to exploit forms of embodied perception in order to promote forms of critical inquiry.”²⁵ Grant Pooke, in his discussion on installation art and sculpture as institutional paradigms, introduces the notion of “‘activated spectatorship’ as a politicized aesthetic practice.”²⁶ He argues that art often manages to put the spectator in direct dialogue with, and as part of, a collective. Moving beyond “the ethical indifference of aesthetic contemplation,”²⁷ this results in the viewer's active engagement with open-ended responses, which in effect realizes art's political potential as an ever “incomplete” project that emphasizes intersubjectivity and multiplicity.²⁸

The chapters of this section discuss art practices that use photography to provide spaces for critical reflection, reveal injustices and point towards action. In these examples, art photography appears to have the potential to critically reframe and deconstruct images of death anew, as well as play with and question existing media images and our own cultural sensitivities. What is more, photographs of death are not used here to trigger emotion or as a way to evade anonymity. As Mieke Bal says about Doris Salcedo's political artworks, “by withholding the actual stories, [the artist] attempted to break the violence of anonymity, without falling into the opposite trap

of voyeurism, exploitation, and sentimentalism.”²⁹ Instead, the aim is to make present through absence: of both existing textual discourse and of representation.

The museum, in these cases, becomes *political* in the sense that through these displays it points towards omissions, explores issues of accountability and power relations under the cloak of art and in the name of artistic freedom and intentionality. In doing so, the museum also allows the performance of visitors’ witnessing of the past in the present, devoid of mere sentimentality and instead charged with agency.

This approach does not come without challenges. The main difficulty might be the problem that all conceptual artworks face. Active engagement and critical reflection are neither straightforward endeavors nor effortlessly achieved, and an “uninitiated” visitor might find abundant barriers to engaging with conceptual artworks and decoding their messages. Furthermore, while one assumes that these photographs as artworks (or part of artworks) are open-ended, we should never dismiss the fact that they are always by definition inscribed with individual intentionalities and narratives (artistic and museographic) in the ways in which they are presented, and which are equally prone to problematization, if they fail to be self-reflective.³⁰ Finally, active engagement does not always mean critical reflection or change. Individual readings, opinions and attitudes are very resistant and a museum exhibition, despite its curators’ or artists’ best intentions, might help reinforce rather than challenge existing perceptions.³¹

Reilley Bishop-Stall, in Chapter 14, discusses Ken Gonzales-Day’s 2000–2013 series *Erased Lynching*—a response to the *Without Sanctuary* exhibition, discussed by Wolff in Chapter 7. She argues that images of atrocities, apart from failing to inspire action, can on the contrary serve as trophies for the perpetrators of crimes and thus dehumanize their victims. For the production of this photographic series, Gonzales-Day used historical photographs of lynching practices, produced in the American West and perversely circulated as postcards around the turn of the 20th century. Gonzales-Day digitally removed the ropes and hanged bodies of not only African-Americans, but Mexican, Native American and Chinese lynch victims, thus also pointing towards what Bishop-Stall calls “the false binary of race” in America. According to the author, this erasure refigures the macabre spectacle of death and encourages viewers to consider both the event and their own responsibility, as well as photography’s own involvement in the lynching spectacle.

In a similar manner, absence is also used as a technique in the installation *May 1, 2011* (2011) by Alfredo Jaar. As Mafalda Dâmaso argues in Chapter 15 about this work, expanding the frame of the original official “documentary” photography of Obama and his team watching Osama bin Laden’s capture, with an empty frame, allows the viewer to question the legal and moral justification of political and governmental decisions. It also allows us to remediate the politicians’ gaze and reframe our own

viewing position previously established and often guided by official narratives. According to Dâmaso, the artist's decision to combine an official iconic photograph with an absent one creates the conditions for a critical spectatorship and engagement.

This process of not simply reframing—as in the case of the museums in the previous section—but also remediating³² museum narratives through the display of photographs of death is according to Chelsea Nichols more concerned with transgressing authorized or official narratives or “ways of looking.” In Chapter 16, Nichols discusses Zoe Leonard's *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman, Musée Orfila* (1991), a series of photographs that depicts a bell jar containing the preserved remains of a bearded woman, which the artist encountered in an obscure anatomy museum in Paris. In these photographs, Nichols suggests that activating what Susan Sontag has described as “photographic seeing”³³ helps the artist reveal her intentions and viewpoints and undermine the museum's authority. More specifically, the photographs of the dead and beheaded woman, open up a series of questions regarding political and institutional structures that oppress gender. Beyond such questions though, they also point towards the “dead” museum practice of displaying gruesome objects or curiosities for purportedly scientific or educational purposes. Taking the discussion one step further, Nichols argues that photography can be seen as a form of taxidermy: it preserves memory and mourning, while it never stands for the thing itself. As such, it can be seen as a practice of collective curiosity, similar to the one possessed by museums, one which, in the case of the bearded woman, takes control over the woman's image in the art space.

The examples in this section—of erased lynching, of a blank screen upon which to read political discourse and of the displayed beheaded bearded woman—all encapsulate and remind us once again of the perplexing relationship between presence and absence in the display of photographs of death in museums. They also point out that if we seek to transform existing photographic and museum practices into ones that instigate social change and political action, then both photography and museums need to become self-reflective: photography as an event rather than an object/image, and a museum visit as a fluid performance³⁴ rather than a rigid process of mere witnessing.³⁵

Conclusion

There is no one way, or a best way, to display photographs of death in museums. Each of the four different museological approaches described in this introductory chapter, and in the individual chapters that follow, comes with strengths and challenges. Some photographic displays of death in museums, especially in the first section of the book, focus on making visible selective images of death (even when these are not explicit) in order to support predetermined narratives and to force visitors to become witnesses. The

second section deals with exhibitions that ask of photography to “speak for itself” by emphasizing its materiality and aesthetic qualities. The photograph becomes “present” as a material object with its own narrative. What is omitted is the individual circumstances of the photographs and the stories of the dead. This approach might result in re-victimization, a sense of secondary trauma, and/or a “pornographic” spectatorship of death. The third part of the book presents exhibitions that try to escape anonymity and elicit empathetic responses. Although the presence of the dead becomes intimate and personal, it might yet result in sentimental spectatorship, with no space for action. Finally, the last section deals with exhibitions that use art photography as a vehicle to highlight omissions or absences, provide a space for critical reflection, explore issues of accountability, expose power relations and point towards action, suggesting, though, that change can only be achieved when both photography and museums become self-reflective.

In all four approaches, a museum’s decision about which approach to adopt as the most appropriate for the display of photographs of death depends on various factors, such as the available material, the museum’s mission, the perceptions and intentions of individual curators, researchers and artists involved in the production of an exhibition (and of the rest of the museum staff), the intended visitor and educational experience, sponsors etc. More so, photographs cannot simply be seen as “implications of authority, control and passive consumption on the one hand,”³⁶ as in the case of the first approach, or “of aesthetic discourses and the supremacy of individual vision on the other,”³⁷ as in the second one. Photographs cannot be reduced to one or the other category. Instead, they will always remain interlocked with the museum’s specific curatorial choices, narratives and economies of truth as much as with their own individual social biographies.

What this book offers, in turn, is insights into the multiplicity and complexity of the relationships between various types of museums and photographs of death, between presence and absence, the documentary and the affective, the forensic and the sensual, memory and memorialization, spectacle and agency for change. More so, it opens up the space for further critical reconceptualization of the ways in which we come to understand both museums and photography in general, as mediums of mediation and, ultimately, remediation.

Notes

- 1 Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien, *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs* (Surrey, Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).
- 2 In her *Death’s Showcase*, the philosopher and critical thinker Ariella Azoulay makes a useful argument regarding museums. She argues that the museum enjoys the privilege of being a place that allows objects to be present. When it comes to photographs of death, however, one can claim that apart from being present as objects/images, these photographs also invite visitors to witness or *be present* at a historic or recent event. This dual photographic presence—as

museum object and memorial—reinforced by the authority of the museum and the perceived evidential force of the photographic medium, remains largely elusive and problematic.

- 3 Museums often adopt more than one of the four approaches, especially through other contextualizing media. For example, an exhibition that falls under the second approach—minimum text and emphasis on the materiality and aesthetics of photography—might be supplemented with a catalogue or a dedicated website rich in text and other supplementary material.
- 4 Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image,” in *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980), 269–285.
- 5 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Berkeley: Vintage Classics, 2000), 91.
- 6 Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Alexandra Bounia, *The Political Museum: Power, Conflict and Identity in Cyprus* (London: Routledge, 2016).
- 7 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 76.
- 8 Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 66.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Barbie Zelizer, “Atrocity, the ‘As If,’ and Impending Death from the Khmer Rouge,” in *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, edited by G. Batchen, M. Gidley, N.K. Miller and J. Prosser (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 155.
- 11 Ibid., 166.
- 12 Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, “Introduction,” in *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, edited by F. Guerin and R. Hallas (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2007), 2.
- 13 Ibid., 2.
- 14 For a more extensive discussion on the materiality of the image and its significance, see Elizabeth Edwards, “Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs,” *Visual Studies* 17, no. 2 (2002): 67 and “Introduction: Photographs as Objects,” in *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, edited by Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.
- 15 Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, “Introduction,” 2 [emphasis in the original].
- 16 Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 25.
- 17 Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 5. Susan Sontag similarly argues that photography might blunt, resulting into “numbing” or desensitization [*Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books, 2003)].
- 18 As cited in Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 24.
- 19 Susan Buck-Morss in Azoulay, *Death’s Showcase*.
- 20 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 38.
- 21 Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 7.
- 22 Ibid., 9.
- 23 Edwards and Hart, “Introduction,” 4.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 10.
- 26 Grant Pooke, *Contemporary British Art: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 153.
- 27 Mieke Bal, *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo’s Political Art* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 203.
- 28 Pooke, *Contemporary British Art*, 155.

- 29 Bal, *Of What One Cannot Speak*, 204.
- 30 See Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Elena Stylianou, “Editorial: Photography, Artists and Museums,” for a more detailed discussion on the complex and close relationship between photography and its frame of production, presentation and dissemination—the museum—and this relationship’s consequent effect: that photography’s self-consciousness is strongly tied to the museum’s self-reflective practices.
- 31 Sharon Macdonald, *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002).
- 32 As already shown in the previous sections, overt display of death can overwhelm visitors to the point of inability for action or desensitize to the point of complacency. In effect, the last section of the book investigates examples that adopt what we call a process of *remediation*. Borrowing the term from media and cultural theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *remediation* refers to “the representation of one medium in another” [Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding of New Media* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2000), 45]. In remediation, media maintain a double logic of both immediacy (transparency) and hypermediacy (multiplicity), “by which contemporary culture seeks simultaneously to proliferate and to erase mediation, to eliminate all signs of mediation in the very act of multiplying them” [Richard Grusin, *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 38]. Although, certainly, Grusin and Bolter were discussing remediation in very different terms, and both photography and the museum are nothing but transparent, we argue that the museum and photography can often act as new technologies for mediating content in ways that are different from more traditional versions such as schools, universities, academic institutions or texts and paintings or even existing museums and photographs. In this section, the means of achieving it is by using art practices. Through these art practices, the stories told by museums and photographs today can be *remediated*—told in a way that is new (and different from the manner mediated by museums and photography in the past) in that they revision our relationship to them and to what they represent. The double logic of achieving both transparency and multiplicity might be an impossible one, but it could nonetheless be applied in museums and photography today through a process of offering a multiplicity of interpretations and an open-ended performative space of engagement, thus erasing a single, authoritative, mediated narrative.
- 33 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).
- 34 Mieke Bal in *Of What We Cannot Speak* suggests that looking at art as a performance, referring in particular to the three aspects of theatre—doing, acting and performing in space—is useful in understanding work that deals with suffering and violence. She says that to combine doing and acting (commemoration) with performing, as both enactment (like in theater) and bringing forth (in philosophical terms), allows a production of a “thou” anew and a collective response that moves beyond existing essentialist readings of both the past and the work itself. She, of courses, discusses the events of Doris Salcedo. Yet, her use of theatre in such terms can be useful for us here as well, since this notion of *performance* as an enactment in space and bringing forth a new “thou” can be equally applied to the museum visit.
- 35 In the spectrum of all possible manifestations of the relationship between museums and photography, both mediums seem to always remain *political* in relation to another defining force: the museum visitor who witnesses, consumes, perceives, responds and ultimately performs in a uniquely individual manner during the museum encounter with photography. This is considered to be an important idea that needs further examination.

36 Edwards and Hart, "Introduction," 15.

37 Ibid., 15.

Bibliography

- Azoulay, Ariella. *Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*. Translated by Ruvik Danielli. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2001.
- Bal, Mieke. *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Barthes, Roland. "Rhetoric of the Image." In *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by A. Trachtenberg, 269–285. New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Berkshire: Vintage Classics, 2000.
- Bennett, Jill. *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding of New Media*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2000.
- Edwards, Elizabeth. "Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs." *Visual Studies* 17, no. 2 (2002): 67–75.
- Edwards, Elizabeth and Janice Hart. "Introduction: Photographs as Objects." In *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, edited by Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Edwards, Elizabeth and Sigrid Lien. *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs*. Surrey, Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Grusin, Richard. *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Guerin, Frances and Roger Hallas. "Introduction." In *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, edited by F. Guerin and R. Hallas, 1–20. London and New York: Wallflower, 2007.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, 2nd edition. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Linfield, Susie. *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Macdonald, Sharon. *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002.
- Pooke, Grant. *Contemporary British Art: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
- Stylianou-Lambert, Theopisti and Alexandra Bounia. *The Political Museum: Power, Conflict and Identity in Cyprus*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Stylianou-Lambert, Theopisti and Elena Stylianou. "Editorial: Photography, Artists and Museums." *Photographies* 7, no. 2 (2014): 117–130.
- Zelizer, Barbie. "Atrocity, the 'as if,' and Impending Death from the Khmer Rouge." In *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, edited by G. Batchen, M. Gidley, N.K. Miller and J. Prosser, 155–166. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Part I

Evidencing the Past



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

2 Negotiating Death at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum

JM Hammond

Introduction

On September 1, 1923, a tremendous earthquake shook Japan's capital, Tokyo, and the surrounding areas to the core. Causing fires and a tsunami and resulting in approximately 105,000 deaths, this was one of the most catastrophic natural disasters Japan has ever experienced.

The Great Kanto Earthquake was also one of the country's first calamities of such a scale to be widely photographed, despite disaster photography having become a familiar feature of Japan's media landscape by this time. In addition to pictures of the widespread damage, the quake spurred a range of imagery that approached the deaths that ensued in multiple ways: Death is both revealed and concealed; mourned and eroticized; imaged and imagined.

Many of these depictions of the disaster and its aftermath are stored in the archives of a Tokyo museum commemorating the quake, and some have found a permanent home on its walls. Only one photograph from those selected for display at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum directly depicts the bodies of the dead, yet death hovers over many of these images. This reticence to prominently display images of the dead is explored early in this chapter, in the light of varying arguments prioritizing the ethical responsibility of museums not to sensationalize death, or alternatively, stressing the need to use such images to convey the gravity of cases of death on a mass scale. The chapter then explores how death, even when not depicted directly, informs a wide range of quake imagery exhibited at the museum, arguing that, in this case study, questions surrounding displaying death encompass many facets beyond showing, or not showing, images of the dead themselves.

The chapter also considers how the format in which the photographs were originally circulated, be it in newspapers, postcards or other sites of representation, informs their purpose and reception, and how the museum's display strategies engage with the *historicity* of these images as a necessary part of its project. As such, the photographic images of the quake become not merely documents of the historical incident, but part of its very fabric.

Or, as John Tagg suggests, “Photographs are never ‘evidence’ of history; they are themselves the historical.”¹

The Great Kanto Earthquake, September 1, 1923

The air largely cleared by a typhoon that swept through the Kanto region the night before, it was business as usual in Tokyo and surrounding areas on the balmy morning of September 1, 1923. As lunchtime approached, many people began cooking on charcoal braziers, in the same kind of wooden structures that had housed their parents, and their parents before them. At just two minutes before noon, a huge jolt shook Tokyo, the neighboring city of Yokohama, and the wider Kanto plain, an area of over 17,000 square kilometers. This was followed in quick succession by one shock after another in a series that lasted a full ten minutes. Smaller tremors continued over the next twenty-four hours until another major temblor occurred.

The initial jolt tossed and scattered the burning coals from the braziers in peoples’ homes, spreading the conflagration from one wooden building to another. Fanned by steady breezes that wasted no time developing into firestorms, the flames rapidly spread, ravaging whole neighborhoods. Adding to the chaos, a combination of these winds, the heat of the fires and the resulting rapid loss of oxygen resulted in the whipping up of devastating cyclones that tore through the region. Yokohama was almost totally leveled, and in Tokyo an estimated 200,000 homes were partially or completely destroyed, causing hordes of people to gather en masse wherever refuge from the fires could be found.

One of the most severely affected parts of the capital was the working-class Shitamachi downtown area, where many living quarters were closely packed together. Crowds fleeing in both directions over the Sumida river were devoured by flames that raced lengthwise across many of the bridges, bringing them down. Others jumped, only to drown or suffocate under the weight of the bodies pressed upon them in the water.

Hours earlier, in Honjo ward on the east bank of the river, word had spread among the locals to head to Yokoami-cho, the site of a former military uniform depot and one of the few open spaces in the area. Claiming a patch of ground in the 80,000-square-meter compound, many brought futons, furniture and valuables in an attempt to save them from the flames that were spreading through the area. People decided to stay there until the fires subsided—as many thought they surely would—and initially, a somewhat festive mood prevailed, as people chatted, ate and even played board games.

By at least three o’clock, however, around 40,000 desperate locals had filled the space to bursting point. The flames had spread until the site was surrounded by a wall of fire. Together with the body heat from those in the depot, the temperature had become unbearable. One of the few survivors later recalled that “every exit was closed by fire. The ground was glowing with heat, the air became. . . a furnace.”²

Then, at around 4:00 pm, the unimaginable happened as the depot was hit by a fire tornado, known as a dragon twist—a rare phenomenon that feeds off a particular conjunction of heat and wind conditions. This tall, swirling column of black smoke brought with it intense flames and fierce winds that threw people, personal effects and even horses high into the air like ragdolls. It also sucked up all the oxygen in its path, so many of those who were not burnt to death died of suffocation. The painting *Whirlwinds* by Ryushu Tokunaga depicts the scene.

Of the official estimate of over 68,000 deaths in Tokyo alone as a direct result of the earthquake, almost 55,000 occurred in Honjo. And of this figure, almost two-thirds—an incredible 38,000 people—occurred in the former depot, marking it as the biggest single site of death from the earthquake as a whole. As such, it is fitting that the site is now home to a museum documenting the earthquake, the only one of its kind in the country.³



Figure 2.1 *Whirlwinds*, Ryushu Tokunaga, oil painting, 1923. © Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Hall Archive.

Remembering the Disaster

In the years after the quake, the long-standing plan to turn the compound of the former depot into a park came to fruition. Here, in 1931, the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum (henceforth, the museum) was established to hold documentation and relics from the disaster. An Earthquake Memorial Hall opened the year earlier to house the ashes of many of those who died in the quake and to serve as a shrine where the public can pray for the repose of the souls of the dead.

The museum later expanded its original remit of providing testament to the earthquake to also include records of the damage from bombings inflicted on Tokyo during World War Two and to document the city's rebuilding afterwards. In this respect, the museum functions on several levels simultaneously: the national, the specifically local and the metropolitan (today it is run under the auspices of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, although funded mainly by donations).

Picturing the Disaster

With communications in ruins, infrastructure in tatters and many roads impassable for emergency services after the earthquake, fires raged across Tokyo and Yokohama for up to three days. Food riots broke out, escaped prisoners and hitherto upright citizens robbed and killed and xenophobia joined with paranoia to make Korean citizens and political radicals scapegoats for the disaster. Martial law was imposed shortly after the quake and was kept in place until November. As tens of thousands of homeless evacuees—pitiful victims but also potential threats to law and order—gathered in several open spaces dotting the city, such as the parks of Ueno and Hibiya, troops were sent in to ensure proper behavior was maintained.

Authorities attempted to steer the visual narrative of the quake to reflect an image of the authorities as competent and in control, the Imperial institution as benevolent and the social community as cohesive and cooperative. The government officially requested the press to publish images that buttressed these positions⁴ and prohibitions were placed on “inflammatory” images of dead bodies.⁵ Ideally, images would objectively document the scale of the disaster, the situation of the survivors and the government's steadfast response to the situation. Photographers and publishers of newspapers and magazines were generally cooperative, but would also skirt around or openly flout the advisories, taking advantage of the loose state of monitoring. Many of the images on display at the museum are press photographs made under these conditions, abiding by these guidelines to varying degrees of faithfulness.

The press, however, was not the only site of representation: The nature of postcards, for example, as a one-off, fleeting phenomenon made them

much more difficult to regulate. While the postcard industry often reproduced press photographs, it also provided circulation routes for uncensored images of the quake, including illicit depictions of the dead. In addition, original photographic prints, which could be bought and sold individually, offered a similar range of imagery and seemingly also escaped the nervous eye of the authorities.

The social, economic and institutional conditions under which images of the disaster were produced for a variety of platforms and formats all played a role in their original reception, for photographic images are never neutral in intent and function. As John Tagg notes, photography's nature as a practice:

depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have.⁶

Yet with the photographs on display at the museum—which derive from across the range of sources outlined above—the “conditions of existence” that originally produced them have, in many cases, become obscured, as will be shown in the next section.

Displaying the Disaster

The selection of photographic images on display on entering the museum are presented as enlarged reproductions, [approx. 90cm (w) x 60cm (h), a few rather larger at approx. 100cm (w) x 120cm (h)]. While the size of the images gives them great impact and makes for ease of viewing in a museum situation, this strategy entails the dislocation of the images from the context in which they originally appeared and were initially viewed by the Japanese (and, in some cases, foreign) public. While some of this contextual background is restored to the images through the use of accompanying comment cards that state, as much as can be determined, where the images were originally published, in addition to where (and when) they were taken, the question remains unaddressed of how the responses of the original viewers of these images may have been informed by the tone of the news story they may have illustrated, their layout on a newspaper page or postcard, or any captions that accompanied them.⁷

The standardized sizes of these photographs also lends their display an air of uniformity and homogeneity. There is, however, one image on display that enjoys a significantly different treatment from this standardized presentation strategy. It is included at a much smaller size (approx. 20cm by 20cm) and, significantly perhaps, is the only photograph on the museum's walls that directly represents the dead.



Figure 2.2 Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, 2015. © J.M. Hammond.

A Photograph of the Dead

The single photograph on display at the museum that depicts the bodies of the dead shows the scene of the former Army Clothing Depot in the few days after the fires and the dragon twist hit the former depot on the afternoon of the quake. It is not captioned with any details of what purpose it was taken for or how it was circulated.⁸ It is included within a larger wall panel giving details of the incident at the former depot (Figure 2.3). This panel includes detailed texts and a diagram (twice the size of the photograph) outlining the trail of the flames as they consumed everything in their path. This layout diverts the viewer's attention away from the photo to the abstracted plotting of death provided by the schematic chart—or, at the very least, divides attention between the two radically different modes of conveying information about death.

Several people in the background of the photograph appear to be surveying the scene, some of them seemingly covering their faces from the stench of the dead piled up around them. Some of these bodies seem to be burned, indexing the fires that spread through the site. Clean-up work does not seem to be underway at this moment, although some of it has perhaps already



Figure 2.3 Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, Map Charting the Spread of Flames at the Former Army Clothing Depot, 2015. © J.M. Hammond.

been completed, for reports from the time told of bodies piled up several meters high, but here the mounds of overlapping corpses do not reach such a height.

The bodies do, however, extend far into the background and outward beyond the edges of the frame, suggesting they continue endlessly—uncountable and unimaginable in scale. This strategy of composition was later to become a familiar feature of images taken when the Allies entered Nazi concentration camps at the end of World War Two; stacks of bodies or piles of bones that seem to continue off-frame with no end in sight.⁹

This kind of picturing of the dead on a mass scale, undifferentiated and manhandled, could, for some, determine the image from the depot as belonging to the most graphic of representations of the dead. Yet this pictorial strategy also camouflages the most uncomfortable visual details. The dead lie on their backs, with none of their faces shown, leaving little indication of their age, gender or any other marks individuating one body from another or conveying the pain they went through when they died. The bodies captured by the camera's lens are rendered as innumerate and almost abstract elements in the composition, and the very anonymity of those depicted can also be seen as working to lessen the shock of their imaged deaths.

Similarly, the researcher Barbie Zelizer has viewed many Nazi concentration camp photographs in which it was almost impossible “to discern which appendage belonged to which body.”¹⁰ Zelizer also notes that such group shots lessen the impact of the depiction of the dead because “the rarely visible eyes and faces worked against the possibility of identifying the victims being depicted.”¹¹ Where it could be argued that it is exactly the dehumanization of the victims that deems images of death on a mass scale the most graphic of all, for Zelizer the absence of telling detail in such group shots prevents us from confronting death as it affects real individuals. Such ambiguities concerning depictions of the dead suggest any attempts to define levels of “graphicness” are unstable and perhaps highly subjective. In this way, the photograph (enlarged in Figure 2.4), with its depiction of a mass of indistinguishable bodies, manages to bring death into the museum and closer to the viewers’ consciousness, even as, at the same time, it keeps death at some distance, where it finds no real individual expression.

The museum’s choice of Figure 2.4 to represent the dead from the former depot needs to be seen in comparison to, and in dialogue with, other such images that are in the museum’s archive but are *not* on display. These include similar photographs to Figure 2.4, where the piles of the dead reach into the



Figure 2.4 Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, detail: Map Charting the Spread of Flames at the Former Army Clothing Depot, 2015. © J.M. Hammond.

distance, but in which the occasional figure stands out from the horizontal rows of bodies—a torso propped up, perhaps sitting in the exact position he was in when he died; in another, a scorched, disfigured head stands out from the frame (it is difficult to ascertain if it is that of a man or a woman). In another photograph, a woman's breasts are clearly visible at the bottom of the frame, suggesting, in Gennifer Weisenfeld's words, that "photographic images of the quasi-sacrosanct site were not impervious to objectification or the eroticized gaze."¹² Even as the authorities aimed to harness images of the quake to promote faith in law and order, and to bolster an official narrative of the fortitude and bravery of the Japanese people in the face of adversity, such photographs carried the potential to appeal to the darker desires and phantasies of the viewing public, and the desire to transgress social taboos regarding death and sexuality/sensuality.¹³

Photographs of the quake dead donated to the museum have sometimes been accompanied by letters expressing incredulity as to why such images were amongst the belongings of the senders' now deceased family members. These were often found in photo albums or placed on household Buddhist altars (*butsudan*), where people prayed for the souls of the dead. After the quake, as at other times of disaster, many people turned to the idea of divine retribution as a potential reason for the devastation, and the images of the dead used in the altars may have been used to pay penitence and to assuage a sense of guilt toward those who died for the sins of all of society. That these citizens did so by meditating on images of the dead that today would likely appear grotesque and inappropriate may strike many as highly perverse. Yet, such activities have an established precedent within the Buddhist tradition, albeit with a slightly different nuance, where for centuries painted images of rotting flesh and skeletons have also been used to come to an understanding of the suffering of existence and the inevitability, and indeed, desirability, of death as an escape from life. It is possible that these photographs served a similar aim—a private use of disaster imagery that cannot be easily reconciled with the public function of the museum and any ethical stance it may see itself as obliged to uphold.

The museum's main stated purpose, as mentioned earlier, is commemorative rather than educational as such.¹⁴ Yet, this aim nonetheless overlaps with a pedagogical aspect to its position as an institution that could, arguably, provide some justification for displaying images of the dead. Mary O'Neill notes that one criteria by which visitors to museums and exhibitions today often judge the appropriateness of displaying images or bodies of the dead is the motivation behind the decision—with an educational aim considered more favorably than exhibitions that appear as mere entertainment, or as profiting from death.¹⁵ This educational function of the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum was highlighted when, during a period in which the museum was not displaying any images of the dead at all, it received a letter from one visitor arguing for such images to be shown, lest the public forget the horror of the incident.

Yet O'Neill points out¹⁶ that such ideas of the educational value of such displays are not universal—and have been criticized by aboriginal groups for being culturally determined: more important than instructing the living (whether on disasters, history or biology) is respect for the dead.¹⁷ Moreover, while this sensitivity is important when dealing with such cultural differences, O'Neill argues that much of the time, “it is not images of the dead *per se* that are problematic but the far broader issues of the role of images and art in maintaining or undermining social order. . .” and that “the use of ethical concepts, such as informed consent and the dignity of the dead, is an avoidance of these issues rather than an engagement with them.”¹⁸ Paul Williams suggests it is our sense of discomfort rather than respect for the dead that turns our eyes away, and asks, “given that victims suffered the actuality of horrific acts, is it a cop-out to consider its mere emblems too uncomfortable to view?”¹⁹

All of these points certainly warrant serious consideration, yet it is difficult to imagine the conditions in which it would be considered appropriate for an institution such as the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum to display, for example, a photograph from its archives of a skull, jaws wide open as though he or she died screaming in agony and continues to scream even in death. Such an image could serve a pedagogical purpose, for, as much as one can imagine the scene, few people, without seeing such images, would perhaps realize that the sheer heat of the fires was so intense it stripped the flesh off some of those caught in the flames. Such images, while extremely uncomfortable, bring home the enormity of the horror, but they also raise the question of where the line is—or where it should be drawn, and by whom—between the educational or historical value of certain images of death and what could be seen as macabre voyeurism.

Metonymy

One way in which the museum attempts to convey something of the seriousness of the disaster is by relying on images that are essentially metonymic, and suggest death without actually portraying it. In this sense, the museum adopts a similar approach to that which David Campbell sees at work in the mass media (despite claims that the media is full of disturbing images). In *Horrific Blindness*, Campbell gives us an example of a metonymic image: a press photograph of a Palestinian man at the window of a police station, raising his bloodied hands in victory. What is not shown is the broken body of the Israeli reservist that he and the crowd had pummeled to death in vengeance for a 12-year-old boy killed in the crossfire between Israeli troops and Palestinian fighters.²⁰ Campbell argues that the violence of the event the image illustrates is blunted by such a pictorial strategy, characterizing this tendency to infer death rather than depict it as operating within an “economy of taste” through which the media responds to the sensibilities of the living toward images of the dead.²¹

He argues that the limits to which the public can stomach images of other people's misfortunes when reading their morning paper can govern the choices and presentation strategies of the media, and this has a great impact on whether the harsh reality of death can be adequately conveyed.

That is, by bowing to the public pressure to be shielded from the pictorial representation of death, the media relies upon metaphoric and metonymic images which obscure the full nature and extent of horror, so that—especially in the social context of these horrors being distant and foreign—the photograph cannot easily provide the full accounting of horror that might provoke a strong reaction. Reading the resultant quiescence on the part of readers and viewers as a product of the picture itself, rather than an outcome of this regulated economy of taste, is to miss the network of practices through which the image's relative power is restricted.²²

Paul Williams shares with Campbell a view that, like much of the media, museums (and disaster museums, in particular) also largely refrain from showing explicit images of death, for fear of offending the sensibilities of the public. Many of the photographs on display at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, as mentioned earlier, were taken while Japan was under martial law soon after the quake, and attempts were made to restrict the kinds of images in circulation. The museum itself cannot be seen to be under the same kind of external pressure as was the media of the day, but the fact that many of the images in its archives are of a more graphic nature than any of those on display suggests a form of restraint, or “economy of taste” in the way it refrains from depicting explicit images of the dead.

This metonymical visual language informs much of the display strategies of the museum, including not only its photographic materials, but also its physical artifacts. Here, the tortured shape of a bicycle evokes similar contortions inflicted upon the body of its owner when the earth caved in; there, the scorched limb of a tree suggests other burned limbs found that day. Death is registered in the seismometer reading that leaps off the chart, and is implicated in every broken wristwatch and every cracked pocket mirror.

Similarly, in the majority of the museum's photographic images on display, the violence inflicted on the human body is not visualized but is transferred onto the body of the city. In one image (Figure 2.5), a ferocious sky is captured in a photograph depicting flames laying waste to a wood-framed structure perched atop a slope—the headquarters of the Tokyo Electric Company in Yurakucho, Tokyo. The concrete buildings nearby remain intact, but severe damage can be seen lower down where a landslide seems to have occurred. Unlike the previous image, the camera adopts a stance further back, taking in a panorama of destruction.

Emphasizing the black plumes that gorge from the headquarters, the composition dedicates more than half of the frame to the smoke-choked sky. In contrast, the few people surveying the scene are reduced to mere dots on the compromised landscape below. Beneath the rubble and the mounds



Figure 2.5 Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, Tokyo Electric Light Company Building on Fire, 2015. © J.M. Hammond.

of collapsed soil there may even be some dead bodies, but the scale of the picture and the distance from which it has been taken do not allow for any clear indication of their presence. Instead, a strategy of metonymy suggests that as much damage has been inflicted on the invisible victims of the accident as it has on the landscape, a strategy echoed in many of the images on display at the museum.

Projecting Death

We began this chapter with a photograph of the dead at the depot, after the raging fires. We end with another photograph on the museum's walls that long circulated, particularly on postcards, often labeled as depicting the crowds of people in the depot before the conflagration (Figure 2.6). It is possible that press or other photographers entered the site early that day and then left for other destinations. It is also believed that some photographs were taken that afternoon by amateurs taking refuge inside the depot, but given the unimaginable heat of the conflagration, no traces of such photographic records were found at the site.



Figure 2.6 Exhibition view at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum, Earthquake Refugees, 2015. © J.M. Hammond.

However, this image surfaced in the wake of the disaster and has been reproduced up until even fairly recently. In the book *Yokohama Burning* by Joshua Hammer, the photograph itself is not included, but the author describes it:

The grounds are packed, but here and there one can spot individuals: a pretty young girl clad in a polka-dotted kimono, an elderly woman with a white scarf wrapped around her head. Another woman climbs on top of the large wooden wheel of a cart piled high with roped-together boxes and strains to grab something with her left-hand. A young boy draped in a white kimono at the bottom of the image seems to have his hands clasped in prayer. People hold black and white umbrellas against the sun, chat with neighbors, confidently waiting out the storm.²³

Just as Hammer writes, the scene is one of a mass concentration of bodies, as people, carts and piles of furniture and futons, are all crammed together without an inch of breathing space. The photograph corresponds closely to

the kind of mental image that could be formed of the situation inside the depot, based on reports handed down from the very few who survived.

The image boasts no neat composition but is simply cut off at both edges, suggesting that the piles of people continue on out of the frame on both sides, a pre-echo perhaps of the photograph, discussed earlier, of the mounds of dead bodies that was to be taken in the depot a few days later. Along the other axis, this mountain of people and humble belongings takes up two thirds of the composition, from the immediate foreground to the far horizon, the remaining top third depicting the kind of sky, dense with dark, swirling smoke that has become all too familiar from various quake images.

Titled and presented as a record of desperate citizens attempting to escape what the viewer, in hindsight, knows to be certain and inescapable death, the image takes on a sense of poignancy as a record of a doomed section of humanity.

The image was widely circulated and for a long time was believed to be the only depiction in existence of the depot early that afternoon. Yet the photograph also surfaced as a representation of other sites. Gennifer Weisenfeld compares two postcards using the same image, one in black and white and captioned, as with the museum image, as being from the former Depot; and another with color tinting, labeled as a scene from the Marunouchi district of the capital, a shift in locale that gives “a disturbing sense of the interchangeability of death scenes.”²⁴ However, the ease and lack of qualms with which the latter postcard freely repackages the historicity of the image is, in fact, matched by the postcard considered to be the “authentic” image of the former Depot.

Only in recent years has it been discovered that the photograph was not, in fact, taken in the former depot at all, nor in Marunouchi, but at a different location in Tokyo altogether. The image is in fact just one part of a much wider panoramic shot, comprised of three separately photographed images seamlessly joined together, that was not published in its entirety in the aftermath of the quake, or indeed in the various collections of quake images that came out in the decades since (Figure 2.7). The museum has enlarged the panorama photograph so it takes up the length of almost an entire wall.

The panorama was taken from Babasaki-mon in the outer grounds of the Imperial Palace in Hibiya Park, Tokyo, its right hand panel providing the image of the alleged scene of the depot on the postcards discussed above. The middle section of the panorama appeared in the *Hochi Shinbun* on the 7th of September 1924, and a double-page magazine spread on the 15th of that month managed to carry roughly 70% of the total panorama. The magazine was a special edition on the earthquake and disaster published by the same firm. That both of these publications came out within weeks of the quake attest to the urgency of efforts to visualize the disaster.

This confirmation of the correct geographical location of the photograph dates it to sometime in the immediate few days after the quake. By this time, the rampaging fires had largely calmed, and the newly homeless and

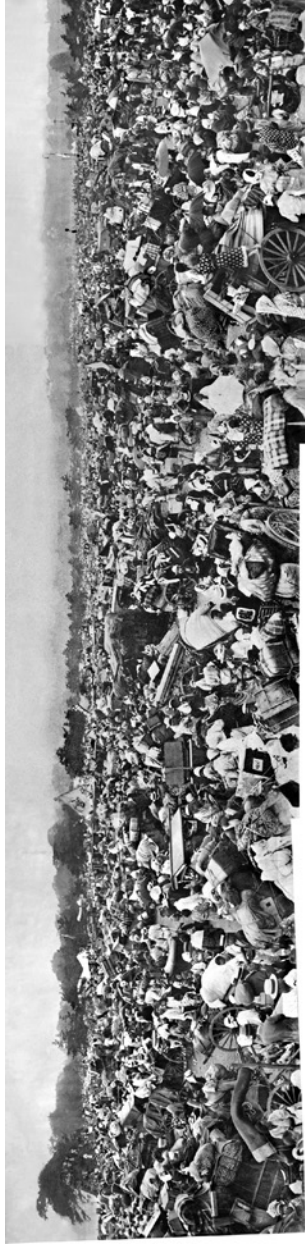


Figure 2.7 The Imperial Palace Plaza packed with refugees, photograph, 1923. © Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Hall Archive.

displaced had gathered on the grounds, as they did in other open spots of the capital, such as Ueno Park. The false information concerning locational and temporal specificity that caption the image in its postcard incarnations is accompanied by alterations to the visual image itself. These changes initiate a chain of further revisions, as the connotations the image evokes undergo transformation.

Unpacking the effect of these modifications requires starting with the panoramic shot itself. About 300,000 Tokyo citizens camped out in the outer grounds of the Imperial Palace in the few days after the quake, posing problems of, at the very least, sanitation and health, food and shelter and law and order. Including the totality of this number of people within the limits of the frame poses an insurmountable challenge, yet the image attempts to convey the enormity of the crisis—a task that seemingly stretched the abilities of the photographic reproduction technology of the time. The limits of the available apparatus are also made apparent by the seeming difficulty in adequately printing and publishing the complete image, perhaps as its width would necessitate shrinking the image in order to fit into the available space, resulting in a loss of clarity in the details.

Even with its wide panoramic scope, the image as originally planned indicates its own inability to convey the totality of the scene, its composition and truncated edges pointing to a further extended mass of people out of frame. This is also true for the section of the panoramic shot selected for the postcard image, but, by contrast, this also invests the scene with a heightened sense of the claustrophobic atmosphere of the former depot. One clear feature of the panoramic image is the rows of trees that suggest some kind of open space, a detail that required blocking out in the postcard image to support the fiction of the location as the treeless, airless space of the former depot. In such ways the image has been manipulated to conform to the expectations of viewers as to what the scene of the former depot should look like.

The correct location of the full panoramic image can be confirmed, in particular, by the barely visible main gate of the Imperial Palace and the Fushimi Yagura, one of the structure's many turrets. The inclusion of these markers unambiguously locates the mass of people as seeking, and receiving, the protection of the Imperial institution, and by extension, the state itself, of which the institution is representative. As such, the image is highly symbolic and takes its place alongside the subset of quake images, from various sources, emphasizing state assistance, control and benevolence.

The section of the image reproduced on the black and white postcard, however, erases these visual markers of Imperial authority and state control, obscuring them beneath the billowing clouds of smoke that have been superimposed over the skies. This situates the image as closer to a different subset of photographs, some of which were discussed earlier—those in which billowing clouds of smoke (often purposefully superimposed over the image) emphasize the encroaching threat of the raging fires. Like the alleged

photograph of the former depot, many of these images accentuate the terrifying threat of the disaster over the state's ability to assert its control over the impending chaos. While these images use trickery to augment the depicted scenes for dramatic effect, enhancing the threat of danger from the increased proximity of the fires, death is insinuated predominantly as a possibility, and enhanced visually as a contingency within the post-quake situation.

The postcard image allegedly of the former depot goes further, presenting death not simply as a potentiality but as a predetermined outcome. The citizens of Tokyo in the panoramic image had already been displaced once from their homes and families, and the repurposed image displaces them yet again, both geographically and temporally. The visual and textual modifications to the image remove the mass of people it depicts from under the benevolent gaze of the Imperial institution and the protective arm of the state and places them instead in the path of the firestorm.

In this way, the postcard's staging of the scene reframes the relationship of those in the image to death itself. The alterations to the image shift the presentation of the depicted figures from lucky survivors to ill-fated victims; from those who escaped death to the dead-to-be, with all the poignancy and, perhaps grotesque scopophilic fascination this can be seen to entail. Enacting a fantasy of calamity upon the depicted bodies, it is, ultimately, as though death has been wished upon them.

By visually denying the possibility of Imperial and state authority to offer protection to its citizens, the altered photograph is transformed into an apocalyptic image, responding to and perhaps even fomenting the fears and morbid curiosity of its viewers. In this way the re-imagined image works against the function of the original panoramic shot, and, by extension, undermines official attempts to control the collective imagination and its visualization of the quake.

Conclusion

The various photographic records on display at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum do more than simply reveal different views of the physical event of the earthquake: They attest to how, for many people in Japan (and beyond), the earthquake was largely, if not primarily, experienced as a visual sensation. As the history of the quake has become in many ways indistinguishable from the history of its photographic portrayal, the museum's professed objective of documenting the earthquake has become virtually synonymous with the task of chronicling the struggle for its visual representation.

At the same time, the sensitivity and taste the museum demonstrates in refraining from putting on display the more disturbing depictions of death it has in its archives, this does not impede death from making its presence felt in the most unlikely of places and in the most indirect of ways—for its fascination is too intractable and its pull too strong.

Notes

- 1 John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 65.
- 2 Joshua Hammer, *Yokohama Burning, the Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 130.
- 3 A similar museum once existed in Yokohama but was closed down, apparently due to insufficient visitor numbers.
- 4 The government-issued Notification of Request for Cooperation of September 1st.
- 5 See: Gennifer Weisenfeld, *Imaging Disaster, Tokyo and the Visual Culture of Japan's Great Earthquake of 1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 54–55.
- 6 Tagg, *Burden*, 63.
- 7 It should be noted, however, that some artifacts elsewhere in the museum, such as newspapers covering the quake, do provide some of the wider context of the visual representation of the event.
- 8 It was perhaps published on a postcard or as individual photograph (or both), as this, as discussed earlier, is how many similar images were disseminated, but it is difficult to say with any certainty, as such images also appeared in the media.
- 9 Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 90, 96.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 110.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 111–112.
- 12 Weisenfeld, *Disaster*, 63.
- 13 This transgression has been explored in depth, for example, by the writer Georges Bataille in his *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*. See also J.G. Ballard's novel *Crash*, in which a man finds sexual satisfaction in looking at images of horrific car crashes.
- 14 For a discussion of how commemoration and education overlap but can also come into conflict, see Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2014), particularly page 78.
- 15 Mary O'Neill, "Images of the Dead: Ethics and Contemporary Art Practice," in *Cultural and Ethical Turns*, edited by Ben Garner, Sonia Pavlenko, Salma Shaheen and Alison Wolanski (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary, 2011), 129. (O'Neill is writing in particular concerning four exhibitions held in the UK over the 1990s and 2000s that featured dead bodies or images of the dead.)
- 16 *Ibid.*, 133.
- 17 This sensitivity to the feelings and beliefs of hitherto under-represented groups is reflected, for example, in the code of ethics offered by the International Council of Museums to its member organizations. The code's clauses on the display of human remains and materials of sacred significance are perhaps the most relevant guidelines for tackling photographic images of death, and these point to the need to take into account the beliefs (including requests for removal) of the groups (community, ethnic or religious) from where these objects originate.
See: International Council of Museums, *Code of Ethics for Museums* (2013), 8, (clauses 4.3, 4.4).
- 18 O'Neill, "Images of the Dead," 130.
- 19 Paul Williams, "Memorial Museums and the Objectification of Suffering," in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century Museum*, edited by Janet Marstine (London: Routledge, 2011), 220–235.
- 20 David Campbell, "Horrorific Blindness: Images of Death in Contemporary Media," *Journal for Cultural Research* 8, no. 1. (2004): 65.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 63.

- 22 Ibid., 64.
 23 Hammer, *Yokohama*, 129.
 24 Weisenfeld, *Disaster*, 63–65.

Bibliography

- Campbell, David. “Horrrific Blindness: Images of Death in Contemporary Media.” *Journal for Cultural Research* 8, no. 1 (2004): 55–74.
- Hammer, Joshua. *Yokohama Burning, the Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire that Helped Forge the Path to World War II*. New York: Free Press, 2006.
- International Council of Museums. *Code of Ethics for Museums*, 2013. Accessed May 7, 2016. http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf.
- O’Neill, Mary. “Images of the Dead: Ethics and Contemporary Art Practice.” In *Cultural and Ethical Turns*, edited by Ben Garner, Sonia Pavlenko, Salma Shaheen and Alison Wolanski, 129–136. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary, 2011.
- Pearce, Andy. *Holocaust Consciousness in Britain*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *Imaging Disaster, Tokyo and the Visual Culture of Japan’s Great Earthquake of 1923*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
- Williams, Paul. “Memorial Museums and the Objectification of Suffering.” In *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century Museum*, edited by Janet Marstine, 220–235. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Zelizer, Barbie. *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera’s Eye*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

3 Honoring the Dead

Photography and the Display of the Jewish Necropolis at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki

Iro Katsaridou

Introduction

Honored with the title “La Madre de Israel” (“Mother of Israel”), Thessaloniki, or Salonica historically, had for centuries been the most populous city of Sephardic Jewry in the world. The city’s centuries-long Jewish character was fractured in 1943, when the Nazis began deporting Jews to concentration camps. Given the city’s intense “Jewishness,” the establishment of a Jewish Museum in Thessaloniki was highly anticipated.

Initially named the Museum of the Jewish Presence in Thessaloniki, the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki was founded by the city’s Jewish Community, exhibiting artifacts and photographic displays that present the centuries-long history of the Jews in Thessaloniki. This chapter focuses on the introductory display of the Museum, which is dedicated to the old Jewish Necropolis of Thessaloniki that was destroyed by the Nazis in 1942. Monumental stones and inscriptions from the cemetery are exhibited, accompanied by photographs taken in the period between 1915–1917 by a British medical officer, Hugh Fawcett. Reproduced on large canvases, these photographs portray the *ziyara*, the tradition of pilgrimage to the graves of holy figures. Focusing on the photographs displayed, it discusses how they affect the way the overall permanent exhibition of the Museum, and especially the Holocaust gallery, is interpreted. For the conclusion, the implied narrative is examined in relation to the discourse on Salonican Jewry and the Holocaust and how this has developed during the last few decades.

A Museum for the “Mother of Israel”

Salonica’s Jewish heritage can be traced back to the 2nd c. BC, when Jews from Alexandria settled in Thessaloniki, forming the first nucleus of the ancient Romaniote (Greek-speaking) community. However, Salonica’s singular place in Jewish history as the “most long-lived and most Jewish city within the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean world”¹ begins with Ferdinand and Isabella’s Edict of Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Iberian Sephardim migrated eastward to the Ottoman Empire, finding in

Salonica a new homeland, a place that, by providing a climate of tolerance and economic stability, allowed their transplanted civilization to flourish both commercially and intellectually until the 20th century. Hence, before the outbreak of World War I, Salonica's Judeo-Spanish-speaking Jews formed the largest community in the city, outnumbering the Greek Christians and the Turkish Muslims.² The centuries-long Jewish character of the city was fractured when, in 1943, the Germans began deporting Jews to concentration camps. Within a few months, there were fewer than one hundred Jews left in Salonica, and of those deported more than 90% perished in the Holocaust.³

The story of the Museum's foundation begins many years before its official opening. As Nicholas Stavroulakis, honorary director of the Jewish Museum of Greece, recalls, already by 1973 members of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki had started to investigate the possibility of establishing a museum that would record the Jewish presence in the city. Although that project was not realized, several attempts to commemorate the Salonican Jews were to be made in the years that followed.⁴ Consequently, in the 1990s the first "nucleus" of Thessaloniki's Jewish Museum was established, housed in a building on Vasileos Herakleiou Street, one of the main commercial streets before World War II and an area that had long been associated with the Jewish presence in the city.⁵ The current Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki was founded in 1997, arising from the efforts of the Jewish Community of the city. Renovated by the Thessaloniki Organization of the Cultural Capital of Europe – 1997, the listed building of the Museum had been constructed in 1904 and is itself a monument to the Jewish presence in Thessaloniki.⁶ A new permanent exhibition was planned based on the existing displays; the project was assigned to Nicholas Hannan Stavroulakis. Born in England to Jewish parents, and with studies in Islamic art, Stavroulakis had the experience of organizing the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens, being its first director; he was thus acknowledged as the perfect candidate for such an endeavor.

According to the museum brochure written by Nicholas Stavroulakis, the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki was founded to honor the rich and creative Sephardic heritage as it is evolved in the city after the 15th century.⁷ The permanent exhibition consists of different displays, which form four distinct sections. The introductory gallery on the ground level is dedicated to the ancient Jewish Necropolis that previously laid to the east of the city walls and was destroyed by the Nazis in 1942. On the first floor, the *Thessaloniki: The Metropolis of Sephardism* photographic exhibition, originally created by the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in Israel and reproduced by a Simon Marks Foundation fund, narrates the history of the Jewish presence in Thessaloniki from the 3rd c. BC until World War II. The third part evolved out of an exhibition organized at the Bar-Ilan University, with objects that were brought to Israel around 1935 by Salonican Jews, who emigrated to Israel following the anti-Semitic attacks in the Campbell quarter in 1931.⁸ Religious and ceremonial artifacts, ethnographic material such as costumes and everyday

objects, and historical documents—like newspapers and photographs—seek to provide the visitor with an image of the pre-war life of the Salonican Jewry. The Museum’s permanent exhibition ends with a separate display on the Holocaust experience of the Salonican Jews, the majority of which, some 46,000 persons, were systematically deported to Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen to find death.⁹

As this short chronicle reveals, there was not an initial overall exhibit plan for the Museum. Instead, the current permanent exhibition was designed partially, mainly being based on modified pre-existing displays. What is clear though is that the Museum’s narrative sought to represent the centuries-long presence of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki, the Sephardic Metropolis. This historical approach is also reflected in the initial name of the institution, the “Museum of the Jewish Presence in Thessaloniki,” abbreviated later into the simpler and more neutral “Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki.” The Necropolis exhibit was Stavroulakis’s main intervention to the original plan. As he recalls, he had to reject previous proposals so as to create a central piece around which the entire museum narrative was to be developed.¹⁰ Introducing the visitor to the permanent exhibition, the Necropolis exhibit was the key display that sought to add cohesion and tie together this narrative.



Figure 3.1 Exhibition view of the Jewish Necropolis exhibit at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, 2016. © Iro Katsaridou.

Displaying the Jewish Necropolis of Thessaloniki

With its nearly 500,000 graves, the old Jewish Cemetery of Thessaloniki had developed for more than four centuries to become the largest Sephardi necropolis in the Near East. Although initially unobtrusive, located in an area outside of the city's eastern walls, as the population grew and the city expanded eastwards, the cemetery came to occupy a more central position within the city's urban plan. From 1925, several voices had expressed the desire to relocate the cemetery, to turn it into a park, or later on to host the campus of the newly established Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Undoubtedly, the cemetery issue caused tensions between the Greek authorities and the Jewish community. Although a 1937 law issued by the Greek government provided that the area would be transformed into a park, leaving the old tombs intact and prohibiting further burials, these plans were never realized. The old Jewish Cemetery was to be entirely demolished by the Nazi occupation government in December 1942. Nevertheless, as Leon Saltiel argues, several historians, Mark Mazower among them, based on sources of the era, attribute the responsibility for the destruction of the Necropolis to an initiative of the local Greek authorities.¹¹

Despite the negotiations between the German officials, the Greek authorities and the representatives of the Jewish Community,¹² the old Jewish Cemetery of Thessaloniki was to be razed in the space of only a few weeks, with no regard given to either the age or any possible historic interest to be found in the tombstones and their inscriptions.¹³ Soon, the plundering of its materials started; tombstones and bricks were used in the construction of public and private buildings, as well as in churches. Remnants of the old Jewish Cemetery can even today be found in parks and churchyards.¹⁴ Some of the tombstones that survived the destruction were transferred after the War to the new Jewish Cemetery that was established in Stavroupolis, a district in the western part of the city.¹⁵

As an introductory exhibit to the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, a gallery on the Jewish Necropolis is housed on the Museum's ground floor. Its exhibits include remnants of Jewish graves, enlarged photographs and explanatory texts, many of which are placed on the closed roller shutters of the gallery's old shops, so as to revive the original commercial function of the arcade.¹⁶ More specifically, debris of Hebrew-inscribed tombstones are displayed, which date from different periods, from Late Roman steles reused as Jewish tombstones to early 20th century pieces that bear carved insignia alluding to the deceased's profession, such as a vehicle for a driver or a pair of scissors for a tailor. The largest part of the photographic material on display consists of enlarged photographs reproduced on canvas, predominantly representing women who are performing *ziyaras*, namely periodic visitations to the cemetery. Of Arabic provenance, the word means pilgrimage to the sacred graves of holy figures, which is often associated with specific mourning rituals. In Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish language spoken by the Sephardic Jews, "ziyara" were the regular visits to a cemetery, often accompanied

with weeping and lamentation mainly performed by women.¹⁷ The wall text attributes the series to a personal album that belonged to a British medical officer, Hugh Fawcett, in 1916. Moreover, it informs the visitor on the content of these pilgrimages.¹⁸

First published in Nicholas Stavroulakis' *Salonika: Jews and Dervishes* in 1993, the nine photographs on display form part of a photographic album of 22 photographs now in the collection of the Jewish Museum of Athens. The album was bought at an auction of Jewish artifacts by Dr Alfred Moldovan, a collector of Judaica of international repute, who recognized its significance and donated it to the Athenian museum in 1985. Originally 24, the 22 photographs that are still preserved today picture scenes of the Jewish Cemetery and the Mevlevihane, namely the religious lodge of the Whirling Dervishes. Not too long after being taken, the photographs were assembled into an album that eventually found its way to New York.¹⁹

According to Stavroulakis, their unknown photographer could have been Hugh Fawcett, a medical officer serving in the British Medical Research Council, who was active in the mission that was sent to Macedonia during the period of World War I.²⁰ The result of the disagreement between pro-German King Constantine I and liberal Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos regarding Greece's joining of the war, was the National Schism (*Ethnikos Dichasmos*) which divided the country into two entities: the royalist Athens government that favored a course of neutrality, and Venizelos's provisional



Figure 3.2 Jewesses at the cemetery, photograph by Hugh Fawcett, ca 1916.
© Jewish Museum of Greece (Athens).



Figure 3.3 Arriving at the cemetery. Photograph by Hugh Fawcett, ca 1916. © Jewish Museum of Greece (Athens).

state in Northern Greece that had the support of the Entente powers (Great Britain and France).²¹ Hence, from late 1915 and until the end of the war (1918), Salonica became a place where important military events occurred, with a multinational army settling on the city's outskirts.²² In 1921 Hugh



Figure 3.4 Rabbi reading prayers. Photograph by Hugh Fawcett, ca 1916. © Jewish Museum of Greece (Athens).

Fawcett co-authored, with A. Goff, the book *Macedonia: a Plea for the Primitive*.²³ As members of a colonial culture devoted to making the unfamiliar or strange seem less uneasy and awkward, Fawcett and Goff included captivating descriptions of Macedonia in their book that exoticized any non-Western element as “primitive” and a picturesque curiosity.²⁴ Several chapters of it were dedicated to Salonica and its population.

Apart from the Moldovan photographs, in the central part of the room a marble fountain is exhibited, a piece that once stood in the center of the courtyard of Ohel Joseph, also known as the Sarfati Synagogue,²⁵ and was later moved to the new Jewish Cemetery in Stavroupolis. According to the accompanying brochure, the fountain constitutes “a symbol of renewed life,”²⁶ while for Stavroulakis it creates “a quite sharp transition from death to life,” having also a functional role to play, being employed “to acoustically mask out the noisy street.”²⁷ Enlarged photographs of synagogues flank the fountain exhibit. Moreover, an enlarged reproduction of an autochrome is also presented. This early type of color photograph forms part of the “Archives of the Planet,” a monumental photographic project recording places, people, and events around the world, initiated by the French banker and philanthropist Albert Kahn.²⁸ The autochrome by Léon Busy that is reproduced for Thessaloniki’s Jewish Museum portrays a view of the Jewish Cemetery in 1918 with Jewish *pleniadores*, or professional mourners.²⁹ The Necropolis exhibit is completed with an enlarged photograph of the destroyed cemetery, displayed next to the staircase that leads to the first floor. The short label that accompanies the photograph reads “1942 Destruction of the Old Jewish Cemetery of Thessaloniki.”

Introducing a Narrative of Life

In Greece, where archaeological museums form the largest group of museums in the country,³⁰ and the “object-centered” approach almost constitutes the entire canon,³¹ one might have expected that the Necropolis gallery would have highlighted the tombstones and other remnants of the cemetery. Contrary to these expectations, however, instead of accentuating the displayed artifacts or outlining the historical framework of the cemetery’s development and eventual destruction, the central wall text identifies the photographer and elaborates on the photographs’ context. The enlarged photographs are thus signified as the main display; placed all along the introductory gallery’s walls, they form the core of the exhibit, while the authentic remnants of the Jewish Cemetery acquire a subsidiary role in it. In this same spirit, the shorter captions that accompany the photographs mostly describe the stages of the *ziyara* ritual and the garments of the persons pictured. With regards to the wall text and the captions, one should add the detailed four-page leaflet providing information on every single artifact on display. Despite the information given, the lengthy text discourages the visitor’s attention; therefore, the visitor is left to approach the exhibit aesthetically, to be immersed in the enlarged photographs that occupy the majority of the wall surface and to experience an atmosphere of a lost culture.

Created by the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki with the aim of telling their story to themselves and to outsiders, the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki constitutes what Elaine Heumann Gurian calls a typical “narrative museum.” Like other museums of its kind, the Thessaloniki museum “bases

its primary focus on the explication of a story, recognizing that objects have important but limited use”; at the same time, if the story allows, it is comfortable with including emotions, such as pathos and dramatic tension.³² Interpreted in this framework, the photographs on display, although being reproductions, are used to move the narrative along. Hence, it would be of great interest to examine the way the Museum’s master narrative was formed, clearly related to its mission statement, and always in relation to what seems to be canon of Jewish museums around the world.

With different starting points and goals, Jewish museums around the world vary widely in the size and nature of their collections. They also differ on where they place their emphases, some being “general,” as they feature art, history, and culture, while others are more specialized, such as Jewish historical-society museums and Holocaust museums. Combining elements of historical, art, and ethnographic museums, Jewish museums in the past were regarded primarily as repositories for ritual objects and antiquities, with a sprinkling of art addressing biblical and other explicit Jewish themes.³³ With the exception of Yad Vashem, Israel’s national Holocaust institution founded in 1953,³⁴ in the first decades following World War II, Holocaust presentation in museums was hindered by the ethical problematization regarding the representability of the Holocaust. Starting out from Theodor Adorno’s famous and frequently cited dictum that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,”³⁵ several thinkers articulated a moral prohibition, an acknowledgement that any representation of the Holocaust can never adequately convey the reality of a lived experience.³⁶ However, since the late 1970s, several Holocaust museums have emerged all around the world, while several other Jewish museums began to shift the focus of their displays, with the Holocaust acquiring a centrality in their presentations. Most of them seek to provide a multidimensional visit that combines didactic with narrative elements. Placing emphasis on the “individual voices,” these museum narratives often diminish the historical perspective in favor of an ethical imperative to experience Holocaust memory by identification and empathy with the (Jewish) victim.³⁷ Exhibiting “authentic” together with reconstructed artifacts, and also photographic and film material, documents, and artworks, brings several thinkers to locate these kind of museums in the buffer zone between academia and popular media.³⁸

Given the significance the Holocaust has had for Thessaloniki’s Jewry, a population that perished to an extent of more than 90%, an exhibit dedicated to it in the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki was very much anticipated. However, the relevant gallery is quite limited. Concentration camp uniforms, the “Star of David” insignia accompanied by the printing press that produced them, authentic deportation documents and photographs are displayed along with wall texts that chronicle the story of the Shoah in Thessaloniki. Despite a general tendency that highlights the Holocaust’s pivotal role in the Jewish past, Thessaloniki’s museum narrative seems to emphasize the Necropolis gallery over the rest of the exhibits.

Clearly, there is an exceptional story behind the destruction of the Jewish Cemetery of Thessaloniki that the master plan of the museum's permanent exhibit has sought to highlight. Carla Hesse and Thomas Laqueur point out that although the Nazis, in their extermination project, had no moral inhibitions concerning the desecration of Jewish graves, in their daily routine they were relatively indifferent to the ancestors and the burial sites of the people they murdered. Hence, the incidents of destruction or desecration of graves by the Nazis are quite rare.³⁹ In this light, the destruction of the Jewish Cemetery in Thessaloniki appears to be an exception to the rule. The Necropolis gallery sought to illustrate and justify this exceptionality. The central wall text clearly relates the cemetery's demolition with the community's devastation:

It was not by chance that the Nazis chose to single out the cemetery for destruction in 1942, even prior to the deportation of some 49,000 Jews from the city to the death camps. Its piles of rubble and bones were the signs of what was to come within a year.⁴⁰

The cemetery's destruction encapsulates the ultimate death, that of the ancestors, becoming a pure and legible symbol of the extermination of Greece's largest Jewish community. The significance of the event is reflected in the comment by Yomtov Yacoel, legal counsel of the Jewish community at the time, who identified the destruction as "the harbinger of the general destruction of the community."⁴¹ In the same spirit, Stavroulakis argues that the demolition of the cemetery broke an important link between the city and the community, being the incident that anticipated the near extermination of the entire community of the Salonican Jews. Hence, he acknowledges that the Necropolis gallery alludes to the Holocaust gallery and constitutes the key to reading the overall permanent exhibition. The narrative that is implied, though, is not one of death. He dissociates his plan for Thessaloniki's museum from discourses that are concerned with drama, a common choice, in his view, for Jewish and Holocaust museums around the world.⁴²

Critique on the use of discourses of death in Jewish museums is not a new thing. Since the very beginning of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. the commission that initiated its foundation, headed by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, had insisted that the new institution should be a "living memorial," of a kind "that will speak not only of the victims' deaths, but of their lives."⁴³ In this same context, Jerzy Halberstadt and Grazyna Pawlak, initiators of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, were inspired by the success of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to envision a similarly impressive museum in Warsaw, but one that would exhibit Jewish life, rather than death.⁴⁴

The criticism against the use of discourses of death in Jewish museums should be contextualized within the broader framework of the ambivalent

and even antithetical reactions that representations of the Holocaust have evoked. A significant debate has arisen regarding the centrality that the Holocaust has come to acquire in contemporary Jewish culture and general public awareness. Having different starting points, the critiques that have been articulated express a wide range of stances. Thus, for several thinkers, this “fixation” with the Holocaust that places death at the center of any event not only distorts Jewish identity and deforms Jewish life, but also marginalizes histories of the persecution and suffering of other peoples.⁴⁵ For others, the tragic memories of the Holocaust have been utilized to legitimize aggressive Israeli government policies,⁴⁶ while others criticize the commercialization of the Holocaust, arguing that the Holocaust has become a devised ideological representation of history that “sells” death to the public.⁴⁷

Trivializing Holocaust memorialization has been one of the major concerns expressed by several other thinkers about Holocaust representation. Hence, in opposition to any “aestheticization of the Holocaust,” through elegiac and often sentimental representations of it, historian James E. Young argues that the memorial act has to be of an “anti-redemptive” and provocative nature.⁴⁸ Asserting Western culture’s contemporary saturation with the Holocaust, Tim Cole remarks that visiting Holocaust memorials falls into a new kind of tourism: Holocaust tourism.⁴⁹ Continuing the thoughts of Tim Cole, Griselda Pollock expresses her skepticism regarding the miscellaneous nature of the displays dedicated to the Holocaust. What she argues is that these displays develop a certain Holocaust iconography, a *musée imaginaire* in itself. Pollock draws the term from André Malraux’s well-known photographic essay to describe the eclectic tendency this visual imagery presents, an imagery fixated on death and its symbols that is composed of authentic and reconstructed artifacts, documentary photographs, and film excerpts picturing atrocities and the liberation of the camps by the Allies and the Russians. For Pollock, this is knife-edge iconography, as there is also another strand to it, which consists of the kitsch clichés of Nazi insignia, SS uniforms, all present in both popular culture and neo-nationalist self-fashioning.⁵⁰

Contextualized within the death paradigm of Holocaust memorialization, the narrative that is revealed in the introductory display of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki is largely differentiated. Apart from the final and rather “hidden” photograph of the exhibit, indicating the destruction of the old Jewish Cemetery, all the other photographs steer clear of typical photographic representations of the Necropolis that record its history and development, or even chronicle its demolition.⁵¹ The wall text explains that there is no photographic documentation of the process of the cemetery’s destruction. Instead, the photographs of the Moldovan album are reproduced in large scale, whose foremost message, according to Stavroulakis, is “that life was lived in the cemetery.”⁵² Using colorful and engaging language

the curator describes the cemetery as a place where the living and the dead still maintained real and almost tangible contact.⁵³ What he sees in these contacts between the living and the dead is the mainstay of traditions and memories that supported the very identity of Salonica's Jews both as individuals and as a community.⁵⁴

With a central role in the exhibit, the Moldovan album photographs sway between the categories Barthes labels as *studium* and *punctum*. As *studium* their culturally determined context incites the visitor's interest in discovering what the area of the cemetery looked like, what the clothes of the Jewish women were, or what kind of rituals they followed to honor their dead. On a more intimate level, as *punctum*, the photographs provoke more intense and personal reactions in the viewer. Showing people being so irrefutably there, in a place that summarizes the devastated Salonican Jewish community, a place whose lachrymose destruction haunts the city's history, the Moldovan photographs evoke a collective trauma that is poignant to the visitor. Confronted with the cemetery's, and subsequently the Jewish community's *that-has-been* (*ça a été*), which for Barthes is the essence or *noème* of photography,⁵⁵ the visitor is tremendously affected by the knowledge of the fact that this Jewish landmark was eventually to vanish.⁵⁶ Indeed, the cemetery's stupefying absence signifies an encounter with death, a symbolic death that the public is mobilized to perceive as a metaphor for the community's devastation and the erasure of its collective memory. It is in the visitor's experience of symbolic death that Salonica's singularity lies. More intense than any other standardized display on the Holocaust, the Necropolis display localizes the trauma and intensifies the public's empathy.

Undoubtedly, the Moldovan photographs engage emotion to give elements of the story of Salonica's Jews. Nevertheless, despite the appeal to the visitors' emotions that the display makes, Stavroulakis's "narrative of life" is limited to allegorical allusions regarding the issue of the cemetery's destruction. On the one hand, this approach could be interpreted as an attempt to keep away from trivializing the shock that the image of the destroyed cemetery could cause. As Susan Sontag has argued, repeated viewings of atrocities could make the horrible seem more ordinary, familiar, remote, and hence inevitable. Especially in a period when several voices fear that we might have hit "Holocaust fatigue," exhibiting on a permanent basis photographs of the violent destruction of Salonica's most sacred Jewish site might deaden their emotional charge, helping the visitor reach the "saturation point" that Sontag warns us about.⁵⁷ On the other hand, though, the interpretation of Stavroulakis's "narrative of life" would not be complete without being contextualized within the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki's official narrative. The last part of the chapter is thus dedicated to the discourse on Salonican Jews in Modern Greek historiography, which largely informs the Museum's master plan.

Seeking a Place in Greek History for the Jews of Salonica: A “Grieving Nostalgia”?

For Stephanie Shosh Rotem, Holocaust museums are what Pierre Nora called “realms of memory”:⁵⁸ they conserve the official narrative and at the same time construct new ones to suit contemporary social values, following certain political agendas. Hence, in her view, Yad Vashem, Israel’s national Holocaust institution summarizes Zionism’s recognition of the Jewish people’s right to a state and up to this day plays a prominent role in the way Israeli identity is formed. On the other hand, in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. an “Americanization of the Holocaust” takes place, a narrative that mobilizes the American values of democracy and freedom as a counteractive to genocide. In the more obvious agenda of the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Holocaust remembrance seeks to fill the void that the extermination of the Jewish community left, distancing Germany from its troubling past.⁵⁹

In the case of the narrative of Thessaloniki’s Jewish Museum, the discourse developed about Salonican Jews in Modern Greek historiography is of crucial importance. Until quite recently, Salonican Jews had been almost invisible in Greek historiography, while the occasional works that were published in the past decades treated them as a coherent and isolated community. According to historian Efi Avdela, in the 1970s and 1980s, the leftist “new Greek history” defied the nationalist narrative only to substitute it with a methodological ethnocentrism, almost exclusively preoccupied with state establishment, modernization, class construction, and relations with the West. It was only in the 1990s that, under the influence of cultural studies, Greek historiography provided a space for the various religious, gender, and ethnic internal “others,” and this is when an interest in Greek-Jewish history emerged.⁶⁰

For historian Henriette–Rika Benveniste, since the “coming out” of Jewish history in Greece in the 1990s, three contradicting and often overlapping meta-narratives have appeared in Greek historiography: the first opposes the threatened return of anti-Semitism to an idyllic peaceful coexistence between Jews and Christians; the second meta-narrative emphasizes the Jewish contribution to the socio-economic development of the Greek communities as opposed to the consideration of the Jews and Judaism as a disrupting force for the nation; and the third meta-narrative conflates today’s multiculturalism with yesterday’s cosmopolitanism.⁶¹

Touching upon these contradictory meta-narratives, the devastation of the old Jewish Cemetery is an issue that reflects the awkwardness with which Greek historiography has until recently approached Salonican Jewry. New research, though, has suggested that the destruction is not entirely the result of Nazi atrocities, but it instead appears to have been a “wedge issue” between the Greek authorities and the Jewish community, of

which the German authorities took advantage.⁶² Carla Hesse and Thomas Laqueur have traced three narratives involved in the issue of the cemetery's destruction: that of the Holocaust; that of the modernization that resulted in moving the burial sites away from the living; and, finally, that of Greek national integration. In Hesse and Laqueur's view, Thessaloniki constitutes the ultimate example of how the imperatives of modernity and of nation-building converged resolutely with the Nazi occupation and the Jewish genocide.⁶³

The approach adopted in the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki stays away from such an interpretation. None of the questions concerning the processes that led to the cemetery's destruction are confronted in the museum. The role of the Greek authorities is covered up. Lacking a proper historical approach, the narrative represents the deeds without the doers, thus elevating the event to a mythical sphere.⁶⁴ Instead, the enlarged Fawcett photographs—the main exhibit of the gallery—do not hint at the ambivalent role of the Greek authorities in the cemetery's destruction, neither do they narrate the entire story of it; rather, they seem to freeze a moment of its history in time, urging visitors, members of Thessaloniki's Jewish Community and outsiders, to imagine the *that-has-been* of the place. Typical of a "narrative museum" approach, the Necropolis exhibit's "narrative of life" elicits emotion, even while downplaying the role of historical contextualization. A frugal phrase in the wall text holds the Nazis solely responsible for the cemetery's demolition, an event that foretells the eradication of the Salonican Jews, while the responsibility of the local authorities or of the Christian community is totally hushed up. Indeed, Stavroulakis acknowledges that he "tried to avoid the matter of the city planners and Greek nationalistic Hellenization of the city."⁶⁵ Nevertheless, in his "Jews and Dervishes" essay, he addresses the troubling issue of Salonica's old Jewish Cemetery, revealing that he is fully aware of the responsibility of the city's Christian community in the eradication of the necropolis.⁶⁶

His hesitant stance, though, reflects the problematization that accompanied the discourses that relate the Jewish past with the Greek national narrative. Hence, contrary to the essay's more daring approach, the narrative followed in a public space, such as the museum, adopts a more appeasing tone. It signifies a tendency to shy away from the socio-political complexity that the issue of the demolished necropolis entailed, an intricate situation that could not have been addressed by the Museum's political agenda at the time. Founded by the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, which since 1920 is a Legal Entity under Public Law, the Museum establishment, like other institutions of this kind,⁶⁷ constitutes a demonstration of strength and an act of self-empowerment on the part of the community. For Benveniste, on the one hand, the founding of the Museum indicates a new phase for the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, which is characterized by its "opening" to the surrounding society, its attempt "to become visible, to affirm its presence, to be vocal about both its glorious past and its tragic end."⁶⁸ On the other

hand, the Museum's realization was supported by state organizations such as the Thessaloniki Organization of the Cultural Capital of Europe – 1997, which funded the renovation of the building. Therefore, an event that might have hinted at elements of anti-Semitism in the city's history should have been very carefully treated.

To counterbalance the awkward and controversial issue of the cemetery's destruction, the Museum narrative seems to accentuate a period in the city's history that preceded its Hellenization. Although not explicit, a sub-narrative of cosmopolitanism appears to be implied, according to which "Westerners," Jews and Muslims are presented as peacefully coexisting in early 20th century Salonica. Hence, elements of cosmopolitanism can be easily traced in the artifacts on display: Ancient Greek and Roman stones that changed use over time becoming gravestones once given Hebrew inscriptions; Jewish artifacts that allude to other cultures, such as a 17th-century memorial tomb carved in the style of an Ottoman cenotaph or a plaster copy of a House of Don Saltiel marble tomb with its Venetian-influenced coat-of-arms.

Mostly, though, the sub-narrative of cosmopolitanism is to be found in the Fawcett photographs, the main exhibit of the gallery, which immortalize elements of the atmosphere that dominated the city at the turn of the 20th century. The implied sub-narrative is reinforced by the accompanying brochure, which seeks to reconstruct the general framework of the photograph-taking process. Hugh Fawcett appears as a member of a Western culture, who, casting his "colonial" gaze upon his subjects, sought to record a Jewish ceremony in its every detail; this same fascination with "otherness" is what leads him to document the Whirling Dervishes at the Mevlevihane, as well. Part of Albert Kahn's "Images of the Planet" colonial expedition, Léon Busy's autochrome, also reproduced in the Museum, reveals this same western visualization of the Jewish mourners and Rabbi as "other."

The interpretation of the photographs in the accompanying brochure as well as in the labels seems to replicate the fascination Fawcett had with ethnographic elements such as garments, ceremonies, etc., while any historical contextualization is clearly downplayed. To this should be added that, with the exception of the central wall text, no dates are given in the explication of the photographs, thus excluding any sense of chronology. Neither do the tenses of the texts help with any historicization; an unspecified past tense is used to describe what was happening in this long, undefined "then," while the descriptions of the photographs are made in what Johannes Fabian has called the "ethnographic present";⁶⁹ a "timeless" present that helps portray a lost culture, all the while occluding any specificity of time and space. The persons in these pictures have been "frozen" in time, as they appear to live in an eternal present.

I believe that what the Jewish Necropolis exhibit aimed at was to invoke what Will Hanley calls a "grieving nostalgia" for the loss of Salonica's early 20th-century cosmopolitan moment.⁷⁰ Elevated to a *that-has-been* of a lost

era, the display sought to appeal to the visitors' emotions, urging them to become privy to what really is a "lost" world, a sentiment intensified by the theatricality invoked by the closed shutters of the original Jewish commercial arcade. However, as Benveniste has warned, there is the risk of conflating cosmopolitanism of the past with contemporary multiculturalism. Focusing on ethnographic details and de-emphasizing historical contextualization, the Necropolis display interprets the Fawcett's photographs as representations of Jewish life that retrospectively promote Salonica of the past as a "tolerant" and difference respecting society. This "reading" constitutes an anachronism as it is related to contemporary multiculturalism, an often depoliticized concept that derives from the postcolonial theoretical framework.⁷¹ In this perspective, the complexity of Salonica's early 20th-century multiethnic society is ignored in favor of an exoticized approach that deprives the photographic subjects of their historical substance.

In my view, the introspected and rather disruptive stance the Necropolis narrative adopts should be contextualized within the broader framework of the way Greece, and more specifically Thessaloniki's local society has addressed the Holocaust issue. When Thessaloniki's Jewish Museum officially opened in 2001, research on Salonican Jews was still at an early stage, despite the foundation of the "Society for the Study of Greek Jewry" in 1991. Especially on the issue of the cemetery there was still much evidence to be revealed. Most importantly though, the discourse on the Shoah in Greece was quite recent. Hence, the narratives on Jewish history or on Greek-Jewish history were rather implicit and conciliatory, echoing what Benveniste calls "the double bind situation" in which the Jewish communities in Greece found themselves at the time, having to condemn anti-Semitic statements and acts and, at the same time, to negate anti-Semitism's existence.⁷²

Things seem to have changed recently, despite incidents such as the rejection by the municipal majority of the proposal to include Thessaloniki in the "Network of Martyred Cities and Villages 1940–1945" in 2008.⁷³ In November 2014, the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki erected a monument to commemorate the old Jewish Cemetery on the campus of Aristotle University, a ceremony attended by state officials, representatives of Jewish organizations and the University authorities.⁷⁴ During my most recent visit to Thessaloniki's Jewish Museum (October 2015), I noticed an entire new wing that has been added to the permanent exhibit of the ground floor. Named the "Andrea Sefiha Gallery" after an active former president of Thessaloniki's Jewish Community, the display presents "a wall of names" of the Salonican Jews that perished in the period 1943–1944. The commemorative wall presents 25,000 names and is the result of an ongoing research made to complete the list of the Holocaust victims in Thessaloniki. The exhibit, along with a new website featuring texts that acknowledge the role of the Greek authorities in the cemetery's destruction,⁷⁵ reveals the "turn" realized in the space of a few years: the "metaphor" of the Jewish Necropolis destruction does not suffice anymore to imply the story of Holocaust; it

has to be explicit. The breaking of the silence on the Shoah is finally a fact for Thessaloniki.

Acknowledgements

I would like to deeply thank Nicholas Stavroulakis for generously sharing with me his thoughts on the exhibition concept of the Necropolis gallery; Erika Perahia-Zemour, of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, for introducing me to the Museum's history; Zanet Battinou, director of the Jewish Museum of Greece (Athens), for facilitating access to the Museum's photographic archive and allowing permission to reproduce the photographs by Hugh Fawcett.

Notes

- 1 Benjamin Braude, "The Rise and the Fall of the Salonica Woollens, 1500–1650: Technology Transfer and Western Competition," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (1991): 216.
- 2 Steven B. Bowman, *The Agony of the Greek Jews, 1940–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 16–17.
- 3 Bowman, *Agony of the Greek Jews*, 189.
- 4 Nikos Stavroulakis, "Το Εβραϊκό Μουσείο Θεσσαλονίκης" ["The Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki"], *Thessalonikeion Polis* 13 (2011): 48–50.
- 5 Erika Perahia. Interview by Iro Katsaridou. Personal Interview. Thessaloniki, 8th January 2015.
- 6 Evangelos Hekimoglou, "Για ένα μουσείο τοπικής ιστορίας: Το Εβραϊκό Μουσείο Θεσσαλονίκης" ["For a Museum of Local History: The Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki"], *Thessalonikeion Polis* 13 (2011): 45.
- 7 Nicholas Hannan Stavroulakis, *The Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki*, Museum Brochure, April 2016.
- 8 Mark Mazower, *Salonica: The City of Ghosts* (New York: A. Knopf, 2004), 382–388.
- 9 Carla Hesse and Thomas W. Laqueur, "Ορατά και αόρατα σώματα. Η εξάλειψη του Εβραϊκού Νεκροταφείου από τη ζωή της σύγχρονης Θεσσαλονίκης" ["Bodies Visible and Invisible: The Erasure of the Jewish Cemetery from the Life of Modern Thessaloniki"], in *Η παραγωγή του κοινωνικού σώματος [The Production of the Social Body]*, edited by Martha Michailidou and Alexandra Halkia (Athens: Katarti, 2005), 41.
- 10 Nicholas Stavroulakis. Interview by Iro Katsaridou. Personal Interview. Chania, 16th January 2015.
- 11 Leon Saltiel, "Dehumanizing the Dead: The Destruction of Thessaloniki's Jewish Cemetery in the Light of New Sources," *Yad Vashem Studies* 42, no. 1 (July 2014): 2–3; Mazower, *Salonica*, 397.
- 12 Evangelos Hekimoglou, "Οι 'χαμένες' επιταγές του Μέρτεν" ["Merten's 'Lost' Checks"], *Thessalonikeion Polis* 18 (September 2005): 40–61; Yomtov Yacoel, *Απομνημονεύματα 1941–1943 [Memoirs 1941–1943]* (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1993); Yacoel's diary is translated in English in *The Holocaust in Salonika: Eyewitness Accounts*, edited by Steven Bowman (New York: Bloch, 2002), 25–122.
- 13 Nicholas P. Stavroulakis, *Salonika: Jews and Dervishes* (Athens: Talos Press, 1993), 18.

- 14 Saltiel, "Dehumanizing the Dead," 35.
- 15 The land for the new Jewish Cemetery in Stavroupolis was allotted in 1938. Saltiel mentions that in 1943, the Jewish Community announced the creation of two new areas to be used as cemeteries, and Michael Molho was tasked by Chief Rabbi Koretz to compile a list of the illustrious personalities buried so as to rebury their remains in the new cemetery. Saltiel, "Dehumanizing the Dead," 13.
- 16 "Museum of Jewish Presence in Thessaloniki: The Transformation of Part of a Listed Commercial Building in the Historic Centre of Thessaloniki into a Museum," Wall Text, The Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, 2015.
- 17 Stavoulakis, *Salonika*, 19.
- 18 "The Jewish Necropolis of Thessaloniki," Wall text, The Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, 2015.
- 19 Stavoulakis, *Salonika*, 14.
- 20 Stavoulakis, *Salonika*, 6–7.
- 21 Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 88–89.
- 22 Mazower, *Salonica*, 288.
- 23 A. Goff and Hugh A. Fawcett, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive* (London and New York: John Lane, 1921).
- 24 Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, "Introduction," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, edited by Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4.
- 25 Nicholas P. Stavroulakis and Timothy J. DeVinney, *Jewish Sites and Synagogues of Greece* (Athens: Talos Press, 1992), 180.
- 26 "The Jewish Cemetery of Thessaloniki," accompanying brochure (Thessaloniki: Jewish Museum, 2015), 4.
- 27 Nicholas Stavroulakis, e-mail message to the author, 21st January 2015.
- 28 David Okuefuna, *The Dawn of the Color Photograph: Albert Kahn's Archives of the Planet* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 16.
- 29 Jeanne Beausoleil et al., *Thessalonique, 1913 & 1918: Les autochromes du Musée Albert Kahn* (Athens: Olkos, 1999), 88.
- 30 Andromache Gazi, "National Museums in Greece: History, Ideology, Narratives," in *Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010*, Conference proceedings from *EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen*, Bologna, 28–30 April 2011. *EuNaMus Report 1*, edited by Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius (Norrköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2011), 372, accessed October 11, 2015, http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=064.
- 31 Elaine Heumann Gurian, "Choosing among the Options: An Opinion about Museum Definitions," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 45 (2002): 79.
- 32 Heumann Gurian, "Choosing among the Options," 80.
- 33 Ruth R. Seldin, "American Jewish Museums: Trends and Issues," *American Jewish Yearbook 1991* (1991): 71.
- 34 Stephanie Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory: Architectural Narratives of Holocaust Museums* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2013), 33.
- 35 Theodor W. Adorno, *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Rodney Livingstone et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 162.
- 36 Anna Richardson, "The Ethical Limitation of Holocaust Literary Representation," *E-Sharp* 5 (2005): 1, accessed October 10, 2015, http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_41171_en.pdf.
- 37 Amos Goldberg, "The 'Jewish Narrative' in the Yad Vashem Global Holocaust Museum," *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 2 (2012): 192.

- 38 Stephanie Shosh Rotem “A Sense of Jewish Empowerment or a Lesson in Universal Values? New Directions in the Design of Holocaust Museums in the USA,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 27, no. 2 (2013): 129.
- 39 Hesse and Laqueur, “Bodies Visible and Invisible,” 44. Saltiel refers to other cases of destructions of Jewish cemeteries. See Saltiel, “Dehumanizing the Dead,” 1.
- 40 “Jewish Necropolis,” Wall text, 2015.
- 41 Yacoel, *Memoirs*, 88.
- 42 Stavroulakis, e-mail.
- 43 “Report of the President’s Commission on the Holocaust,” 27 September 1979, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20050707-presidents-commission-holocaust.pdf>.
- 44 Robin Ostow, “Remusealizing Jewish History in Warsaw: The Privatization and Externalization of Nation Building,” in *(Re)visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the New Millennium*, edited by Robin Ostow (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 158.
- 45 Alvin H. Rosenfeld, “The Assault on Holocaust Memory,” *The American Jewish Yearbook* (2001): 13–14.
- 46 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Maldon, MA: Polity Press, 1989), ix; Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000), 7–8.
- 47 Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1999), 6.
- 48 James E. Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 191–199.
- 49 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 17.
- 50 Griselda Pollock, “Holocaust Tourism: Being There, Looking Back and the Ethics of Spatial Memory,” in *Visual Culture and Tourism*, edited by David Crouch and Nina Lübben (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 177.
- 51 Saltiel, “Dehumanizing the Dead,” 32–34; Hesse and Laqueur, “Bodies Visible and Invisible,” 41. Typically enough, in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia* launched by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the article on Salonica is illustrated with a view of broken Jewish tombstones. Accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005422>.
- 52 Stavroulakis, email.
- 53 Stavroulakis, *Salonika*, 30.
- 54 Stavroulakis, *Salonika*, 36.
- 55 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 26–27.
- 56 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador USA, 1977), 70.
- 57 Sontag, *On Photography*, 21.
- 58 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.
- 59 Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory*, 10.
- 60 Efi Avdela, “Toward a Greek History of the Jews of Salonica?,” *Jewish History* 28, no. 3–4 (2014): 405–410.
- 61 Henriette–Rika Benveniste, “The Coming out of Jewish History in Greece,” *Usages publics du passé*, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://anciensiteusagespublicsdupasse.ehess.fr/index.php?id=130>.
- 62 Saltiel, “Dehumanizing the Dead,” 27.
- 63 Hesse and Laqueur, “Bodies Visible and Invisible,” 55.

- 64 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972), 117–119.
- 65 Stavroulakis, email.
- 66 Stavroulakis, *Salonika*, 17.
- 67 Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory*, 10.
- 68 Benveniste, “Coming out,” 3.
- 69 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 80–82.
- 70 Will Hanley, “Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies,” *History Compass* 6, no. 5 (2008): 1346.
- 71 Louisa Avgita, “The Balkans Does Not Exist,” *Third Text* 21, no. 2 (2007): 221.
- 72 Benveniste, “Coming out,” 4.
- 73 The pretext was that Jews did not perish in the city, since they were deported to concentration camps. Following protests from the Central Jewish Board of Greece and the opposition party in the Municipality, a few months later Thessaloniki was eventually to join the list. “Salonika will join list of ‘martyred towns’,” accessed October 16, 2015, <http://www.jta.org/2008/09/07/news-opinion/salonika-will-join-list-of-martyred-towns>.
- 74 “Monument Unveiled at the University of Thessaloniki—In Memory of the Old Jewish Cemetery,” accessed October 16, 2015, http://www.kis.gr/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=548:monument-unveiled-at-the-university-of-thessaloniki-in-memory-of-the-old-jewish-cemetery&catid=12:2009&Itemid=41.
- 75 “Η Εβραϊκή Νεκρόπολη” [“The Jewish Necropolis”], accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.jmth.gr/article-09032014-the-jewish-necropolis>.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W. *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Rodney Livingstone et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Avdela, Efi. “Toward a Greek History of the Jews of Salonika?” *Jewish History* 28, no. 3–4 (2014): 405–410.
- Avgita, Louisa. “The Balkans Does Not Exist.” *Third Text* 21, no. 2 (2007): 215–221.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. New York: Noonday, 1972.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge, Maldon, MA: Polity, 1989.
- Beausoleil, Jeanne, Alexandra Yerolympos, Vasilis Panayotopoulos and Georgios Velenis. *Thessalonique, 1913 & 1918: Les autochromes du Musée Albert Kahn*. Athens: Olkos, 1999.
- Benveniste, Henriette–Rika. “The Coming out of Jewish History in Greece.” *Usages publics du passé*. Accessed October 11, 2015. <http://anciensiteusagespublicsdupasse.ehess.fr/index.php?id=130>.
- Bowman, Steven B., ed. *The Holocaust in Salonika: Eyewitness Accounts*. New York: Bloch, 2002.
- Bowman, Steven B. *The Agony of the Greek Jews, 1940–1945*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

- Braude, Benjamin. "The Rise and the Fall of the Salonica Woollens, 1500–1650: Technology Transfer and Western Competition." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (1991): 216–236.
- Clogg, Richard. *A Concise History of Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Cole, Tim. *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Finkelstein, Norman. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*. London: Verso, 2000.
- Gazi, Andromache. "National Museums in Greece: History, Ideology, Narratives." In *Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010*, edited by Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, *EuNaMus Report 1*, 363–399. Norrköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2011. Accessed October 11, 2015. http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=064.
- Goff, A., and Hugh A. Fawcett. *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*. London and New York: John Lane, 1921.
- Goldberg, Amos. "The 'Jewish Narrative' in the Yad Vashem Global Holocaust Museum." *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 2 (2012): 187–213.
- Hanley, Will. "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies." *History Compass* 6, no. 5 (2008): 1346–1367.
- Hekimoglou, Evangelos. "Οι 'χαμένες' επιταγές του Μέρτεν" ["Merten's 'Lost' Checks."] *Thessalonikeon Polis* 18 (2005): 40–46.
- Hekimoglou, Evangelos. "Για ένα μουσείο τοπικής ιστορίας: Το Εβραϊκό Μουσείο Θεσσαλονίκης" ["For a Museum of Local History: The Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki."] *Thessalonikeon Polis* 13 (2011): 44–47.
- Hesse, Carla and Thomas W. Laqueur. "Ορατά και αόρατα σώματα. Η εξάλειψη του Εβραϊκού Νεκροταφείου από τη ζωή της σύγχρονης Θεσσαλονίκης" ["Bodies Visible and Invisible: The Erasure of the Jewish Cemetery from the Life of Modern Thessaloniki."] In *Η παραγωγή του κοινωνικού σώματος [The Production of the Social Body]*, edited by Martha Michailidou and Alexandra Halkia, 31–53. Athens: Katarti, 2005.
- Heumann Gurian, Elaine. "Choosing among the Options: An Opinion about Museum Definitions." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 45 (2002): 75–88.
- Hight, Eleanor M. and Gary D. Sampson. "Introduction." In *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, edited by Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, 1–19 New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Mazower, Mark. *Salonica: The City of Ghosts*. New York: A. Knopf, 2004.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.
- Novick, Peter. *The Holocaust in American Life*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1999.
- Okuefuna, David. *The Dawn of the Color Photograph: Albert Kahn's Archives of the Planet*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Ostow, Robin. "Remusealizing Jewish History in Warsaw: The Privatization and Externalization of Nation Building." In *(Re)visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the New Millennium*, edited by Robin Ostow, 157–180. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

- Pollock, Griselda. "Holocaust Tourism: Being There, Looking Back and the Ethics of Spatial Memory." In *Visual Culture and Tourism*, edited by David Crouch and Nina Lübbren, 175–189. Oxford: Berg, 2003.
- Richardson, Anna. "The Ethical Limitation of Holocaust Literary Representation." *E-Sharp* 5 (2005): 1–19. Accessed October 10, 2015. http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_41171_en.pdf.
- Rosenfeld, Alvin H. "The Assault on Holocaust Memory." *The American Jewish Yearbook 2001* (2001): 3–20.
- Saltiel, Leon. "Dehumanizing the Dead: The Destruction of Thessaloniki's Jewish Cemetery in the Light of New Sources." *Yad Vashem Studies* 42, no. 1 (2014): 1–35.
- Seldin, Ruth R. "American Jewish Museums: Trends and Issues." *American Jewish Yearbook 1991* (1991): 71–117.
- Shosh Rotem, Stephanie. *Constructing Memory: Architectural Narratives of Holocaust Museums*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2013.
- Shosh Rotem, Stephanie. "A Sense of Jewish Empowerment or a Lesson in Universal Values? New Directions in the Design of Holocaust Museums in the USA." *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 27, no. 2 (2013): 129–153. Accessed October 16, 2015. doi: 10.1080/23256249.2013.825470.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Picador USA, 1977.
- Stavroulakis, Nicholas P. *Salonika: Jews and Dervishes*. Athens: Talos, 1993.
- Stavroulakis, Nicholas P. and Timothy J. DeVinney. *Jewish Sites and Synagogues of Greece*. Athens: Talos, 1992.
- Stavroulakis, Nikos. "Το Εβραϊκό Μουσείο Θεσσαλονίκης" ["The Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki."] *Thessalonikeion Polis* 13 (2011): 48–53.
- Yacoel, Yomtov. *Απομνημονεύματα 1941–1943* [*Memoirs 1941–1943*]. Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1993.
- Young, James E. *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

4 “Death From the Skies”

Photographs in Museums of the Aerial Bombing of Civilians During World War Two

Sheila Watson

The presence or absence of photographs in museums of dead and injured civilians, victims of aerial bombing by both Allies and the Axis powers during the Second World War reflect both historical conventions and current political concerns, telling us as much about national identity today as they do about events in this period. Drawing on case studies in Germany, England and Scotland, this chapter will consider how and why images of death (and indeed, the incidents that brought them about in some cases) are excised from some museums but foregrounded in others. In so doing, it will consider such photographs within the context of the overarching display techniques of individual museums, in particular the text that accompanies them, and set these against the background of the development of historical narratives of bombing campaigns in the Second World War, including contemporary official attitudes to these events. At the same time, it will reflect on the ethics of such exhibits and the ways in which photographs of death during wartime have been used in the past. This is not, however, a chapter about the rights or wrongs of strategic bombing of civilians during the Second World War, a topic which has been covered in detail elsewhere,¹ but more about how images of civilian deaths during bombing raids are used or avoided in the 21st century to promote national identity.

It has been estimated that in World War II, at least 60 million people were killed, of which 35 million were civilians.² Until recently, these losses were rarely referred to in the museum setting. Museums tended to follow the style set by military historians and narrate stories of battles punctuated with maps and information about key military leaders, weapons and uniforms. Stories of bombing and death of civilians were either omitted in museums or told, as in the Imperial War Museum, London, as part of a narrative of the fortitude of the survivors, an illustration of national character.

Photographs of War Dead in Museums

Our case study museums—the National War Museum, Scotland, the Imperial War Museum, London, the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the Deutsches Technikmuseum, Berlin—use photographs of dead civilians

sparingly or not at all. The British ones tend to regard the national victims of German bombing as examples of British fortitude or ignore them. Photographs of the dead are omitted; indeed, the suffering caused by bombing is glossed over. In the German museums, Allied bombing of German civilians and German bombing of Poland are shown with images of dead bodies and mourners and are used as to elicit pity for the victims.

It is unusual to display photographs of dead combatants in museums in the “West,” even in those dedicated to war and its consequences. If they are shown, they are often discreet background images indistinguishable from one another, barely visible as bodies (as in the moving images in the Imperial War Museum North’s story of Trench Warfare). Photographs of civilians who have suffered unnatural deaths by enemy action are rarely shown at all and, if present, are nearly always of foreign civilians not one’s “own” dead, despite the fact that it has been estimated that over 600,000 European civilians died in bombing raids and over a million were seriously injured.³ To a certain extent, such absence is a result of cultural norms, the sense that images of the dead in a public place, unless displayed by relatives as a form of mourning, are generally disrespectful.⁴ For “culture constrains all narrative. Audiences set limits on what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and by their response they select which narratives get repeated and which fall away.”⁵ The fact that children visit history museums in large numbers also acts as a form of self-censorship.

Thus, discretion or amnesia, particularly in Britain, is partly to do with the notion of what is acceptable to show in public. Mainstream Western media, such as still photographs, news film and official digital media, avoid showing many images of the dead, preferring images of covered bodies or pictures of those about to die rather than the corpse itself.⁶ In this, museums are no different from mainstream television and digital news channels. There are some exceptional iconic images, such as those of Holocaust victims, for example, those of Belsen when first liberated (Paton 1991, Kushner 2002, 22),⁷ repeated time and time again as illustrations of Nazi evil, so that familiarity can blunt shock while still eliciting disgust (Sontag 2004, 73),⁸ but images of death are generally omitted from museums whatever the context of the theatre of war. In part, this may be the result of ethical considerations, of a sensitivity towards relatives or friends of the victims or of fear lest we enjoy such sights as Plato thought we did.⁹ It has been suggested that a focus on death and suffering may, in whatever context, result in a form of collusion with the perpetrators, those who were responsible for such acts in the first place, by which we “participate in the dehumanization process at the core of the perpetrators’ project.”¹⁰

The Nature of Photographs

Once disseminated, photographs lose their original frames of reference.¹¹ Nevertheless, however they are used subsequently, we often credit

photographs with authenticity.¹² They cannot be viewed, however, without a cultural lens in which the viewer places images in contexts which may distort a form of authenticity: the historic context of the photograph itself or the original intention of the photographer. As Preußer points out, photographs of piles of dead German civilians, victims of Allied bombing, “cannot be regarded without denoting the emblem of industrial mass killing, the destruction of European Jewry. . . . As a German, when looking at the piles of bodies to be burnt in Dresden, one simultaneously recognises Auschwitz.”¹³ Thus Germans become, by implication, innocent victims too. Of course, we just do not know how those who see such photographs in museums respond, though Preußer suggests German responses will be conflated with Holocaust narratives, and we could speculate that non-German viewers might also make such a connection if they understand this specific form of visual rhetoric.¹⁴

Sontag, writing about contemporary images of war generally, suggests that “it has become a cliché of the cosmopolitan discussion of images of atrocity to assume that they have little effect, and that there is something innately cynical about their diffusion,” and that the intentions of those who disseminate them may have political or commercial motives.¹⁵ She comments that “the feeling persists that the appetite for such images is a vulgar or low appetite; that it is commercial ghoulishness, an attempt by the presenter of the image to focus deliberately on death and suffering for financial gain.”¹⁶ In a similar way, one can assume that historical photographs of wars’ atrocities of civilian dead might also be so regarded. However, the context and the method of display along with individual experiences will all affect the response to the photographic image and, until more research is undertaken, we cannot accept without question the notion that such images necessarily pander to the ghoul in us all. Moreover, Azoulay argues that such images can be understood more positively, particularly if those whose suffering is represented are marginalized politically and are otherwise absent from public consciousness. Here the image of suffering “manufacture[s] the new conditions of visibility of catastrophe.”¹⁷ While we might question Azoulay’s main thesis that such images help develop a universal sense of citizenship through photography,¹⁸ we can, nevertheless, acknowledge that photographs of death can draw attention to a commonality of human suffering.

Historical Antecedents

In the West, photographs of death during wartime have well-established conventions which have been reproduced in museums. During the First World War, reporters, newspapers and newsreels adopted various attitudes to the death of their own soldiers that on the whole tended to suppress the photographic image, unless it could be understood within the context of a glorious, romantic and heroic sacrifice for the nation.¹⁹ Later, during the Spanish Civil War, photographs of deaths of civilians by Robert Capa,

amongst others, developed the notion of the validity of such an image if it exposed not just the evil of war but also the ruthlessness of the perpetrators. With the liberation of the concentration camps in Germany, images of civilian dead and dying were circulated across the globe. Germany itself was “deluged with photographs of corpses”²⁰ along with narratives that implicated all Germans in war crimes. This exceptional distribution of photographs of civilian victims of war was designed to demonstrate the evils of the Nazi regime²¹ and was part of an attempt to re-educate German civilians and make them accept responsibility for supporting the Nazi party. Yet, as Wachsmann concludes, many Germans, as a measure of defense against such accusations, argued they had suffered too, perpetuating “the myth of German victimhood” and denying knowledge of the camps.²²

Later, photographs of dead and dying civilians in the Vietnam War, distributed by journalists and those who opposed the war, followed this convention of displaying dead civilians as innocent victims. War itself was on trial, but then so were certain soldiers, generals and politicians.²³ Thus, exhibiting civilian dead has become a means of depicting, if only by implication, the guilt of the regimes of those nations in whose name the deeds are done.

However, despite these developments, the taking and exhibiting of the images of the dead, whether of the enemy or of the civilian, can be seen as an act of aggression. Spring suggests that this is a form “of symbolic violence, a violation of the integrity of the individual.”²⁴ Sontag makes a similar point that photographs “turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed,”²⁵ a form of possession that may involve a form of violence towards the dead. There is a sense that a photograph of a dead person violates that person who has been unable to give permission for the image to be made and who may also be shown in a pose that makes graphic pain, suffering, fear and the intimate moment of death. Moreover, there is a kind of violation of viewers who may find such images so disturbing that they suffer from feelings of disgust and fear long after they have ceased to gaze on the photograph. However, if photographs of the enemy are shocking and can be used to symbolize death itself, how much more distasteful and literally disgusting are images of “our own” dead, particularly those of innocent victims? Thus, mainstream cultural institutions and the mass media on the whole do not show images of their own dead civilians, particularly those in past Second World War bombing campaigns. If such images are shown in museums, they have a strong political purpose, as we shall see in our case study, Germany. They arrest the visitor’s attention by their rarity and unpleasantness and mediate our attitudes to war as represented in that museum, encouraging us to see those who carry out bombing as evil and those who suffer as innocent victims through an “affective and empathetic function.”²⁶ In so doing, they “play a constitutive role within the production and mediation of the political.”²⁷ Their absence in exhibitions about the Home Front in the UK works in a similar way. In a pro-independence Scotland, they silence a history of shared Britishness, while in England, a

similar absence indicates a celebration of national character; people who could survive such atrocities and carry on.

British and German Photographs of Civilian Bombing Casualties: Then and Now

In the UK, images of the victims of bombing raids in places such as London were censored at first and then voluntarily omitted from publication by newspapers and newsreels because depressing images and news did not sell newspapers or attract paying customers to cinemas.²⁸ In a similar way, civilian enemy dead were rarely shown during the Second World War, as this suggested not only the enemy's humanity but also posed questions about the ethics and morality of killing enemy non-combatants and their children. While bombing of the enemy was accepted by most members of the public as a necessary evil to ensure victory, the media focused instead on the numbers of Bomber Command who died and their bravery.

If one tries to find still photographs of mutilated British bodies, children burnt alive in German bombing raids or dead babies suffocated in London shelters, whether one looks at online sites such as the Imperial War Museum's (IWM) archive or popular British printed histories of the bombing campaigns, one will not find them easily, if at all. Images of the injured are easier to find, but these have been carefully edited, often by the Ministry of Information, which controlled such images during the war and commissioned them for propaganda purposes as examples of the fortitude of the public under fire.²⁹ Photographs of dead people in the IWM public digital archive are of mainly Nazi concentration camp victims, presumably because these images were more readily circulated during and after the war. For example, there are some particularly harrowing photographs of the dead and dying under the generic heading of "The liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, April 1945" taken by the No 5 Army Film and Photographic unit. This caption gives an indication of the sorts of images they are: "German SS guards toss the body of a dead girl into a mass grave."³⁰ Thus, the dead are shown as examples of the evil against which the Allies were fighting.

However, images of victims of the firestorms of Hamburg and Dresden are more easily found. For example, an internet search for strategic bombing in the Second World War led to the popular Wikipedia site³¹ in which there were several harrowing images of German, Chinese and Japanese dead, but none of British casualties, though the devastation of British cities was illustrated with photographs of burning city centres. German suffering was personalized with images of piles of bodies and photographs with captions such as "In death a German mother stares at her twins in a pram" or "An elderly lady in front of the bodies of school children in Cologne, Germany, after a bombing raid."³² Bombed British school children are shown alive and well or, at the very least, smiling happily as they are bandaged, their injuries not fatal nor, it would appear, too traumatic once they were in

hospital, playing to the notion of British grit under fire. German archives, on the other hand, give ready access to images of dead bodies during the Allied bombing of Germany. The *Ullstein Bild* archive has several images of close ups of corpses and mounds of bodies after raids on Dresden.³³

Thus, all that follows must be placed within this context. Images of death, widely circulated at the time for whatever reason, (or their excision from the media in the past), and their public availability today, affect what images museums use and how they use them.

Germany

Deutsches Technikmuseum, Berlin

The Deutsches Technikmuseum (German Museum of Technology)'s website welcomes visitors: "We would like to invite you to join us for an eventful and enjoyable journey of discovery through the cultural history of technology."³⁴ Its section on aviation states, "Along the way, exhibits large and small, spectacular and unique, document the colourful story of civil and military aviation in Germany. A section on aircraft engineering on the third floor supplements the chronological tour."³⁵ Areas covering air and space technology were opened in 2005.³⁶

In one section on air warfare, the visitor (in 2012) confronts the horrors of the Allied bombing campaign in images of Hamburg in flames. On a dark wall, a video shows the dreadful and devastating impact of the Allied bombing raids. The images cannot be lingered over—the film moves from inferno to bodies and back to destruction.

In a museum celebrating German technological achievements, a narrative (through images) of the Allied air superiority towards the end of the war and the violence inflicted on civilians appears strangely out of place.

Such public and official reminders of the horrors of the air war against Germany by the Allies were rare in Cold War West Germany and, for several years after re-unification, collective forgetting was the norm. In 1999, W.G. Sebald commented on the willing forgetfulness of the Federal Republic, suggesting that perhaps those whose nation had sent millions to their deaths in concentration camps felt they could not complain about their own destruction.³⁷ Even as late as 2007 Zehfuss commented that "until recently one had to consult the English language literature to find any discussion on the ethicality of strategic bombing,"³⁸ although in 2010, Von Benda-Beckmann argued that after 1945, "in both the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as well as the Federal Republic the air war became a topic of public and political interest as well as the subject of many popular and academic historical accounts."³⁹ However, more recently the story has moved into the museum space. Why did this happen?

Both East and West Germany saw bombing at first as the inevitable consequence of Hitler's policies, ones with which they had colluded, and



Figure 4.1 Dead bodies in Hamburg in the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin. From the film *Hamburg im Feuersturm*. Reproduced by kind permission of the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin and the Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung. © Andy Sawyer.

for which they were subsequently to suffer.⁴⁰ After 1949, the communist authorities in the East used the bombing raids as a means of drawing attention to the perceived immoral actions of former allies, now enemies. These bombing attacks were no longer the consequence of Germany's war with its allies but a cruel and unjustifiable revenge on the German people by the former Western allies—an example of imperialist capitalism in action. In 1949, the SED Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*), which governed the German Democratic Republic until re-unification, on the fourth anniversary of the bombing of Dresden, published images of dead bodies piled up in the city in its newspaper and devoted half of its Sunday supplement to this story. The British and Americans were accused of bombing Dresden for no legitimate reason. In contrast, the Soviets were held up as models of restraint and civilized behavior, for they did not bomb the Germans, despite the fact that the German invasion of the Soviet Union had caused millions of innocent civilian lives.⁴¹ Such memories “forgot” the rape and destruction the Russian army brought in its

wake, a story which has only relatively recently reached mainstream history and public popular narrative.⁴²

Margalit traced the adoption by many in West Germany of this view of Allied bombings of Germany over the coming decades. However, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany, there developed a much stronger public interest in German suffering at the hands of all the Allied forces. This aroused great controversy, not least because for many, this move was an attempt to remember perpetrators as victims. However, it proved a useful way of providing the inhabitants of the newly united Germany with a common history—a history of victimhood and suffering. It enabled historians and politicians in Germany to present what had hitherto, particularly up until the 1970s, been seen as “a moral . . . impossibility.”⁴³ This was also encouraged by books such as Jörg Friedrich’s 2002 *Der Brand* or *The Fire: The bombing of Germany 1940–1945*, a book describing in words and images the horrors of the air war, and *Brandstätten Fire Sites* with graphic illustrations of the incinerated dead, burnt in many cases beyond recognition. Friedrich argues that the Germans were victims of an Allied regime that sought to destroy the civilian population regardless of whether or not this hastened the end of the war. Post publication *Der Brand* has attracted a great deal of critical attention, in particular the way in which Friedrich’s use of language suggests a parallel to the mass extermination of the Holocaust.⁴⁴ Although Friedrich has attracted criticism, nevertheless, his arguments that the Allied bombing campaign against Germany was morally wrong, along with television programs that have discussed German suffering, have caught the German imagination. The story of the bombing war, along with photographs of piles of bodies in the streets, have become ways by which the re-united German nation can find a common history in a war Germans on the whole prefer to forget. The Deutsches Technikmuseum’s images of the dead in Hamburg can be seen as part of a new collective memory, a memory that understands the Germans as victims not aggressors and an attempt to create a unified European memory of the war that moves beyond perpetrators and sees all as victims.⁴⁵ However, presenting all people involved in the war as victims avoids issues such as agency and presents a history of Europe in which hapless groups of people found themselves as victims, regardless of their original participation in, and responsibility for, armed conflict.

Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin

The Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, in its present form, opened in 2006 by the Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and is a post-unification project, designed to record the struggles of the German peoples throughout history and to celebrate the unification of the two Germanys at the end of the 20th century. Unlike the Deutsches Technikmuseum, it does not show images of the dead in bombed German cities. However, it juxtaposes the

area devoted to Allied bombing raids on Germany next to the section on the Holocaust and treats British and Polish bombing victims differently. In so doing, this museum offers a story that would have been understood by most East Germans before unification as representing the suffering and victimhood of German civilians and which outweighed any German aggression towards Britain.

The Second World War section begins with arresting images of three black and white photographs of dead civilians, following a bombing raid on Poland, mounted as though they are in a photograph album, with small pieces of text below them. On the top left, civilians pick their way through wreckage described thus: “The air-raids on Warsaw were the first area bombings of a city in World War II. Such bombings cost thousands of civilian lives.” Immediately below this, image two women bend over civilian corpses lying on the ground with the text “Victims from the Premienie Pankie hospital after an air raid.” The most striking image is on the right hand side, slightly larger than the other two. It shows a woman grieving above the corpse of another woman. The former is kneeling over the body. Her right hand is lifted as though about to touch the face of the dead person. Her own face is grief stricken. The text includes the following: “Polish girl next to her dead sister after a Strafer attack. . . The air raids on Warsaw were the first



Figure 4.2 Exhibition view of the Deutsches Historisches Museum. Polish victims of German Strafe attacks. Reproduced by kind permission of the Deutsches Historisches Museum and Sam Bryan. Original 1939 photograph by Julian Bryan. © Sheila Watson.

aerial bombings of a city in World War II. Such bombings cost thousands of civilian lives. Warsaw surrendered on 27 September 1939.” Another larger text panel makes the point clearly: “From the very beginning the war in Poland was pursued with the utmost cruelty. . .”⁴⁶

Here, like the moving images in the Museum of Technology, the photograph is used as a form of “immediate testimony” that supports the word.⁴⁷ One need not read the text to understand the message. However, it is the image that arrests the viewer and evokes pity and horror. Nevertheless, as Berger points out, a photograph is not a memory of an event⁴⁸—it is a moment fixed in time and it has different meanings depending on the context in which it is placed and the people who are viewing it. Here, the words contextualize the images and provide interpretation:⁴⁹ without them, these suffering civilians could be anywhere in wartime Europe. However, here they are specifically allocated a national identity. The Poles have long understood their national history as one of disappointment, betrayal, defeat and death, and their national identity is bound up with this narrative⁵⁰ and this photograph acknowledges this.

Near the section on Poland is a display on the Blitz on Britain 1940. Here are few photographs and none of bodies although the text refers to civilian deaths:

To prepare for the invasion the Battle of Britain was launched in August 1940 with aerial attack on British supply and armament factories. Yet the German raids also cause increasing numbers of civilian casualties as in the case of the complete destruction of Coventry.

This text panel conflates two different military campaigns in order to mitigate German responsibility for the loss of civilian lives. The Battle of Britain and the Blitz are often confused as they overlap.⁵¹ The bombing of British civilians (the Blitz) was designed to destroy British morale while reducing British manufacturing capacity, so that the British would sue for peace. It took place after plans for invasion were abandoned. It was understood that raids at night would bring confusion, panic and “special terrors,” thus undermining British morale.⁵² Insofar as this was the Germans’ aim, they failed. Despite the fact that during September and November 1940, 18,261 people died in German raids in London and elsewhere,⁵³ there was no public demand for the end of the war. However, positioning the raids in the context of preparation for invasion in this text panel justifies the deaths of civilians in military terms and avoids acknowledging that Germany instigated a terror campaign of bombing against the British civilian population, designed to break morale through mass destruction and slaughter of civilians.

Coventry was just one example of this campaign which combined bombing of military targets with attacks on civilian ones. The small Midlands city was devastated by the attack on November 14, 1940, but it was not completely destroyed. The casualties were mainly civilians: 568 dead and

1,256 injured.⁵⁴ Despite widespread disruption of everyday life, factory production was restored within a week.

The museum also has a small silent black and white film from the Imperial War Museum Archives showing destruction of cities in Britain by Nazi aeroplanes. There are no dead bodies or signs of civilian suffering. In part this is because the British have not themselves shown such images until relatively recently. The lack of images of death in Britain is not, however, because of reluctance in the Deutsches Historisches Museum to show photographs of the dead. Nearby, a section called the “The Murders of the Mobile Killing Units” shows photographs of hangings and the execution by a pistol to the head of an individual kneeling above a mass grave of murdered victims. Once again we are brought face to face with violent death inflicted by the Nazis on their victims, but these are not British casualties of bombing raids.

Why should this matter? After all, the text says it all—it presents a narrative of complete destruction. However, the absence of the photograph of dead civilians in Coventry and elsewhere in the UK means that the impact of the event is muted. Photographs are, as Sontag points out, designed in the context of war to “arrest attention, startle, surprise.”⁵⁵ The image of a dead sister being mourned viscerally by another in Poland remains in the mind long after the text has disappeared from memory. Such a photograph provides the viewer with a sense of the immediacy of sorrow and suffering in a way dispassionate historical descriptions of events that eschew emotion rarely do. The lack of an image of death and destruction, grief and sorrow in the British section makes “empathetic grief” more difficult to engender amongst visitors. Hogan, looking at scientific research into the responses of the brain, has drawn a distinction between the empathy we show when we imagine something and the empathy we experience when we have a concrete example of others’ emotions such as grief or joy. “. . . [s]tatistics do not, most often, frighten or sadden us. A concrete experience of someone’s terror or grief, however, does.”⁵⁶

Without photographs of the dead and grieving survivors, the city of Coventry is presented as distant military target, an example of the power of the Luftwaffe, whose citizens were legitimate targets. To re-enforce the notion that the British victims of the Blitz do not deserve pity, the museum has included in the display Nazi propaganda images of the British as imperialist aggressors.

One of them, immediately above the video, shows an Englishman riding on a throne carried by enslaved men from the colonies. The man in uniform wields a whip, smokes a pipe and with his hooked nose, references his Jewish ancestry. The words “England’s Schuld” (England’s Guilt), refers not only to the exploitation of Empire but to the words originally accompanying this front cover of the *Illustrierter Beobachter*, *The Illustrated Observer*, a Nazi magazine, which blamed England for provoking the war.⁵⁷ Popular views in Germany upheld by Friedrich hold that British bombing was far worse than American bombing,⁵⁸ despite the fact that they often targeted



Figure 4.3 Section of World War II Exhibition showing the position of the England's Guilt poster immediately above the Imperial War Museum's film of the bombing of British cities. Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London and by kind permission of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin. © Sheila Watson.

the same cities in the same way. This image, taken out of context, with the words "England's Guilt," implies whatever the sufferings of the British during the bombing war they deserved their fate.

The museum also dedicates a large area to the bombing of German cities by the Allies after the war. It follows immediately from the Holocaust section. In a long text panel entitled "*Germany Bombed*," Allied guilt and German victimhood are made explicit:

With systematic carpet bombing of residential areas far from military and industrial facilities, the British and the Americans wanted to break the Germans' morale. . .

The bombing of Hamburg in July 1943 claimed over 35,000 lives. Berlin suffered the harshest of attacks in February 1945 with thousands of deaths. On 13/14 February 1945 over 35,000 died in the militarily meaningless bombing of Dresden. Altogether, between 500,000 and 600,000 Germans lost their lives in Allied air raids.

Note the words "militarily meaningless." This text positions the Allies as war criminals. Such bombing undoubtedly killed many civilians but it was not,

as suggested here, without its military and strategic objectives. Dresden is perhaps the most controversial of all the bombing raids by the Allies and is often seen to be without military meaning; commentators arguing that its military status was “doubtful” and that it was a “cultural centre, with very little industry or military significance.”⁵⁹ However, by 1944–5 the difference between military and civilian targets had been eroded. British and American governments planned these raids to be an attack on all aspects of Germany, civilian, military and industrial alike, in part to aid the Russian advance and hinder Germany’s resistance to the Red Army.⁶⁰ The Combined Chiefs of Staff Directive for the Bomber Offensive of January 21, 1943, known as the Casablanca Directive, outlined the morale-destroying function of air raids. The lowering of German morale and the destruction of cities as a whole was the overall aim. Both German and British industrial production had, on the whole, hitherto recovered from bombing raids in a relatively short period of time. It was only through the killing of large numbers of people, the bombing of the infrastructures through which they lived their lives, along with damage and destruction to industrial units, could either side reckon on making an impact on war production and thus on the war at the front.⁶¹ This is abhorrent; a “calculated frightfulness,”⁶² but it is not meaningless. It is in fact entirely logical within the parameters of total war. Nor was it a “revenge attack” for British casualties for, although the British Press sometimes appeared to suggest that some raids were “tit for tat,” they were always carefully managed within strategic objectives, unlike some of the Luftwaffe’s, where it was made very clear to the German populace and the British that the raids were in retaliation and in revenge for attacks on Germany.

Dresden and Hamburg, in particular, have become icons of suffering through which many German people express their victimhood during the Second World War. This victimhood is, as we will see, a form of interpretation and collective memory that extends “across the generations”⁶³ and has taken on, for some Germans at least, “the appearance of unequivocal truth,” much as Hitler is considered to be synonymous with evil.⁶⁴ However, some of the symbolism and juxtaposition of material culture will only be immediately obvious to members of the German nation who now share a common cultural background. For example, the positioning of the Allied air raids next to the model of the concentration camp and the images of Warsaw ghetto victims in this museum might suggest that the sufferings of so-called Aryan Germans and European Jews was similar if not equal, an equation criticized by several commentators⁶⁵ but encouraged by others.⁶⁶

*Britain and the Blitz*⁶⁷

Unlike the Germans, the British celebrate their role in the Second World War, including their ability to withstand the bombing of civilians. Writing about the fiftieth anniversary of the war, Martin Woollacott commented that “Second World War celebrations have a meaning in Britain that they

do not have in any other former allied country. The war, for some Britons at least, is an icon of our inner superiority.”⁶⁸ It was also a people’s war, or The People’s War.⁶⁹ For Britain, the Second World War was and remains a just war in which the British suffered the bombing of their cities and, under Churchill’s leadership, rallied, endured and eventually fought back and won. Well-known photographs of the Blitz in the media are of wrecked and burning buildings, people in shelters and air raid wardens, policemen offering support—rarely, if ever, of body parts or people grieving over corpses mutilated by fire or bomb blasts. These things happened, but they are not mentioned. Museums in London, such as the Imperial War Museum (in its 1989 construction of the Blitz experience), present bombing as a test of national character, something in which people can take pride. The more recent Museum of London displays (2010) show photographs of covered bodies but still mainly focuses on the survival and bravery of the victims.

In contrast, the bombing of Scotland in the National War Museum of Scotland in the Second World War is barely mentioned at all. Indeed, the exhibition appears to play it down. There is one painting of air raid shelters in Dundee which has a text panel stating, “In Dundee, concern was expressed at the slowness with which the authorities provided shelters. In the event the feared mass attacks did not materialise and, with a total of 38 bombs dropped on the city, Dundee escaped relatively lightly.” Little is made of the fact that other areas in Scotland suffered badly. For example, Clydebank was a “legitimate” industrial target with its docks, ship building yards and factories on Clydeside and was attacked on two consecutive nights in March 1941. Despite the first raid of March 13/14, the docks continued to function. The following night, the Luftwaffe came back and, guided by the still-burning docks and factory areas, bombed the residential districts surrounding them. About 55,000 people lost their homes; only seven out of the 12,000 tenements were reported to have escaped damage.⁷⁰ Over a thousand were killed outright and 1,600 were seriously injured. Bodies were buried in mass graves without coffins. On April 7, the Germans returned again and bombed civilian areas as well as the docks.⁷¹ The absence of detail about this raid, except in a brief textual mention, is a kind of national amnesia and contrast sharply with the way the Blitz is dealt with in England. A similar amnesia can be found in the National Museum of Scotland, where there is a reference to the bombing in Clydebank. Here a reference to bombing can be found in the second paragraph about Scotland’s contribution to the war effort. “On the night of the 13 and 14 March 1941, 581 people were killed in the worst series of Luftwaffe air raids on Clydebank. But its distance from Germany meant Scotland escaped the worst effects of the war.” The use of 581 as the number of dead is interesting. Official announcements at the time estimated the dead to be about 500, though this was soon revised upwards to over a thousand, and those who survived the bombing were incredulous at the initial low figure given out.⁷² The use of the lower number by the museum gives the impression of being deliberate as there

are well documented sources to prove the higher number. At a time when Scotland debated independence, we can interpret this as a distancing from the events of the past that symbolize a united Britain, unconcerned about common national interests within it. The Blitz is a British myth for people were bombed in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as England. For some Scots, intent on pursuing a nationalist agenda, this story is irrelevant and is downplayed to reduce emotional attachment to the Union and what it stood for in the past.

Conclusion

We have seen that photographs of the dead in the bombing wars that marked the Second World War are rare in museums in Britain and Germany. Cultural norms and the lack of the ready availability of certain images, help to explain this absence. However, their absence and occasional presence denote the ways these nations understand their histories in the twenty first century. Germany uses the story of victimhood as a means of uniting itself and a way of coming to terms with its past. Britain's Blitz story promotes a story of common suffering and unity in adversity. In a time of Scottish dissatisfaction with the Union, the Blitz narrative almost disappears in Edinburgh, while museums in England tend to present it as something of which British people can be proud and which defined the nation in the past. The presence or absence of the dead tells us more about ourselves than it does about the events that brought about the sorrow and the suffering.

Acknowledgments

Some of this research was facilitated by EuNaMus, (European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen), a three-year project (2010–13) funded by the EU Seventh Framework program, in which the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, was a partner. I thank my reviewers for their constructive comments. I am grateful to my colleague Dr Andy Sawyer for permission to publish one of his photographs and to the following, the Imperial War Museum, London, the Deutches Techniques Museum, Berlin and the Deutches Historisches Museum, Berlin, and Sam Bryan for similar permissions. This chapter was redrafted during a period of study leave in 2014 for which I thank the University of Leicester.

Notes

- 1 Anthony Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities: Is the Targeting of Civilians in War Ever Justified?* (Bloomsbury: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2007).
- 2 Keith Crawford and Stuart Foster, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Text Books* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2007), 11.

- 3 Richard Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 23.
- 4 Mary O'Neill, "Speaking to the Dead: Images of the Dead in Contemporary Art," *Health (London)* 15, no. 3 (May 2011): 3, accessed August 25, 2015, doi: 10.1177/1363459310397978.
- 5 H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 125.
- 6 Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 7 Alexander Paton, "Mission to Belsen," *British Medical Journal* 283 (December 1981): 19–26, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://www.bergenbelsen.co.uk/pages/Database/ReliefStaffAccount.asp?HeroesID=44&c=44>.
- 8 Tony Kushner, "The Holocaust and the Museum World in Britain: A Study of Ethnography," *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora* 21, no. 1–2 (2002): 22, accessed August 25, 2015, doi 10.1080/02619288.2002.9975029.
- 8 Sontag, Susan, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2004), 73.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 86.
- 10 Kushner, "The Holocaust and the Museum World in Britain," 18.
- 11 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 35; Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 9–10.
- 12 Heinz-Peter Preußner, "Regarding and Imagining: Contrived Immediacy of the Allied Bombing Campaign in Photography, Novel and Historiography," in *German Monitor, Volume 67: Nation of Victims? Representations of German War-time Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam and New York: Amsterdam Editions Rodopi, 2007), 145.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 14 Sonja Foss, "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory," in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, edited by Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers (New Jersey and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 303–313.
- 15 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 99.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 100.
- 17 Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2012), 83.
- 18 Robert McCracken, "Book Review: Azoulay Ariella: 'The Civil Contract of Photography'," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68, no. 2 (2010): 181–183, accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4079324>.
- 19 Judith Beurier, "Death and Material Culture: The Case of Pictures during the First World War," in *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, edited by Nicholas J. Saunders (London: Routledge, 2004), 109–122.
- 20 Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little Brown, 2015), 614.
- 21 Stephen Hart, "Liberation of the Concentration Camps," *BBC History* (2011), accessed August 11, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/liberation_camps_01.shtml.
- 22 Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*, 615.
- 23 Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera at War: War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day* (London: Octopus Books, 1986).
- 24 Kimberly Spring, "Re-Presenting Victim and Perpetrator: The Role of Photographs in US Service Members' Testimony against War," in *Memory and the Future: Transnational Politics, Ethics and Society*, edited by Yifat Gutman,

- Adam D. Brown and Amy Sodaro (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 109.
- 25 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 72.
- 26 John Roberts, *Photography and Its Violations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 5.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Sheila Watson, "The Ministry of Information and the Home Front in Britain," Ph.D. dissertation (University of London, 1984); Ian McLaine, *The Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War I* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979).
- 29 Watson, "The Ministry of Information and the Home Front in Britain."
- 30 File available [http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search?query=dead%20&items_per_page=10&page=7&f\[0\]=mediaType%3Aimage&f\[1\]=contentDate%3ASecond%20World%20War](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search?query=dead%20&items_per_page=10&page=7&f[0]=mediaType%3Aimage&f[1]=contentDate%3ASecond%20World%20War) (accessed April 15, 2014).
- 31 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Germany (accessed April 6, 2014).
- 32 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Germany (accessed April 6, 2014).
- 33 <https://www.ullsteinbild.de/ullstein-webshop/start.html> (accessed April 6, 2014).
- 34 <http://www.sdtb.de/Exhibitions.587.0.html> (accessed April 21, 2014).
- 35 <http://www.sdtb.de/Panoramas.1164.0.html> (accessed April 21, 2014).
- 36 <http://www.sdtb.de/The-new-extension.1298.0.html> (accessed April 23, 2014).
- 37 Winfried Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (New York: The Modern Library, 2004), 13–14.
- 38 Maja Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory: The Politics of War in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 78, fn.13.
- 39 Bas Von Benda-Beckmann, *German Catastrophe: German Historians and the Allied Bombings, 1945–2010* (Amsterdam, NLD: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 340.
- 40 Gilad Margalit, "Dresden and Hamburg—Official Memory and Commemoration of the Victims of Allied Air Raids in the Two Germanies," in *German Monitor, Volume 67: Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam Editions: Rodopi, 2007), 125–140.
- 41 Ibid., 130.
- 42 Ingrid Stabins, *Give Me Tomorrow: A Young Girl's Ordeals during the WWII Russian Invasion of Eastern Germany* (Rockland, Maine: Maine Authors Publishing, 2012).
- 43 Peter Schneider, "'Deutsch als Opfer?' Über ein Tabu Nachkriegsgeneration," in *Ein Volk bon Opfern? Die neue Debatte um de Bombenkrieg 1940–45*, edited by Lothar Kettenacker (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2003), 158–165. Cited by Lothar Kettenacker, "The German Debate," in *Terror from the Sky: The Bombing of German Cities in World War II*, edited by Igor Primoratz (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 212.
- 44 Preußner, "Regarding and Imagining," 146.
- 45 Wolfram Kaiser, Stefan Krankenhagen and Kerstin Poehls, *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives and Representations* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 146.
- 46 The German air force bombed civilians in the opening days of its attack on Poland despite the fact that its military strategy officially targeted military sites and operations (Max Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939–1945* (London: HarperPress, 2011), 6–7. Overy considers it unlikely that civilian deaths were intentional but, whatever the official purpose of the air raids, the Poles and their allies understood bombing of women and children to be part of an official war of terror. He argues that there is no evidence that civilian deaths

- reached 40,000, as has been claimed, but suggests instead approximately 7,000 died [Richard Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 61–63].
- 47 John Berger, “Uses of Photography: For Susan Sontag,” in *Understanding a Photograph: John Berger*, edited by Goff Dyer (London: Penguin Classics, 2013 [1978]), 49.
 - 48 John Berger, “Uses of Photography: For Susan Sontag,” in *Understanding a Photograph: John Berger*, edited by Goff Dyer (London: Penguin Classics, 2013 [1978]), 49–60.
 - 49 John Berger, “Appearances: The Ambiguity of the Photograph,” in *Understanding a Photograph: John Berger*, edited by Geoff Dyer (London: Penguin Classics, 2013 [1982]), 61–98.
 - 50 Halik Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2013).
 - 51 The Battle of Britain in the summer and autumn of 1940 was a duel between fighter aircraft for the control of the skies during daylight hours, with some bombing of British airfields and ports [Henry Pelling, *Britain and the Second World War* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co, 1970), 96–97]. The Blitz, which followed afterwards and continued throughout the winter and spring of 1940–41, was a deliberate attempt to bomb British cities into submission by nighttime bombing, after Hitler postponed his plans to invade on September 17, 1940. Coventry was bombed on November 14, 1940.
 - 52 Leonard Mosley and the editors of Time-Life Books, *World War II: The Battle of Britain* (London: Caxton Publishing, 2004), 142.
 - 53 Overy, “The Bombing War,” 94.
 - 54 Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz: The British under Attack* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 148.
 - 55 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 20.
 - 56 Patrick Hogan, *Understanding Nationalism: On Narrative, Cognitive Science, and Empathy* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2009), 98.
 - 57 Ian Garden, *The Third Reich’s Celluloid War: Propaganda in Nazi Feature Films, Documentaries and Television* (Stroud: The History Press, 2012), plate facing page 192.
 - 58 Robert Moeller, “The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimisation in East and West Germany,” in *Germans as Victims*, edited by Bill Niven (London: Palgrave, 2006), 26–42; Charles S. Maier, “Targeting the City: Debates and Silences about the Aerial Bombing of World War II,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 859 (September 2005): 434.
 - 59 Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments during the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 148.
 - 60 Keith Crawford and Stuart Foster, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Text Books* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2007), 50–51.
 - 61 Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe*, 140.
 - 62 *Ibid.*, 137.
 - 63 Christopher Hewer and Ron Roberts, “History, Culture and Cognition: Towards a Dynamic Model of Social Memory,” *Culture and Psychology* 18, no. 2 (2012): 170, accessed August 25, 2015, doi: 10.1177/1354067X11434836.
 - 64 *Ibid.*
 - 65 Preußner, “Regarding and Imagining.”
 - 66 Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand or the Fire: The Bombing of Germany 1940–1945* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2006 [2002]).

- 67 The word Blitz is shorthand for Blitzkrieg, a German word to describe a military tactic of “lightning war” which was designed to hit the enemy fast and hard in order to secure surrender. In Britain, it was shortened to the word Blitz and came to stand for German bombing raids.
- 68 Martin Woollacott, “Section 2,” *The Guardian*, 24 March, 1994: 2, cited David Cesarani in Martin Evans and Kenneth Lunn (eds.), “Lacking in Convictions: British War Crimes Policy and National Memory in the Second World War,” in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), 27.
- 69 Sonya Rose, *Which People’s War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 70 Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1935–1945*, caption opposite 590.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 416–417.
- 72 Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz: The British under Attack* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 290.

Bibliography

- Abbott, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative: Second Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Azoulay, Ariella. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2012.
- Berger, John. “Uses of Photography: For Susan Sontag.” In *Understanding a Photograph: John Berger*, edited by Goff Dyer, 49–60. London: Penguin Classics, 2013 [1978].
- Berger, John. “Appearances: The Ambiguity of the Photograph.” In *Understanding a Photograph: John Berger*, edited by Geoff Dyer, 61–98. London: Penguin Classics, 2013 [1982].
- Beurier, Judith. “Death and Material Culture: The Case of Pictures during the First World War.” In *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, edited by Nicholas J. Saunders, 109–122. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London and New York: Verso, 2010.
- Calder, Angus. *The Myth of the Blitz*. London: Pimlico, 2004 [1991].
- Cesarani, David. “Lacking in Convictions: British War Crimes Policy and National Memory in the Second World War.” In *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Martin Evans and Kenneth Lunn, 27–42. Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997.
- Crawford, Keith A. and Stuart J. Foster. *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Text Books*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2007.
- Foss, Sonja K. “Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory.” In *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, edited by Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers, 303–313. New Jersey and London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004.
- Friedrich, Jörg. *Brandstätten: Der Anblick des Bombenkriegs: (Brandstätten Fire Sites)*. Propyläen: Verlag, 2003.
- Friedrich, Jörg. *Der Brand or the Fire: The Bombing of Germany 1940–1945*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2006 [2002].

- Garden, Ian. *The Third Reich's Celluloid War: Propaganda in Nazi Feature Films, Documentaries and Television*. Stroud: History, 2012.
- Gardiner, Juliet. *Wartime Britain 1935–1945*. London: Headline Book, 2004.
- Gardiner, Juliet. *The Blitz: The British under Attack*. London: HarperCollins, 2011.
- Godfroid, Anne. "The European Forum of Contemporary Conflict." In *The Power of the Object: Museums and World War II*, edited by Esben Kjeldbaek, 83–98. Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc, 2010.
- Grayling, Anthony C. *Among the Dead Cities: Is the Targeting of Civilians in War Ever Justified?* Bloomsbury: Bloomsbury, 2007.
- Hart, Stephen. "Liberation of the Concentration Camps." *BBC History*, 2011. Accessed August 11, 2015. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/liberation_camps_01.shtml.
- Hastings, Max. *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939–1945*. London: Harper, 2011.
- Hewer, Christopher and Ron Roberts. "History, Culture and Cognition: Towards a Dynamic Model of Social Memory." *Culture and Psychology* 18, no. 2 (2012): 167–183. Accessed August 25, 2015. doi: 10.1177/1354067X11434836.
- Hogan, Patrick. *Understanding Nationalism: On Narrative, Cognitive Science, and Empathy*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009.
- Kaiser, Wolfram, Stefan Krankenhagen and Kerstin Poehls. *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives and Representations*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014.
- Kettenacker, Lothar. "The German Debate." In *Terror from the Sky: The Bombing of German Cities in World War II*, edited by Igor Primoratz, 203–222. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010.
- Kochanski, Halik. *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War*. London: Penguin, 2013.
- Kushner, Tony. "The Holocaust and the Museum World in Britain: A Study of Ethnography." *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora* 21, no. 1–2 (2002): 12–40. Accessed August 25, 2015. doi 10.1080/02619288.2002.9975029.
- Lambourne, Nicola. *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments during the Second World War*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.
- Lewinski, Jorge. *The Camera at War: War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day*. London: Octopus, 1986.
- Maier, Charles. "Targeting the City: Debates and Silences about the Aerial Bombing of World War II." *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 859 (September 2005): 429–444. Accessed April 12, 2016. https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/irrc_859_maier.pdf.
- Margalit, Gilad. "Dresden and Hamburg—Official Memory and Commemoration of the Victims of Allied Air Raids in the Two Germanies." In *German Monitor, Volume 67: Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz, 125–140. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- McCracken, Robert Chad. "Book Review: Azoulay Ariella: 'The Civil Contract of Photography'." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68, no. 2 (2010): 181–183. Accessed August 25, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4079324>.

- McLaine, Ian. *The Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War I*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979.
- Moeller, Robert G. "The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimisation in East and West Germany." In *Germans as Victims*, edited by Bill Niven, 26–42. London: Palgrave, 2006.
- Moeller, Robert G. "The Bombing War in Germany 2005–1940: Back to the Future?" In *Bombing Civilians: A Twentieth-Century History*, edited by Yuki Tanaka and Marilyn B. Young, 46–76. New York: New, 2009.
- Mosley, Leonard and the editors of Time-Life Books. *World War II: The Battle of Britain*. London: Caxton, 2004.
- Moyn, Samuel. "Empathy in History, Empathising with Humanity." *History and Theory* 45 (October 2006): 397–415. Accessed August 25, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy4.lib.le.ac.uk/stable/3874132>.
- Niven, Bill. "The GDR and the Memory of the Bombing of Dresden." In *Germans as Victims*, edited by Bill Niven, 109–129. London: Palgrave, 2006.
- Niven, Bill. "German Victimhood Discourse in Comparative Perspective." In *Narratives of Trauma: Discourses of German Wartime Suffering in National and International Perspective*, edited by Helmut Schmitz and Annette Seidel-Arpaci, 163–180. New York: Rodopi, 2011.
- O'Neill, Mary. "Speaking to the Dead: Images of the Dead in Contemporary Art." *Health (London)* 15, no. 3 (May 2011): 299–312. Accessed August 25, 2015. doi: 10.1177/1363459310397978.
- Otto, Lene. "Post Communist Museums: Terrspaces and Traumascesapes." In *The Power of the Object: Museums and World War II*, edited by Esben Kjeldbaek, 324–360. Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc, 2010.
- Overy, Richard. *The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945*. London: Allen Lane, 2013.
- Paton, Alexander. "Mission to Belsen." *British Medical Journal* 283 (December 1981): 19–26. Accessed June 8, 2015. <http://www.bergenbelsen.co.uk/pages/Database/ReliefStaffAccount.asp?HeroesID=44&=44>.
- Pelling, Henry. *Britain and the Second World War*. Glasgow: William Collins Sons, 1970.
- Preußner Heinz-Peter. "Regarding and Imagining: Contrived Immediacy of the Allied Bombing Campaign in Photography, Novel and Historiography." In *German Monitor, Volume 67: Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz, 141–160. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007.
- Priestley, John B. *Britain under Fire*. London: Country Life, (n.d).
- Roberts, John. *Photography and Its Violations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Rose, Sonya O. *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Schmitz, Helmut (Editor). *German Monitor, Volume 67: Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007.
- Schneider, Peter. "'Deutsch als Opfer?' Über ein Tabu Nachkriegsgeneration." In *Ein Volk bon Opfern? Die neue Debatte um de Bombenkrieg 1940–45*, edited by Lothar Kettenacker, 158–165. Berlin: Rowohlt, 2003.
- Sebald, Winfried G. *On the Natural History of Destruction*. New York: Modern Library, 2004.

- Showalter, Dennis. "Europe's Way of War, 1815–64." In *European Warfare 1815–2000*, edited by Jeremy M. Black, 27–50. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2004.
- Spring, Kimberly. "Re-Presenting Victim and Perpetrator: The Role of Photographs in US Service Members' Testimony against War." In *Memory and the Future: Transnational Politics, Ethics and Society*, edited by Yifat Gutman, Adam D. Brown and Amy Sodaro, 105–120. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Stabins, Ingrid. *Give Me Tomorrow: A Young Girl's Ordeals during the WWII Russian Invasion of Eastern Germany*. Rockland, Maine: Maine Authors, 2012.
- Von Benda-Beckmann, Bas. *German Catastrophe: German Historians and the Allied Bombings, 1945–2010*. Amsterdam, NLD: Amsterdam University Press, 2010.
- Wachsmann, Nikolaus. *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. London: Little Brown, 2015.
- Watson, Sheila. "The Ministry of Information and the Home Front in Britain." Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1984.
- Woollacott, Martin. "Section 2." *The Guardian*, March 24, 1994.
- Zehfuss, Maja. *Wounds of Memory: The Politics of War in Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Zelizer, Barbie. *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Zolberg, Vera, L. "Museums as Contested Sites of Remembrance: The Enola Gay Affair." In *Theorizing Museums*, edited by Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe, 69–82. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

5 Saints, Martyrs and Heroes

“Sacred Displays” or the Iconography of Death in Cypriot Museums

Yiannis Toumazis

Introduction

The present research mainly focuses on the iconography and display of violence and death in museums, in such a politically contested space as Cyprus. It especially concentrates on what I call “sacred displays”: museum displays, which are devoted to Cypriot (Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot) heroes or martyrs and which, almost always, contain emblematic photographs of the victims. Often displayed together with other objects, such as remnants of the clothing of the violently deceased, personal equipment or other related relics, these displays, basically bearing religious connotations, aim at triggering nationalistic emotions in the viewer. In Cyprus, the public display of heroic death through photographs is not uncommon. These emblematic portraits of death, like, for instance, the photos of heroes and martyrs are often displayed in schools, village coffee shops, football clubs, local associations and in public monuments or cenotaphs throughout the island. These are not only icons of death, but they have also often become iconic images of atrocity, echoing iconic atrocities mainly associated with national ideology. This chapter examines how certain museums in Cyprus (both in the northern and the southern parts) stimulate specific nationalistic narratives by using photography and objects related to atrocity and death. Using several examples of displays from various Cypriot museums, my intention is to mainly focus on the politics of such displays, their semiotics, ethics and aesthetics, also attempting to draw parallels between the display of death, nationalism and religion.

Nationalism, Religion, Cyprus

Cyprus, the “reluctant” republic, according to Stephen G. Xydis,¹ was declared independent in 1960. The independence from the British colonial rule did not lead to a problem-free cohabitation of Greek- and Turkish Cypriots. During most of the British colonial rule (1878–1960), Greek Cypriot nationalism found fertile ground to grow without considering the Turkish Cypriot presence on the island. The main reason

for this was the relative lack of a Turkish Cypriot nationalist consciousness and a Turkish Cypriot nationalist movement. The British played the leading part in awakening Turkish Cypriot nationalism, feeling that its consequences would assist them in maintaining control on the island.² The violent eruption of Turkish Cypriot nationalism in the 1950s found the Greek Cypriots not very well prepared to accept that this was a real and important political phenomenon, which had to be taken into account in their own political calculations. The “Greekness” and, from a point onwards, the “Turkishness” of Cypriots (Greek- and Turkish Cypriots respectively) and, consequently, the dependence on the motherlands, but also the desired annexation to the latter, constituted a key argument for either side for a series of violent and bloody incidents climaxing in the arrival of the Turkish army in Cyprus in July 1974—what the Greek Cypriots call the Turkish invasion and what most of the Turkish Cypriots refer to as the Peace Operation—and the continuing division of the island.

In turn, accounts and attitudes around the Cyprus problem took specific forms and shapes in the respective motherlands. Cyprus has influenced the nationalisms of both Greece and Turkey and has certainly been affected by them. In fact, Greek and Turkish nationalisms are closely related to each other. They were forged against each other and also led to two independence wars fought against each other. The Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire (1821) led in 1830 to the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece. Almost a century later, in 1919, the Greek invasion of Western Anatolia resulted in the victory of Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk], the end of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.³ Despite the fact that in their emergence both nationalisms claimed secularism, they eventually incorporated religion in their pursuits. According to Grigoriadis:

Although religion was at first considered to be an obstacle to modernization and Westernization, it later emerged as a necessary repository of cultural values for the construction of national identity and the unification of disparate ethnic, religious and linguistic groups within the newly drawn nation-state borders. This resulted in a religion- and culture-driven synthetic national identity but did not mean that religion lost its subordinate status to nationalism. It did mean that secularist leaders engaged in debates with heavy religious connotations in their aim to appeal to people and popularize the message of nationalism. Eventually, the boundary between secular and religious nationalism became blurred.⁴

In Cyprus, the boundaries between secular and religious nationalism were equally blurred as in Turkey and in Greece. Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms, both shaped and heavily influenced by the respective

nationalisms of the motherlands, bear many of the similarities mentioned above. Because of the very active role of the Greek Orthodox Church in the *Enosis* cause, that is, the union of Cyprus with Greece, in the beginning of the 20th century, religious nationalism was much more dominant among the Greek Cypriots; the Turkish Cypriots were rapidly keen to adopt Mustafa Kemal's secular reforms—as early as in the 1930s—and progressively became more and more preoccupied with the idea of *Taksim*—the ethno-national partition of the island.⁵

Display of Death and Cyprus

For Georges Bataille, human sacrifice is, in general,

the acute stage of a dispute setting the movement of a measureless violence against the real order and duration. It is the most radical contestation of the primacy of utility. It is at the same time the highest degree of an unleashing of internal violence.⁶

Human sacrifice, as an act to placate the gods, has been inherent to human culture since prehistoric times. Iphigenia had to be sacrificed by her father to appease goddess Artemis so that the Achaean ships could sail to Troy. In Christian faith, the salvation of the human soul presupposes the supreme sacrifice of the Son of God. In human societies, death for one's faith has been considered sacred and worshipped accordingly throughout the ages. In Christianity, apart from Jesus—who died suffering on the Cross—warrior saints and holy martyrs were tortured to death by the enemies of their faith and gained sainthood by the Church. Their remains, parts of their skeletons, remnants of their clothes or other personal belongings, which often had been plundered during holy wars, such as the crusades, are on public display, revered and honoured accordingly and worshiped for their miraculous properties. In Islam the concept of martyrdom is also venerated, echoing the battle of Karbala (a small patch of land on the Euphrates), where Houssein ibn Ali, the prophet's grandson and third Imam of the Shi'ites, was tortured to death and beheaded by the army of the Umayyad Caliph Yazid. This conflict between Hussein and Yazid, between the Imam and the Caliph, actually sealed the schism between the Sunni and the Shi'ite Muslims.⁷ Martyrdom in Islam is specifically linked with the concept of the *Jihad*, the Holy Struggle (spiritual but also physical) for the defense of one's faith. Today, the so-called Islamic State executes “infidels” in the cruellest of ways invoking Allah's name.

Heroic sacrifice or dying for one's “national cause” is equally respected. Monuments and cenotaphs are erected for heroes and martyrs (considered enemies and traitors by their opponents) who gave their lives fighting. Their images and very often their clothes or personal belongings, which sometimes embody legendary relics of epic tales and heroic deeds, are displayed

in specially built museums. But heroic death or martyrdom is almost always related to atrocity. Nenad Miscevic argues that:

‘National awakening’ and struggles for political independence are often both heroic and cruel; the formation of a recognizably national state often responds to deep popular sentiment but sometimes yields inhuman consequences, from violent expulsion and ‘cleansing’ of non-nationals to organized mass murder.⁸

The fact is that wherever you look across the Cypriot territory—both in the northern and in the southern parts of the island—religion and nationalism are omnipresent: the main features dominating public space are, on the one hand, religious monuments, namely churches and mosques—some dating back centuries and others more recent—and, on the other, national monuments, cenotaphs and museums that are associated with some point in the history of Cyprus and mainly the recent one: the liberation struggle of the Greek Cypriots against British colonial rule (1955–1959), the atrocities between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (1963–1964) and the monuments and museums of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, which are related to the tragic events of 1974.

It is also a fact that all these edifices contain, depict or expose publicly, through material objects, images and mainly photographs, some of which have acquired an iconic status, extreme or violent acts. In our iconolatric world, many of the images of atrocities have become iconic. As Umberto Eco aptly summarized:

The vicissitudes of our century have been summed up in a few exemplary photographs that have proven epoch-making: the unruly crowds pouring into the square during the ‘ten days that shook the world’; Robert Capa’s dying miliciano; the marines planting the flag on Iwo Jima; the Vietnamese prisoner of war being executed with a shot in the temple; Che Guevara’s tortured body on a plank in a barracks. Each of these images has become a myth and has condensed numerous speeches. It has surpassed the individual circumstance that produced it; it no longer speaks of the single character or of those characters, but expresses concepts. It is unique, but at the same time it refers to other images that preceded it or that, in imitation, have followed it.⁹

Moreover, the relationship of atrocity photography with religion is not at all accidental. According to Batchen et al.: “The iconic in atrocity photography bears relation to Western myths and archetypes—indeed to religious art.”¹⁰ Furthermore, Susan Sontag claims that:

it seems that the appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show the bodies naked. For many

centuries, in Christian art, depictions of hell offered both of these elemental satisfactions.¹¹

W. J. T. Mitchell fittingly remarks on the correlation of the photographs depicting the tortured victims of Abu Ghraib with Christian iconography.¹² One could say that such images not only display, but also in fact quite often glorify human violence exerted on the human body and activate subconscious political and religious associations with pornographic and voyeuristic connotations, both of which are also present in some cases in Christian iconography. Photography today, to evoke Sontag once again,¹³ may have lost its ability to shock, infuriate or enrage, but, on the other hand, we can also say that iconic images of atrocity undoubtedly continue to reinforce religious or nationalistic feelings. They are in a way “cloning terror,” to use W. T. J. Mitchell’s expression,¹⁴ acting as carriers of religious dogmatism and political ideology. Iconic photographs can sometimes distance the viewer from the depicted event’s cultural or political contexts, sometimes turning the individuals represented into stereotypes. These images tend to use and promote human suffering simply as a cliché—usually in a banal way—and certainly dissociated from the human dimension of the image. There are also photographs displayed in these museums, which are not of the documentary type and do not directly represent atrocity, but they are related to it. These are photographic portraits of deceased heroes and martyrs. According to Batchen et al.,¹⁵ extremity is not essentially a condition of all photographs of atrocity. Photographs of atrocity are not only photographs in photojournalism and prison documents, but also photographs that appear to have been taken for family albums or as holiday snaps. Particularly, with the viewer’s retrospective knowledge, such ordinary photographs can become photographs of atrocity. These images are used almost like in Byzantine iconography. The portraits of martyrs and heroes in museums, on the one hand, recreate in the viewer a traumatic memory, and on the other hand, inspire awe and respect, energizing the nationalistic feeling, just like the portraits of saints activate religious veneration. The study cases presented in this chapter will attempt to highlight this “sacred” character of the heroic displays in Cypriot museums and will specifically examine the crucial role of photography in shaping this “sanctified heroism.”

Greek Cypriot Iconography of Death

As we have already seen, Cyprus abounds with images of death associated with religion and national ideology. Warrior-saints with armor and swords killing infidels and monsters, female saints brutally tortured and martyred for their faith, holy martyrs burned alive or violently blinded before being hanged. Relics of all these saints are venerated as being miraculous, together with many icons—also considered miraculous—that adorn the Greek Orthodox churches of the island. Pieces of sacred wood supposedly

from the Holy Cross, itself an instrument of torture, are believed to have been brought to Cyprus by St. Helena and have ever since attracted believers, who flock to many churches and monasteries to worship them: human sacrifice as a sacred atrocity is the highest expression of the Christian faith also on the island of Cyprus. On the other hand, Cyprus is also rife with images of heroes and martyrs who gave their lives fighting for their country. Among these are Greek Cypriot heroes who were hanged, tortured or even burned alive in their effort to liberate Cyprus from the British, and whose photos are displayed in coffee-shops and nationalist associations of various villages, at the “Imprisoned Graves” in the Central Prison in Nicosia, at several National Struggle Museums and even at the very site of their sacrifice—in guerrilla hideouts now turned into museums. The Church has always been closely tied to the struggles of the Greek Cypriots and for over a century played an active leading role in pursuing the island’s national issue, *Enosis*, namely the union with Greece. As years passed, and especially for the Greek Cypriots, religious identity became closely identified with national consciousness. Moreover, no other figure marked the political life of the early years of the independence of Cyprus more than the priestly figure of Archbishop Makarios, the first President of the newly formed Republic and for many decades the religious and political leader of the Greek Cypriots.

The Museum in the Monastery

The close relationship between the Church and the national struggle in Cyprus is best represented by Gregoris Afxentiou, second in command of EOKA (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters, Greek: Εθνική Οργάνωσις Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών), a Greek Cypriot nationalist guerrilla organization that fought a campaign for the end of British rule in Cyprus, for the island’s self-determination and for eventual union with Greece. Afxentiou was hiding in Machairas Monastery in the Troodos Mountains disguised as a monk. Incongruously, the Church did not manage to save Afxentiou, who was eventually burned alive by the British forces on March 3, 1957, following a raid at his secret hideout, just a few hundred meters from the monastery. Today, a colossal statue of the hero stands near Afxentiou’s hideout, which has been turned into a national shrine of the hero’s holocaust and is revered as one of the most important monuments of the Liberation Struggle of EOKA. Furthermore, within the monastery complex, one of the most sacred and important places of pilgrimage and worship in Cyprus, devoted to Virgin Mary, there is a museum dedicated to Afxentiou’s heroic sacrifice. The museum exhibits photographs combined with Afxentiou’s personal belongings, the garments he wore when he was disguised as a monk, remnants of his burnt shirt, trousers and leather jacket, his golden tooth and even hair from his body detected on an under blouse he wore.



Figure 5.1 Showcase in the museum dedicated to the Greek-Cypriot hero Gregoris Afxentiou at the Machairas Monastery, 2013. © Yiannis Toumazis.

The use of photography has a key role here. Enlarged photos from Afxentiou's early childhood, photographic blow-ups of him as a high school student, dressed in army uniform or as a guerrilla fighter, provide the black and white setting for the central displays. Juxtaposed cutouts of Afxentiou and his co-fighters, strategically placed in front of these quasi panoramas, create a three-dimensional effect, like a [maladroit] theatrical décor. One could also claim that the use of blown up photography here is somehow reminiscent of the post-byzantine frescoes galore from the nearby Machairas church, which illustrate the life and martyrdom of Jesus Christ. Actually, the very first images that welcome the visitor in this very small museum are a copy of Panayia Machairiotissa (Virgin Mary of Machairas), one of the few icons attributed to Saint Luke, and next to it, two photographs of Afxentiou. The first one is a photomontage depicting a bird's-eye view of the monastery, its mountain surroundings and Gregoris Afxentiou, in his military uniform imposingly standing in the forefront. There is also a caption printed on the photograph, with the phrase (in Greek): "Afxentiou, the brave one who revived Thermopylae." The second photo is the emblematic identity card portrait of the hero dressed as a monk. The sequence of these three iconic images (Virgin Mary-Afxentiou as Saviour and Afxentiou as Monk) directly implies a "sanctified" portrayal of the

burnt fighter. What is also very interesting is the use of photographs inside the few showcases of this museum, displayed together with specific objects. In the first showcase, almost adjacent to the entrance desk, the same photo of Afxentiou dressed as a monk is again exhibited, this time in a naively handcrafted wooden frame. Here, the same photo becomes an object in its own right,¹⁶ almost like a Byzantine icon, and its materiality resonates holy associations. The photo is flanked by the rifle and other military accoutrements of Afxentiou, together with his monk gear: robe, socks, cap, slippers and under blouse. There are also two much more personal exhibits in the showcase: the hero's golden tooth and some of his body hair exhibited in a shallow circular glass lab container. The accompanying caption informs the visitors that the hair was recovered during the restoration of his under blouse. These items, and especially the macabre bodily remains, enhance and magnify the sanctification of the Greek Cypriot hero, bringing to mind the holy relics flanking the icons of Christian saints. To intensify the feeling of awe, another central showcase represents the heroic sacrifice of the hero. Photography combined with objects is again the dominant museographic pattern. Cut-out, blown-up photos of Afxentiou's co-fighters, who were ordered by him to abandon the hideout and surrender to avoid death, create the backdrop of the showcase. Inside the case, documentary photos of the siege, combined with the burnt remains of clothing, exploded or burnt ammunition and other relics create another macabre display. In a table showcase nearby, the visitor can see what remained from Afxentiou's leather military jacket, as the relative caption informs us in Greek. Here photography serves as visual proof of the colonial brutal atrocity. As Paul Williams says, "photographs can make horror palpable and convincing";¹⁷ in combination with the material objects from the actual scene of atrocity, museum authenticity acquires a much more direct and "dramatic" aspect. One could also argue that this museum encapsulates the essence of Greek Cypriot religious nationalism of the 1950s. The Cypriot Church not only backed the Greek Cypriot struggle against the British colonials, but also played a vital role in the field operations. Furthermore, and somehow symbolically, through the priestly gear, the military accoutrements and the bodily remains—like the holy relics, in abundance in the nearby monastery—this museum enshrouds Afxentiou, the most important national hero of the Greek Cypriots, in a religious, quasi-sacred veil. Moreover, the half-burnt clothes—gruesome remnants of the violent and tragic events—intensify the viewer's affect and empathy in relation to the hero and his martyrdom, implying at the same time the inhuman colonial practices. These objects, combined with photographs of the documentary type, function as real evidence of the committed brutality, thereby enhancing the photographic evidence depicting the burnt body of the hero, whose veracity could possibly be questioned by some. Symbolically, the national sacrifice also becomes a religious one. Writing about the Holocaust, Tim Cole emphasizes that it acquired "a pseudo religious aura

within contemporary Israel.”¹⁸ Subsequently, this aura became a central element of political discourse:

what Liebman and Don-Yehiya have termed Israeli ‘civil religion’, and thus a vital element of ‘the ceremonials, myths, and creeds which legitimate the social order, unite the population, and mobilise the society’s members in pursuit of its dominant political goals’.¹⁹

Since his death, Afxentiou’s sacrifice has been one of the most iconic chapters of the Greek Cypriot national narrative and for many an important episode of nationalistic pride hinting to the long desired *Enosis* with motherland Greece. On the contrary, at the Imperial War Museum in London, one experiences a completely different perspective of Afxentiou’s deeds. In the section on the former colonies of the British Empire, one of the showcases is dedicated to Cyprus and the struggle of the Greek Cypriots against the British colonialists (1955–1959), which in this case is called the “Cyprus Emergency.” Among the many items on display are weapons, makeshift bombs, mines and explosives, spiked clubs, flags, various documents, handwritten letters and proclamations of EOKA, which in the exhibit captions is described as a terrorist organization. Centrally placed in the showcase is an official police photograph of Afxentiou, but in this case, seen from the perspective of the colonial victimiser, he is not displayed as a sanctified hero, but rather as a gang leader and a ruthless terrorist. It is evident that the reading of the events, seen from the side of the victimizer, is completely different here. The inflicted arson of Afxentiou’s hideout that resulted in his gruesome death is nowhere to be found in the caption, indirectly validating the atrocity of the colonial regime.

The Museum at the Central Prison

Afxentiou’s burnt body, together with twelve other EOKA fighters, nine of whom were hanged by the British, is buried in the “Imprisoned Graves”—another emblematic place for the Greek Cypriots—at the Central Prison of the Cypriot capital. The site, which is part of the complex of the main colonial prison of the island still in use, consists of a small graveyard in an inner walled courtyard, adjacent to the death row and the gallows. The British built the cemetery when Field Marshall John Harding was Governor of Cyprus (1955–1957). Harding was infamous for the unprecedented measures he took against the Greek Cypriots at the time, including curfews, closures of schools, the opening of concentration camps, the indefinite detention of suspects without trial and the imposition of the death penalty for offenses such as carrying weapons, incendiary devices or any material that could be used in a bomb. A number of such executions took place often in controversial circumstances, leading to resentment, in Cyprus, the United Kingdom and in other countries.



Figure 5.2 View of the Imprisoned Graves, 2010. © Yiannis Toumazis.

The reason for creating this small cemetery inside the prison was that the British did not want the funerals of the executed EOKA fighters to develop into mass rallies and rebellious demonstrations. Only a Greek Orthodox priest was allowed in the prison to perform the funeral service. Religion is evidently omnipresent here. The white marble crosses, which according to the Greek Orthodox custom, bear the photographs of the heroes, testify in the most “sacred” way the heroic sacrifice. This religious space has an eerie, mesmerising aura, accentuated by the barbed wire crowning the yellow stone prison walls.

Next door, one can also see the cells of the condemned fighters in the death row, the gallows and the paraphernalia of their execution: hanging rope, iron handcuffs, a long leather belt to tie the prisoner’s feet and a white canvas hood for the victim. An open trap door on the floor, just below the gallows, suggests the hanging procedure. Undoubtedly, this site, like so many others in Cyprus, both in the northern and the southern parts “merely aid the remembrance of the perpetrators of pain and shame rather than the victims.”²⁰ In addition, the complete absence of any informational texts somehow enhances the horrific atmosphere of agony and death, evoking to the visitor’s imagination the last living moments of the prisoners and accentuating the horrific colonial methods of prisoner execution. Memorials

of this kind aim at stirring up historical memory and charging it emotionally with the energy released by spaces of extermination, especially by the human absence, which, once more, hints at death. Museums dedicated to the Holocaust are similarly charged, as are the crematoriums and gas chambers in concentration camps. In his study “On Sanctifying the Holocaust: An Anti-Theological Treatise,”²¹ Adi Ophir talks about a newly created “Holocaust religion,” whose intention is to sanctify the Holocaust through a religious consciousness built around it. Ophir claims that: “Absolute Evil must be remembered in exquisite detail. And already scattered throughout the land are institutions of immortalisation and documentation, like God’s altars in Canaan one generation after the settlement.”²² He also points out that in these newly founded “sacred” institutions there are rituals of memorial, remembering and repetition, instead of rituals of sacrifices, since the sacrifice is completed and now all that is left is to remember.²³

On March 9, 2016, on the central stage of Cyprus’ State Theatre, the Council of Historical Memory of EOKA Struggle 1955–1959, the Associations of EOKA Fighters and the EOKA Liberation Struggle Foundation, which, according to Costas Kadis, Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus, “perform valuable work around the historical study, research and scientific documentation of the heroic saga of 1955–1959, thus contributing significantly to the enlightenment and preservation of our historical memory,”²⁴ organized a dramatized recreation of Gregoris Afxentiou’s last hours in his hideout on Machairas mountains. The event was organized to culminate the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the EOKA Struggle. Similar celebrations are annually held in the Republic of Cyprus, in elementary and high schools, local associations and other institutions that deal with the preservation of national memory. Returning to the “Imprisoned Graves,” one could also argue that this public exhibition of the place of sacrifice, as well as the semantics of its museography and spatial layout, once again allude to Christian tradition, in other words, to the “sanctity” of the place of martyrdom, and subconsciously establish the museum-church relationship. The display of the gallows as an instrument of torture and national sacrifice conceptually alludes to the Cross of Christ and spatially implies the “Holy of Holies,” the sanctuary in which the supreme act of human sacrifice takes place. The photos of the heroes-martyrs replace the Christian icons, while the cemetery-memorial nearby, with its marble crosses, certifies that enduring relationship. It is somehow incongruous that such a “holy heritage site,” i.e. an actual cemetery, lies within the heart of a very active prison, heavily overloaded with prisoners, which once belonged to the perpetrators and now to the former victims. One could also argue that it would be more appropriate and ethical to re-entomb the EOKA heroes in a proper Christian cemetery, thus avoiding this literal display of death in an active prison environment, part of which also acts as a museum of colonial atrocity.

Contemporary Reliquaries: Exhuming 1974

Adjacent to Vouno, a village in the northern part of Cyprus, which after 1974 was renamed Yukarı Taşkent (Upper Tochni) and will be discussed further in this chapter, lies the village of Sychari, now renamed Aşağı Taşkent (Lower Tochni). In the broader area of the village, a large number of Greek Cypriot soldiers were murdered in cold blood in 1974, most of whom are still considered missing today. These soldiers were buried in mass graves, who are currently being exhumed, thanks to a coordinated initiative of the two Cypriot communities under the auspices of the United Nations. These remains are identified with DNA testing and are handed over to their relatives for a proper burial.

The photograph shown here, which depicts a small excavator in an idyllic hillside covered with pine trees, is not as innocent as it seems at first sight. The location is situated just beyond the site of the huge flag of the so-called “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” engraved by the Turkish army by painting the ground (an area of approximately seventeen football fields) on the slope of the mountain. I was driven to this site by the young caretaker of the Museum of the Martyrs of Tochni (also to be discussed further down) when I visited the museum some time ago. Incidentally, the young man did not speak any English and brought me there on his own



Figure 5.3 Works for the exhumation of bodies of Greek Cypriot missing persons at the Sychari area, 2011. © Yiannis Toumazis.

initiative and without me knowing that coincidentally, on the day of my visit, exhumations of bodies of Greek Cypriots from the mass grave at Sychari were being carried out in the area. Despite the practical difficulties, I managed to secretly take a snapshot of this gruesome operation. In the last couple of years, a very large number of exhumations takes place, thanks to information given by eyewitnesses of the massacres from both



Figure 5.4 Showcase dedicated to Corporal Georgios Savva at the Museum of Commando Fighters in Cyprus, 2010. © Yiannis Toumazis.

communities that have come forward in the recent years. Together with the bones, macabre remnants of the clothes and other personal belongings of the victims are discovered in mass graves all over Cyprus. In many cases, these remains, together with the boxes in which the bones of the missing persons were delivered to their relatives, are displayed in museums in the southern part of the island. In the Museum of Commando Fighters in Cyprus, which was opened in 2010, an entire showcase is devoted to Corporal Georgios Savva, who was killed during the Turkish invasion in Kyrenia. Exhibited in a black oval frame, together with Savvas's portrait photograph, is the reliquary of the identified bones of the commando together with remnants of his clothes and shoes, as these were uncovered during the exhumation. The following information is given on the accompanying caption: "Holy Chest, Corporal Georgios Savva, hero of the 33rd Squadron of Commandos." This modern wooden box, with a metal lining—in essence a small coffin—identical to dozens of others in which the bones discovered in the mass graves have been placed, is museologically interpreted as a "holy chest," a reliquary for a hero-saint, indirectly alluding to both the glorification and the sanctification of the deceased soldier. Also in this case, the "photographic-icon" and the personal belongings of the victim take a macabre materiality and serve as affect activators, indicating a nationalistic approach, which is validated by the implicit aura of sanctity of the victim. Here, religion and nationalism blend together, the chest becomes holy and the hero becomes a saint.

Turkish Cypriot Iconography of Death

The relationship between religion and nationalism is somewhat different for the Turkish Cypriots from that for the Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriot nationalism was not present during most of the British colonial rule (1878–1960). Michael Attalides argues that the main reason for this was the relative lack of a Turkish Cypriot national consciousness and a Turkish Cypriot nationalist movement.²⁵ According to Charalambos Kafkarides, the British played the leading part in awakening Turkish Cypriot nationalism, sensing that its consequences would assist them in maintaining control of the island.²⁶ The close relationship though, between religion and the national issue, which existed for the Greek Cypriots is not so much observed in the case of the Turkish Cypriots, since the secular reforms of Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] were easily and rapidly adopted by them. On the other hand, and as it also happened in the motherlands, secularist leaders in Cyprus used religion as a tool to engage more people to the message of nationalism. One could also argue that despite the more secular approach to the Turkish Cypriot national cause, Islamic religion acted symbolically as counterweight to the Greek Orthodox aspirations.²⁷ Thus, Turkish Cypriots who die for their national cause are not called heroes but martyrs, a notion deriving directly from the

Islamic faith. Martyrdom in Islamic faith is quite a spiritual concept. For Mahmoud M. Ayoub:

at least in early Islam, the application of the term *martyr* was not limited to the person who is killed in the way of God on the battlefield. Martyrdom is an act of *jihad* (striving) in the way of God. *Jihad* however, contrary to the common view held in the West, is not simply militant: more basic is the *jihad* against the evil in one's own soul and in society. It is this inner purity resulting from the *jihad* of the soul that creates the right intention of serving the cause of truth in whatever way possible. In addition to dying in defense of one's faith, property or life, therefore the act of falling off one's mount, dying of snakebite, or drowning is also regarded as martyrdom. Likewise, he who dies from a stray arrow or bullet, or from his house collapsing upon him, is considered a martyr. Even those who die of the plague or a stomach ailment, or a woman who dies in childbirth, are considered martyrs.²⁸

Navid Kermani points out that especially the Shi'ite religion "is now dominated by black flags and veils, the ubiquity of mourning, penitence and death, a conspicuous enthusiasm for self-sacrifice, the celebration of suffering, the reverence for martyrdom and the veneration of individual martyrs."²⁹ There are many martyrs from the Turkish Cypriot community of the island, among whom several women and children, who were murdered during the inter-communal strife of 1963–1964 and 1967 and during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. These people were buried in mass graves, and now their photos and remnants of their clothing and personal belongings are displayed in the houses where the massacres occurred, or in their schools or in Greek Orthodox churches in the occupied northern part of Cyprus, which have been turned into museums. The use of photography in these museums is also crucial but bears certain differences from the Greek Cypriot study cases that have been examined in this chapter. For Paul Sant Cassia (2007:149), "whereas the Turkish Cypriots begin by utilising photographs of dead people as proof of their disappearances as deaths, the Greek Cypriots record representations of absences as metaphors of a presence that needs to be commemorated, much like an icon." Three cases are considered most iconic for the Turkish Cypriots: the murder of two women and three children in December 1963 in the bathroom of their home in Nicosia, the mass murder of 106 women, children and elderly in the villages of Muratağa, Atlılar και Sandallar in the Famagusta District and the mass murder of 84 Turkish Cypriot men from the mixed village of Tochni, the latter two incidents occurring in August 1974.

The Massacre in the Bathroom

In the northern part of Nicosia lies the home of Dr. Nihat İlhan, a doctor-major who served in the Cyprus Turkish Army Contingent in the 1960s,

which, since 1966, has been converted into the Museum of Barbarism. On December 21, 1963, during the inter-communal conflicts, to which the Turkish Cypriots refer as *Kanlı Noel* (Bloody Christmas), İlhan's wife, their three young children and a woman from the neighborhood were killed by Greek Cypriot fighters (a fact which, however, is disputed by some) in the bathroom of their house. The fact that the victims were murdered by Christians on Christmas Day, Christianity's most prominent festival, along with the fact that all of them were women and children, made the horrific barbarity even greater. The photograph depicting the five corpses stacked one on top of the other in the small bathtub of the doctor's home has become one of the most iconic images of death for the Turkish Cypriots and is on display in many other Turkish war museums both in Cyprus and in Turkey.³⁰

There are also many other photographs of mutilated Turkish Cypriots murdered by Greek Cypriots exhibited there; one inscription refers to them as genocide. In addition to the captions, excerpts from articles from the international press provide the needed veracity to the horrific event that occurred in the house. But even this well-known photograph depicting the dead women and children, which has incited so much unrest, is disputed as the product of a Turkish act of provocation. Costas Yennaris, in his book *From the East, Conflict and Partition in Cyprus*, reveals a conversation he



Figure 5.5 The bathroom in Dr. Nihat İlhan's house, now Museum of Barbarism, 2010. © Yiannis Toumazis.

had with Turkish photographer Ahmed Baran, who claims to have shot the contested photograph. According to Baran, Dr. Nihat İlhan murdered his wife and children in a state of amok. Following this, the Turkish military commanders directed/fixed the scene in the bathroom and presented it as a crime committed by the Greek Cypriots.³¹ Even today, this event, the photograph of which was extensively used and became the key symbol of the pogroms of the Turkish Cypriots by the Greek Cypriots, remains the subject of debate and contestation. Besides, the editor-in-chief of the Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Afrika*, wrote three short articles in the Greek Cypriot newspaper *Politis* presenting a version similar to Baran's of what had happened that day. According to Levent, an ex-commander of the Turkish Resistance Organisation (TMT) who was present at the scene of the shootings admitted a completely different course of events. The TMT (Turkish: *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı*) was a Turkish Cypriot pro-taksim paramilitary organization formed by Rauf Denktaş and Turkish military officer Rıza Vuruşkan in 1958 as an organization to counter the Greek Cypriot Fighter's Organisation EOKA and also to force partition of the island. According to his allegations, the first photographs, which were taken by TMT, were very different from the one that became iconic. He claims that TMT altered the positions of the corpses to make them more "effective" to the public eye. One could now see the frozen gazes of the children's corpses in the bosom of their also dead mother. In addition, the dead bodies remained for several days in the bathtub, so that the international press could have plenty of time to document and publicize the tragic event.³² As Stylianos-Lambert and Bounia comment, "we need to remember that all documentary photography is constructed either because of the way it was shot, subsequently used or framed within a museum."³³ Accordingly, the Museum of Barbarism setting provides an all-powerful atmosphere to sanctify the committed martyrdom. The bathroom of the house has been left intact as it was on the day of the murders. One can still see the holes from the bullets and the bloodstains, which with the passage of time have become small black marks on the walls. Among the items displayed in the museum are bloody bathrobes, socks, shoes and other personal belongings of the murdered women and children, as well as a denture and human hair (just like Afxentiou's museum). This macabre and old fashioned museographical approach of space, the representation of the martyrdom of these people in the very same rooms where it occurred, in addition to the bloody personal items on display, bring out feelings of injustice, confusion, uneasiness and repulsion to the visitors and apparently aim at activating the (intense) traumatic memory. The fact that the viewer is in the familiar space of a home, which has been turned into a museum—in general museums are considered much more trustworthy than any other institution—and that the victims are "ordinary people" like himself/herself, intensify these feelings of abhorrence. Since 1966, this museum encapsulates the suffering of the Turkish Cypriot community and has been visited by thousands of Turkish Cypriot pupils and students. Against this

backdrop, the photograph of the five victims in the bathtub becomes the absolute (and sacred) icon of [Turkish Cypriot] suffering, pointing to the absolute [Greek Cypriot] evil. For Williams,³⁴ there is something incomparably powerful about still images [of atrocity] in a museum setting. Alongside objects and texts, they produce meaning in history museum exhibitions. On the other hand, Williams questions the ethics of displaying such atrocity photographs in museums:

Are they an attempt to visually recreate the realities of what occurred some time ago? Are they a tributary vestige of the little that could be recovered from a great loss? Does the museum anticipate that visitors will accommodate the images or resist them; will they encourage sympathy or revulsion? Is there something intrinsically wrong in turning an image of human suffering into some appreciable aesthetic form?³⁵

In the case of the Museum of Barbarism, these ethical questions lie in the heart of the museum's concept, which was created around an iconic photograph of extreme atrocity.

The Museum in the School

The Martyrs' Museum is dedicated to the 106 victims of the mass slaughter of women, children and elderly people (the youngest one being 18 months old) from the Turkish Cypriot villages of Muratağa, Atlilar and Sandallar, which occurred on August 14, 1974, by Greek Cypriots, residents of nearby villages, who were members of EOKA B, an outlawed and terrorist paramilitary organization. EOKA-B was formed in 1971 by General Georgios Grivas-Digenis and it followed an ultra right-wing nationalistic ideology with the ultimate goal of achieving the *Enosis* (union) of Cyprus with Greece. The museum is housed in the Turkish Cypriot Primary School near Sandalar, and it is the focal point of many monuments in the broader area of the massacres, where one can see cemeteries and cenotaphs, execution sites and, of course, mass graves. Road signs and signs with maps of the graves' locations guide the visitor to the sites. Photography also plays an essential role here; photographs showing the discovery of the mass graves by the Turkish Cypriots, depicting the unearthed, mutilated and half-rotten corpses are exhibited outdoors in all these sites. The school-museum is situated in a large fenced courtyard with trees, dominated by the bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, not far from the cemetery where all victims are properly reburied. The first impression one has when entering the building is that at any moment the school bell will ring and the children will enter the class for their lesson. Inside the classroom nothing has changed; it could be a classroom anywhere on the northern part of the island except, perhaps, for the wooden desks and the teacher's seat, which remind the visitor that they have been there for



Figure 5.6 Interior of the Martyrs' Museum near Sandallar, 2010. © Yiannis Toumazis.

decades. There is also a big blackboard and on the wall above hang photographic portraits of all Turkish Cypriot leaders. The photographic portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk hangs on top of them, just below the ceiling. Written on the blackboard in white chalk are the names and ages of the victims. Taking a closer look, one can see that all around, hanging high on the walls, are the photographic portraits of the dead: the children, their mothers, their grandfathers and their grandmothers. The arrangement of the photos is frontal and linear, creating an eerie grid. Lower, on the class announcement boards, are pinned documents and photos of this one and of other iconic atrocities for the Turkish Cypriots.

One cannot but focus on the portraits of the victims. The directness of the gaze of the portraits of the dead victims, in conjunction with the strange symmetry of the empty desks, transfixes the visitor, activating mechanisms of simulation of the traumatic experience, and generates the viewers' emotions against such a horrific atrocity. For Stylianou-Lambert and Bounia portrait photographs of heroes or martyrs in war museums are grouped together to provide a mosaic of personal and collective sacrifice.³⁶ According to Barthes, "photography is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which

we see the dead.”³⁷ In this case, the correlation to death is much more direct. For Paul Sant Cassia, such photographs:

point to an event so traumatic that it exists outside time, but nevertheless makes an irreducible chasm between the before and the after. It legitimates the genesis of the total and complete separation of the Turkish from the Greek Cypriot community through a prototypical act of destruction. Such photographs seek to illustrate collective experiences through images where Turkish Cypriots have been encouraged by their nationalist political leadership to objectify themselves as subject of suffering. Such images do not appeal to individual memory. Rather they illustrate a collectivised ethnic memory empty of individual experiences.³⁸

Moreover, the museological interest lies in the fact that the exhibition space is not directly related to the mass crime itself. The setting creates an “imagined memory”³⁹ of atrocity and martyrdom. The classroom, with the empty desks and the portraits of the martyrs, and in particular those of the children, is used to intensify once again the viewers’ shock and abhorrence, intentionally reminding them that although they are standing in a school class, which under normal circumstances would be filled with the exciting cheers of innocent children, they are actually standing inside a cenotaph, a monument of horrendous brutality. In this case, the “sanctity” of the museum space acquires a different meaning. The temple of knowledge, the place of education and shaping of innocent children, is converted into a monument of extreme and violent death.

The Museum in the Church

During the Turkish invasion, in August 1974, eighty-four Turkish Cypriot men from the mixed village of Tochni (Taskent in Turkish) were abducted by guerrilla fighters of the outlawed organisation EOKA B, were murdered in cold blood and buried in a mass grave. After the Turkish invasion, the widows and orphans of Tochni were moved to the northern part of the island and settled in the Greek Cypriot village of Vouno, which was renamed Yukarı Taşkent (Upper Tochni). Just above this village, on the slope of the mountain, the Turkish army engraved the huge flag of the so-called “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,” also mentioned previously in this chapter. This oversized intervention onto the natural landscape is visible from a great distance even in the southern part of Cyprus, while next to it the Turkish Student Oath is also inscribed on the mountain. The oath reads: “*How happy is the one who says I am a Turk.*” One could even assume that the fact that the huge flag is so close to the village, which is associated with one of the most emblematic atrocities against the Turkish Cypriots, is not a coincidence at all. One of the abandoned Greek Cypriot Christian churches



Figure 5.7 Interior of the Museum of Taşkent Martyrdom, 2011. © Yiannis Toumazis.

of the village has now acquired a different role and has been transformed into a museum-cenotaph, dedicated to the memory of the murdered Turkish men of Tochni. It is called The Museum of Taşkent Martyrdom.

The former Greek Orthodox Church is stripped of all its Christian ornaments. There are no icons, nor any religious objects or furniture. On the contrary, all exhibits here are of a secular character, even though their display in a Christian church somehow acquires a different meaning. For example, in the small, arched sanctuary of the church where the Orthodox keep the “holy of holies” now dominates an oil painting inspired by the mass murder, flanked by the flags of Turkey and the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.” Above the altar, where an icon or a wall painting of the Holy Trinity is usually placed in most Orthodox churches, now hangs a picture of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. One could safely say that nowhere else than here one finds the true expression of the ultimate sanctification of the reformer of the Turkish state, of the leader who replaced religious worship with secularism. The boundaries between political hegemony and religious sanctity are hard to discern. All around, bluntly hanging on the walls of the church, are photographic portraits of the victims-martyrs, other photographic documents and articles from the local and international press

describing and “verifying” the horrific atrocity. In this case, the appropriation of space acquires a particular significance. On the one hand, the “sanctity” of the museum space is also established here, let alone that in this case, the museum is in a real church. Conceptually, the church, the holiest site for (Greek Cypriot) Christians, the House of God, is converted into a museum-cenotaph of an iconic traumatic event for the Turkish Cypriot (Muslims). The religious aura of the church now becomes the (sacred) aura of a museum. One might assume that such a use is designed to emphasise the brutality of the enemy (the Greek Cypriots), who acted contrary to their Christian beliefs (Christians-slaughterers) and, on the other, to create a new secular context of worship in the once Christian church, in which the state is not only portrayed as the victorious winner, but is also placed above all (Kemal-God), while the martyrs, namely those who fell for their country, are elevated to the status of secular saints, martyrs who sacrificed their lives for their homeland.

Conclusion

The two photos shown here, one from the Commando Museum in the southern part of Nicosia and the other from the Museum of Barbarism in the northern part of the city, reveal an alarming vulgar similarity: the huge bloodstain décor. Many memorial museums, many places of pain and shame, often create their narratives not to critically and responsibly interpret the (extremely violent) event, but to construct a kind of “historical consciousness” about specific events, which is as problematic as collective memory.⁴⁰

In his controversial study about the Holocaust, Norman G. Finkelstein talks about the exploitation of horrific events such as the holocaust, which are used as ideological weapons to promote various nationalistic causes, such as “state-victimhood.”⁴¹ In the six study cases we have examined in this chapter, the musealization and monumentalization of traumatic and often shameful events, through photographs and material objects, does not attempt to critically showcase the ultimate futility of these events, but to promote an emotional handling of the (violent) past. In addition, the museological *mise en scène* and the selective use of artifacts, photographs and documents lead to an almost sacred fetishization of atrocity. According to Cole, many museums today have in some way become symbolic mass graves or cabinets of horrible curiosities.⁴² In Cyprus, where the boundaries between religion and national identity are blurred, museums of this kind directly or indirectly allude to religious connotations to “sanctify” their (nationalistic) cause. Museum ethics and aesthetics acquire a special significance, especially in highly contested areas with unresolved political issues. In such areas, both museology and museography, become fundamentally and essentially political and as such they should be practised with criticality and responsibility; they should eventually create a threshold to understanding and forgiving, the ultimate goal being, of course, the promotion of life and not of death.

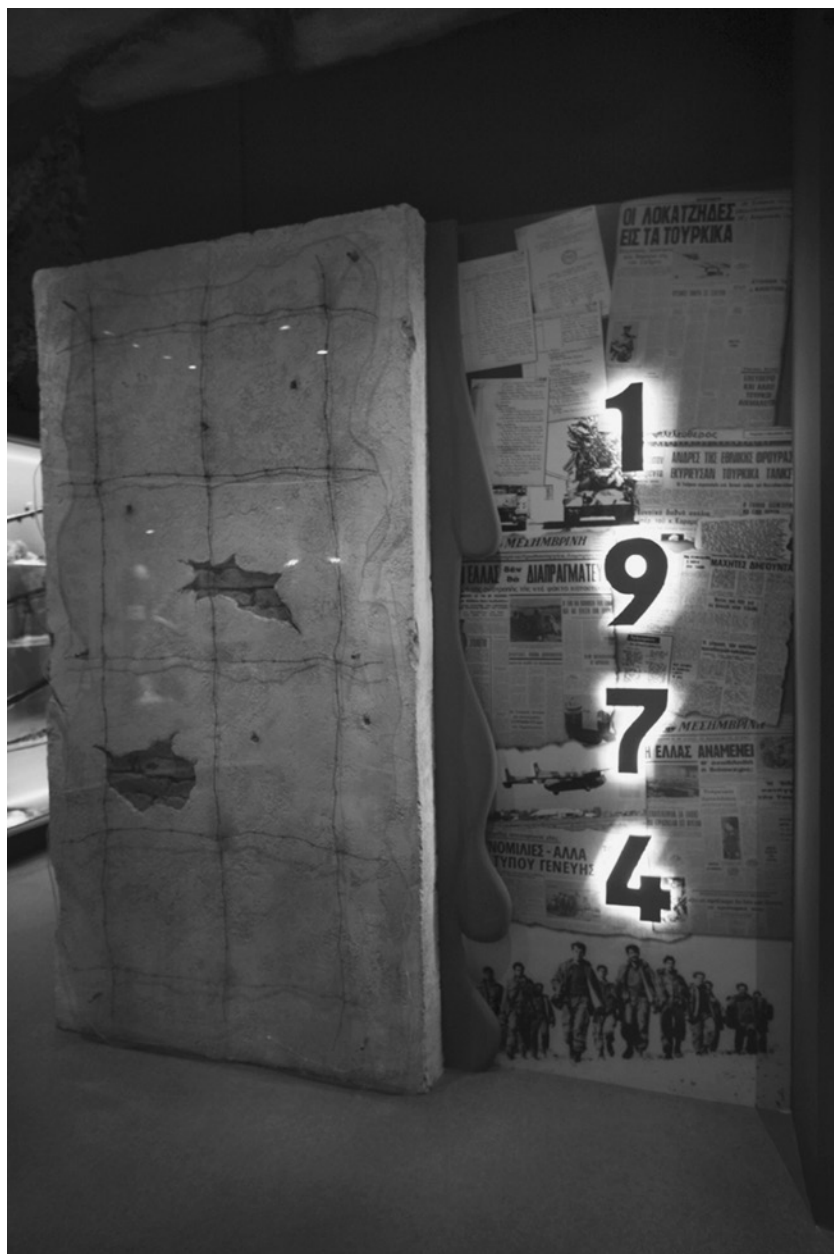


Figure 5.8 Exhibition view from the Commando Museum, 2010. © Yiannis Toumazis.



Figure 5.9 Exhibition view from the Museum of Barbarism, 2010. © Yiannis Toumazis.

Notes

- 1 Stephen G. Xydis, *Cyprus: Reluctant Republic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973).
- 2 Yiannis Toumazis, "Pride and Prejudice: Photography and Memory in Cyprus," in *Photography and Cyprus: Time, Place and Identity*, edited by Liz Wells, Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Nicos Philippou (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 80.
- 3 Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, *Instilling Religion in Greek and Turkish Nationalism: A "Sacred Synthesis"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 5 Niyazi Kizilyürek, *Οι Τουρκοκύπριοι, η Τουρκία και το Κυπριακό* (Greek): *The Turkish Cypriots, Turkey and the Cyprus Issue* (Athens: Papazissi Editions, 2009).
- 6 Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 60.
- 7 Navid Kermani, "Roots of Terror: Suicide, Martyrdom, Self-redemption and Islam," February 21, 2002, accessed April 17, 2016. https://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-islamicworld/article_88.jsp.
- 8 Nenad Miscevic, "Nationalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 27, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/nationalism/>.
- 9 Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, translated from the Italian by William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 216.
- 10 Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, eds., *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 63.

- 11 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 41.
- 12 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of the Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- 13 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977).
- 14 Mitchell, *Cloning Terror*.
- 15 Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, eds., *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 177.
- 16 Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of the Image* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- 17 Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 2007), 58.
- 18 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History Is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 142.
- 19 Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), as cited in Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History Is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 142.
- 20 William Logan and Keir Reeves, eds., *Places of Pain and Shame* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 2.
- 21 Adi Ophir, "On Sanctifying the Holocaust: An Anti-Theological Treatise," *Tikkun* 2, no. 1 (1987): 61-66.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 24 Costas Kadis, "Χαιρετισμός Υπουργού Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού κ. Κώστα Καδή, στην καταληκτήρια εκδήλωση για τα 60χρονα από την έναρξη του Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ '55-'59" (Greek): "Address by Education and Culture Minister Mr Costas Kadis, at the Closing Event for the 60th Anniversary of the Beginning of the EOKA Struggle '55-'59," accessed March 27, 2016, <http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp3813a>.
- 25 Michael A. Attalides, *Cyprus, Nationalism and International Politics* (Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2003).
- 26 Charalambos Kafkarides, *Τουρκία-Κύπρος 1923-1960* (Greek): *Turkey-Cyprus 1923-1960* (Nicosia: Amorgos, 2010).
- 27 Niyazi Kizilyürek, *Οι Τουρκοκύπριοι, η Τουρκία και το Κυπριακό* (Greek): *The Turkish Cypriots, Turkey and the Cyprus Issue* (Athens: Papazissi Editions, 2009).
- 28 Mahmoud M. Ayoub, "Martyrdom in Christianity and Islam," in *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity and Judaism*, edited by Richard T. Antoun and Mary E. Hegland (Syracuse, New York: The Syracuse University Press, 1987), 71.
- 29 Navid Kermani, "Roots of Terror: Suicide, Martyrdom, Self-redemption and Islam," February 21, 2002, accessed April 17, 2016. https://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-islamicworld/article_88.jsp.
- 30 Yiannis Toumazis, "Pride and Prejudice: Photography and Memory in Cyprus," in *Photography and Cyprus: Time, Place and Identity*, edited by Liz Wells, Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Nicos Philippou (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 92-93.
- 31 Costas Yennaris, *From the East, Conflict and Partition in Cyprus* (London: Elliott and Thompson, 2003).
- 32 Şener Levent, "Το έγκλημα της μπανιέρας" (Greek): "The Crime in the Bathroom," Newspaper *Politis*, March 9, 2007: 6.
- 33 Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Alexandra Bounia, "War Museums and Photography," *Museum & Society* 10, no. 3 (2012): 186, accessed March 27, 2016.

- <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/stylianoubounia.pdf>.
- 34 Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 2007), 53.
 - 35 *Ibid.*, 54.
 - 36 Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Alexandra Bounia, "War Museums and Photography," *Museum & Society* 10, no. 3 (2012): 186, accessed March 27, 2016. <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/stylianoubounia.pdf>.
 - 37 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 32.
 - 38 Paul Sant Cassia, *Bodies of Evidence, Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 150–151.
 - 39 Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 2007), 65.
 - 40 *Ibid.*, 157.
 - 41 Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London and New York: Verso, 2003), 3.
 - 42 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History Is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 167.

Bibliography

- Attalides, Michael A. *Cyprus, Nationalism and International Politics*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2003.
- Ayoub, Mahmoud M. "Martyrdom in Christianity and Islam." In *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity and Judaism*, edited by Richard T. Antoun and Mary E. Hegland, 67–77. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Bataille, Georges. *Theory of Religion*. New York: Zone Books, 1992.
- Batchen, Geoffrey, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, eds. *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.
- Cassia, Paul Sant. *Bodies of Evidence, Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007.
- Cole, Tim. *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History Is Bought, Packaged and Sold*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Eco, Umberto. *Travels in Hyperreality*. Translated by William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.
- Edwards, Elizabeth and Janice Hart. *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of the Image*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Finkelstein, Norman G. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*. London and New York: Verso, 2003.
- Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. *Instilling Religion in Greek and Turkish Nationalism: A "Sacred Synthesis"*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Kadis, Costas. "Χαιρετισμός Υπουργού Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού κ. Κώστα Καδή, στην καταληκτική εκδήλωση για τα 60χρονα από την έναρξη του Αγώνα της ΕΟΚΑ '55-'59" (Greek): "Address by Education and Culture Minister Mr Costas

- Kadis, at the Closing Event for the 60th Anniversary of the Beginning of the EOKA Struggle '55-'59." Accessed March 27, 2016, <http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp3813a>.
- Kafkarides, Charalambos. *Τουρκία-Κύπρος 1923–1960* (Greek): *Turkey-Cyprus 1923–1960*. Nicosia: Amorgos, 2010.
- Kermani, Navid. "Roots of Terror: Suicide, Martyrdom, Self-redemption and Islam." February 21, 2002. Accessed April 17, 2016. https://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-islamicworld/article_88.jsp.
- Kizilyürek, Niyazi. *Οι Τουρκοκύπριοι, η Τουρκία και το Κυπριακό* (Greek): *The Turkish Cypriots, Turkey and the Cyprus Issue*. Athens: Papazissi Editions, 2009.
- Levent, Şener. "Το έγκλημα της μπανιέρας" (Greek): "The Crime in the Bathroom." *Politis*, March 9, 2007.
- Liebman, Charles S. and Eliezer Don-Yehiya. *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Logan, William and Keir Reeves, eds. *Places of Pain and Shame*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Miscevic, Nenad. "Nationalism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition). Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Accessed March 27, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/nationalism/>.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. *Cloning Terror: The War of the Images, 9/11 to the Present*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Ophir, Adi. "On Sanctifying the Holocaust: An Anti-Theological Treatise." *Tikkun* 2, no. 1 (1987): 61–66.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Picador, 1977.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003.
- Stylianou-Lambert, Theopisti and Alexandra Bounia. "War Museums and Photography." *Museum & Society* 10, no. 3 (2012): 183–196. Accessed March 27, 2016. <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumstudies/museumstudies/documents/volumes/stylianoubounia.pdf>.
- Toumazis, Yiannis. "Pride and Prejudice: Photography and Memory in Cyprus." In *Photography and Cyprus: Time, Place and Identity*, edited by Liz Wells, Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Nicos Philippou, 79–97. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014.
- Williams, Paul. *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. New York and Oxford: Berg, 2007.
- Xydis, Stephen G. *Cyprus: Reluctant Republic*. The Hague: Mouton, 1973.
- Yennaris, Costas. *From the East, Conflict and Partition in Cyprus*. London: Elliott and Thompson, 2003.

Part II

The Spectacle of Death



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

6 *The War/Photography* Exhibition and the Display of Death

Jean Kempf

Death is the indirect but central subject of one of the most often-quoted pieces of photo criticism, Roland Barthes's critique of *The Family of Man* exhibition:

Birth, death? Yes, these are facts of nature, universal facts. But if one removes History from them, there is nothing more to be said about them; any comment about them becomes purely tautological. The failure of photography seems to me to be flagrant in this connection: to reproduce death or birth tells us, literally, nothing. For these natural facts to gain access to a true language, they must be inserted into a category of knowledge which means postulating that one can transform them, and precisely subject their naturalness to our human criticism.¹

Barthes thought, from his then Marxist perspective, that only the historicization of "natural processes" allowed us to make sense of them, and thus to transform them. And he felt that Edward Steichen, the curator of this landmark exhibition (New York, MoMA, 1955), in his defense of a form of a historical humanity was just doing the opposite: he accepted whatever befell man as a "fact of nature." My contention here is that the *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict And Its Aftermath* exhibition may be viewed as the darker sibling of the *Family of Man*.² While *The Family of Man* was an attempt at preaching for peace and humanity in a world of potential nuclear annihilation, *War/Photography*—almost sixty years later—is the tacit acceptance of the permanence and inevitability of war and its attendant suffering, maiming and death, a form of dark universality. And, just like *The Family of Man*, this exhibition raises a series of questions about the nature and function of photography in the early 21st century that should be questioned from the ethical, sociological and historical points of views.

The Exhibition

War/Photography is an extremely ambitious exhibition. It was in the making for over ten years and led its curators to look at and sift through about

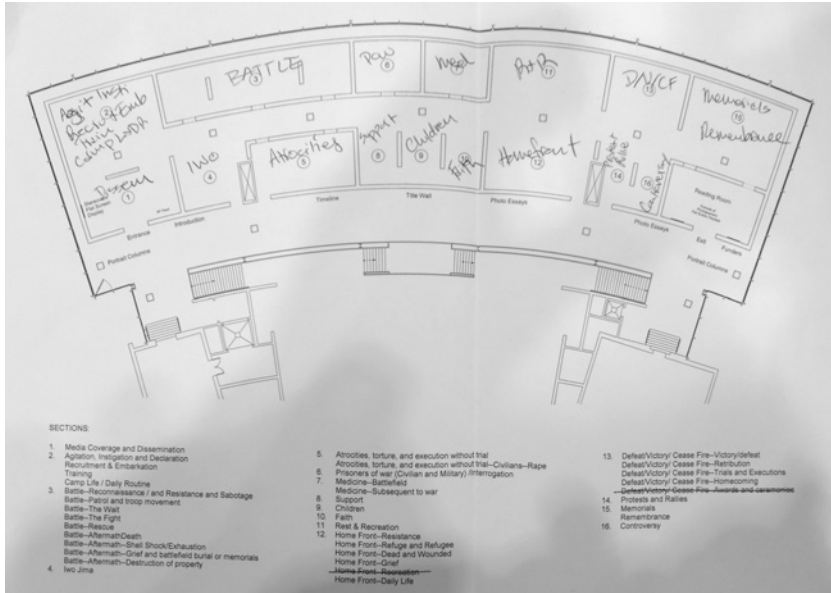


Figure 6.1 Original layout of the exhibition *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict And Its Aftermath* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2014. © Jean Kempf.



Figure 6.2 Original layout of the exhibition *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict And Its Aftermath* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2014. © Jean Kempf.

one million images.³ First shown at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston from November 11, 2012, to February 3, 2013, it then traveled to three other venues in a slightly modified setup and with fewer images to accommodate the existing spaces.⁴ The photographs came from many different countries and ranged from early daguerreotypes to most contemporary images. The idea behind it, according to Anne Tucker, the main curator of the exhibition, was to rethink the relationship between death and photography by organizing the exhibition according to the various stages of war, from its preparation to its waging and aftermath, and thus called for the collaboration of an array of war scholars. Accordingly, it is organized in sections (and subsections) around what she calls the “*principles of war.*”⁵

In the Brooklyn Museum version, which will be commented here at greater length, the display was organized in two main rooms divided by a central wall and connected by a short corridor where the public could watch Tim Hetherington’s short film, *Diary* (2010).⁶

War/Photography is thus not primarily about death. Yet, being about photographs of war, it clearly comes out as dealing with death as its core issue, and particularly death in its most scandalous form, that of young people and civilians: in other words, what one would consider “non-natural deaths.” Viewers are thus confronted with something that no aesthetic approach can really soften, even though photographs mediate it, and sometimes through strong aesthetic codes. Indeed, as Ariella Azoulay has repeatedly stated, in such context, photographs establish a “civil contract” between the viewer and the photographed.⁷ The fact that the photographed subject might be dead and/or long gone does not change the existence of this contract. Although Azoulay uses her own theory in a very specific understanding, she has a particularly interesting formulation of the photographic ecosystem. She writes: “As long as photographs exist, I will contend, we can see in them and through them the way in which such a contract also enables the injured parties to present their grievances, in person or through others, now or in the future.”⁸ She refuses the words “empathy,” “shame” or “compassion” for their moral connotation and the dissymmetry of the gaze they imply.⁹ Yet *in fine* we end up seeing ourselves in a mirror, whether we like or we are horrified by what we see. So although the “contract” proposed by photographs is not as “judicial” as Azoulay makes it, we cannot escape the ethical dimensions that such photographs—and such exhibition—raise.

The idea of an exhibition, Anne Tucker recounts, was in the acquisition by the Houston Museum of Fine Arts (HMFA) of Joe Rosenthal’s iconic rising of the flag at Iwo Jima, which prompted the curators to look deeper into war photography.¹⁰ Although we have no reason to doubt this explanation, something broader must have presided to such a huge enterprise. Exhibitions, their contents and display, are windows on or symptoms of how we see ourselves as a society, and thus are important keys to cultural history.¹¹ The preparation of this exhibition happened to coincide with a decade of war in the United States, not on its territory but very much in the hearts and

minds of the people and perhaps more importantly *visible* in the flesh of wounded veterans and the *absence* of those who did not make it. Death as a subject was then appropriate as a new entry in the museum.

Experiencing Death in the Museum

The presence of “death” in museums is as old as museums, whether as a subject of—classical more than modern—paintings or in collections of objects directly inherited from the cabinets-of-curiosities tradition. The museum is a strong discursive context which does not take the visitor by surprise, as she knows what to expect. The museum as Azoulay puts it “denotes a boundary, a demarcation and separation between all the other objects and images scattered in the public space and those worthy of the title of art.”¹² One does not bump into an exhibition, one chooses to go, and especially after being invited to do so by advertising campaigns and reviews that have prepared us for what we are about to see. More importantly perhaps, the museum is an ambiguous place, which bears some resemblance to a place of worship. Like a place of worship, it is visited by people for both social and “internal” reasons. Museums are places that one feels compelled to visit as part of cultural rituals—to acquire or validate a certain social status (that of someone who enjoys “culture”)—but one may also be genuinely attracted there for the emotion and inspiration that the contact with visual artifacts generates.¹³

And from the press coverage and the attendance, it seems that critics and audiences also validated the *War/Photography* exhibition: reviews were laudatory at all venues, and the exhibition turned into a blockbuster. So why would one visit an exhibition featuring death—and suffering—most prominently, especially an exhibition which defines itself as being designed essentially on a conceptual paradigm rather than on an aesthetic one? (Anne Tucker insists on the fact that the curators’ choices were guided by what the images contributed to the explication of the paradigm of war and not by their form). But, does then the exhibition have the same function as a visit to a war memorial? Most probably not, as the “art label” of the venues (art museums in all four cases) transforms the experience into something different and less “historical” than what happens in an actual memorial.

I was able to observe the exhibition at first hand in one of its four venues (at the Brooklyn Museum of Art), and during my repeated visits I was struck by two facts. First, that visitors took young children to the exhibition. I would like to see this as a positive sign, that of the reintroduction of the “facts of life”—however terrible—in the daily experience of children. My brief and sketchy interviews with some parents, however, led me to believe that they thought that children are *de facto* exposed to violence in everyday life especially in the media (TV) and thus could be safely exposed to a museum presentation of it. Secondly, the unusual level of silence among the visitors who did not even click away with their cameras and smart phones as they usually do elsewhere was striking. I read this as a consequence of three

factors: the very tight space of the Brooklyn venue (two rather small and low-ceilinged rooms connected by a short corridor) creating a silent bubble; the visual power of the photographs; and eventually, their symbolic value as if any word exchanged with a fellow visitor would be sacrilegious. One doesn't talk during a funeral—in Western societies at least—and only away from the deceased; the dead can only be honored by silence.

An art museum, however, is not a memorial in the original traditional sense of the term, although the two may share some common features. Many modern memorials have shifted towards a hybrid concept of “memorial museums,” from a place of (pure) meditation and remembrance to one of mediation and pedagogy. In traditional memorials, however, such as the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, or the World War One memorials in France and Belgium, death is most often represented as a massive albeit somewhat intellectual fact. It is very often reduced to series of names sometimes “illustrated” by a statue which rarely *shows* death and when it does, it is in such an exalted way. This explains why visitors to the Vietnam memorials for instance, need to touch the letters of the names on the wall, to make it more physical, as it were. In *War/Photography*, death is first of all predicated on a specific visual form—photography—excluding others.¹⁴ Despite the fact that both in the catalogue and in their interviews Anne Tucker and her fellow curators take great pains to distance themselves from a naive view of photography's objectivity, the exhibition itself asserts the power of *immediacy* of the image, although not its “objectivity.” This is in no way a “problem” with the exhibition itself: the power of the subject, its repetitiveness in such a large exhibition, the size of many of the images viewed in close quarters and the very power of photography to “make things present” overwhelms our senses and our attempts at distancing, despite the very small number of “traumatic” images, if any.¹⁵ “Traumatic” is actually a fairly imprecise qualifier. It involves an element of dehumanization but also one of surprise for pictures to produce a “trauma.” Thus, I am excluding from the list images such as Nick Ut's photo of the running girl (plate 413), images of death camps (p.39) and that of the self-immolating bonze (plate 363), which were once traumatic but have become less so because of their broad dissemination. That would leave as “traumatic” only the portrait of an incinerated Iraqi soldier (plate 142), the wedding of a disfigured Marine (plate 377) and the portrait of a napalm victim by Avedon (plate 449). One could add to the list the bayonetting of prisoners (plates 51 and 195) and possibly the dead German soldier looking “normally dead,” except that his head is reduced to a hollow skull (plate 156), or the American soldier who is missing half of his head (plate 303), something that is only visible after careful examination.

In fact, the exhibition is made particularly powerful by the conflation of a content—death as an ultimate and unknowable experience—and a form—photography that constantly blurs the lines between reality and representation, thus heightening our experience. In a sense, it completely displaces

the issues repeatedly discussed by Sontag as a modernist avatar of Kantian aesthetics (does the beautiful representation of a thing make the thing beautiful?) towards something else: the suspension of judgement.¹⁶

All comparisons of the “efficiency” of images to depict horrors seem to go back to Goya’s *El 3 de Mayo* (1814) the first modern painting to portray the atrocities of modern wars and the moment when a human being faces death in a realistic rather than in a symbolic or expressionistic way.¹⁷ Subsequent paintings drew their inspiration from the painting: Manet’s series *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (1869), and of course, Picasso’s *Massacre in Korea* (1951). Despite describing the same “reality” as that pictured by photographs, all these representations are discussed—and viewed—in aesthetic terms, with a distancing effect. The photograph by comparison produces a radically different viewing experience because of its presence effect. It is not that viewers are not aware of the materiality of the image, nor even of representation. It’s just that the power of the *subject* heightens the indexical power of the image and somewhat eradicates mediation. This is what is behind the conscious search for, or chance encounter with the very moment of death captured on film.¹⁸

The sum effect of the visit is visible on the Post-It wall that was set up in the Brooklyn museum, in a vestibule, at the exit of the exhibition. Its content is rather predictable.¹⁹ It first stresses visual shock:

Pictures say it so much more powerfully
Impressive
This made me see the world differently in a new perspective
Let’s make a documentary of *THIS* & show it to the W[orld]

which in turn produces its expected effect on spectators with first a deconstruction of the heroic image of the war:

War is not a game, not an adventure, not a show. Why do we still deny
that?
I’m so sorry
Horrible
Such horror is unjustifiable
War is horror

and sometimes a political twist:

Soldiers ≠ Heroes
Peace activists = Heroes

with eventually the traditional appeals to peace:

Say no to war—> Peace

Give peace a chance

No màs guerras ni en EU ni en mundo [No more wars either in the US or in the world]

A few comments, however, have a more political bite, either ironic or cynical (from a veteran):

RU Proud on beeing [sic] American?

Le seul vrai progrès serait l'abolition de la guerre [Banning wars would be the only progress]. But weapons are world economy number 1.

Old men send young men to fight their wars. Free admission today is the only thing I ever got for being a vet.

Some finally are frankly patriotic (from school children who might have been coached?):

We take a lot of granted in the good old US of A!

Lest we forget.

Never forget our fallen.



Figure 6.3 Post-It notes on the final exit wall of the exhibition *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict And Its Aftermath* at the Brooklyn Museum, 2014. © Jean Kempf.

These comments, as well as the attitude of viewers while visiting the exhibition, show that emotions elicited by these powerful images and the subject run high indeed. They are merely, however, the expected repetition of ideas and feelings more or less already present with the visitors and that the exhibition brings to the surface.²⁰ And the rather neutral, non-polemical, almost scientific narrative chosen by the curators give—almost paradoxically—an even freer rein to personal feelings to deploy.

The Narrative

Making an exhibition is like writing a narrative which guides the viewer through the photographs. This is particularly true of *War/Photography*, whose didactic structure is prominent, both in the exhibition space and in the book. It comprises twenty-three sections, themselves divided into sub-sections (and eight topical presentations), covering from the advent of war to well after its end. In the Brooklyn Museum of Art, it was complemented by several short interviews posted on the website during the time of the exhibition of war photographers or of veterans describing their experiences and encouraging viewers to ask them questions (“In conversation”). These have now been taken offline, but testify to the need for the museum to engage its audiences in a sharing of experiences, where those who faced war and thus death can reach out to those who just saw the exhibition. At the heart of this display is death. Although only one sub-section is titled as such, death is the central topic of at least three other sub-sections: “executions” (and to some extent “interrogations”), “civilian death” and “grief.”

By choosing to de-historicize conflicts (all conflicts are the same here) and to organize the narrative on a functional structure (preparation, realization, result), the curators proposed a reading of war (and of death as one of its major outcomes) as a manufacturing process. This is a trope Lewis Hine had used in the early 20th century to describe—and criticize—child labor.²¹ In his photographs as in *War/Photography*, raw materials (human beings) are processed by tools (technology) and as surely as in an assembly line—here a “dis-assembly” line as it were—it produces death and other atrocities. The *manufacturing* of death, images tell us, is something that predates the industrial genocidal enterprise of the Nazis.²² For Tucker and alii, war is a systematic process whose mechanical nature ineluctably produces death and destruction of bodies and property, irrespective of historical and moral reasons behind the conflicts. The fact that Tucker explains in great detail how the team came up with a selection is very interesting in this respect. She mentions that innumerable collections were analyzed, war historians consulted as experts and that the curators built up an expertise on the topic as the preparation went along. Her presentation describes a scientific process in the classical inductive approach promoted by the masters of the methodical school in the late 19th century for whom the organization was the product

of reality expressing itself in an almost unmediated way, just as photographs would simply record the light.²³

This death-as-industrial-process trope is most evident in Civil War photographs, especially by Timothy O'Sullivan and Mathew Brady. While *The Harvest of Death* (whose title plays on the agricultural metaphor of the Great Reaper) is in the exhibition, *Collecting Remains of the Dead at Cold Harbor, Va., for interment after war* (by John Reekie) is not, despite the fact that of all the Civil War photos, it is one that conflates in the most remarkable way death and atrocity in one single photograph.²⁴ One sees in it (the image was carefully organized but, of course, based on what the photographer witnessed) a mass of bodies on a stretcher, most of them reduced to pulp, shreds of uniforms, five skulls, a severed foot loosely hanging and a canteen identifying the remains as that of Union soldiers. It clearly corresponds to the definition proposed by Jay Prosser: "[a]trocitiy . . . suggests an extreme violation . . . [p]hotography of atrocity challenges the integrity of the human."²⁵ The conspicuous absence of this image and of other "images of atrocity" in *War/Photography*, raises questions, as if the "integrity of the human being" that is violated in maimed corpses and awful wounds could not quite be exhibited for fear of violating in turn the humanity of the viewers. The curators thus may have eschewed what they felt might have been construed as necrophiliac porn—not wanting to turn the exhibition into War/Pornography—and deliberately chose to avoid some of the most horrific images of death (or violence) that lie in the collections of the various institutions which have collected records of war over the years.²⁶ Only five or six photographs at most would qualify as "traumatic."²⁷ And yet, how does one show death? One can only show dead people, and even then, death is most often "unseen"—which increases its mystery. Indeed, except by showing mangled bodies (or skeletons, or parts of both), which indicate death beyond doubt, all other signs of death are ambiguous as dead people sometimes look close to sleeping, even in real life.²⁸

From Viewing Death to Imagining the Dead

Faced with this challenge, a choice was made in this exhibition not to (over) use traumatic visual material and resort, as often, to displacements, either metaphoric or more often metonymic: a moved body leaving the index of its presence in the snow in a wonderfully self-reflexive image by American photographer Stanley Greene in Chechnya (plate 164), the content of the wallet of a dead North Vietnamese with family pictures (plate 163), a noose in Chechnya by the same Stanley Greene (plate 199), the tombs of fallen soldiers and destroyed property, is certainly one of the most common way of metaphorically signifying the human toll of war and is given a complete section in this exhibition.

But the dead bodies also have a narrative function in themselves. The immobility of the dead made it an early subject for photography at a time

when technical means made it impossible to capture movement.²⁹ Being placed almost in the middle of the exhibition, they open up a second phase of war, its “product.” This position within the narrative signals an ideological message.

In a conception of modern war as an industrial process, death is one of the products, injuries being the other. And yet, something happens with mass deaths, whose very nature seems to escape the usual perception. Whereas death is perceptible in the image of dead individuals in all its horror and mystery when death becomes industrial, the effect is blunted. The images of the liberation of the camps, of which only one (plus the reproduction of an Office of War Information pamphlet) is shown in the exhibition, are probably the first ones to have stated that fact with such strength and clarity.³⁰ Those, however, had been predated by images of mass death. I am thinking here of the above mentioned pictures of the American Civil War and of the Crimean War, but perhaps even more of the photographs of the huge World War I military cemeteries, which, strangely enough do not seem to be represented in this exhibition, but for one shot of a very small German cemetery.³¹ The effect of those images is in the “landscape effect” needed to render their sheer size and in the visual rhythm imparted by the *ad infinitum* repetition of the white crosses.³² These crosses, which are already signs of a dead soldier, are turned into meta-signs when photographed, identical repetitions that strip the dead of his individuality—as opposed to what civilian European cemeteries with their elaborate monuments do³³—equalizing but also massifying the dead, and integrating them into the paradigm of the assembly line and the mass-production of objects. But it is equally visible in another classic trope of turn-of-the-century reform photography, that of the “before-and-after” photographs, in the juxtaposition of two daguerreotypes, one of the soldier alive and the other of the soldier on his death bed.³⁴

In some way—and *War/Photography* almost seems to be predicated on this fact—the representation of the mass killings of the 20th century and the sheer repetition of death in the news, have dulled our senses and made us if not immune, at least less visually shocked by death and violence. After all the concept of genocide, central to 20th century conscience, is exactly that. A concept that cannot be visually grasped.

The representation of death in a museum exhibition, however, differs from that in the news. Despite their repetitiveness, images in the news are quickly pushed away by others. On the contrary, the selection of a few still images, often of sizable proportions, on the wall of an exhibition and their laying out to channel the viewers and force them to confront the images, is somewhat different. The guiding hand of the curators has its limits though, as one is free to look or not to look and especially at the most brutal images, and the museum being a public space, the viewers may feel a sense of shame at looking at certain pictures.³⁵

Those sensitive pictures, however, are not always of death, and that is a remarkable point. Death cannot be looked at in the eye, at least from our safe

position as viewers in the museum as opposed to being actual spectators in the field where smell and physical proximity would change it all.³⁶ The ultimate trouble—one may call it “voyeuristic,” but it is essentially traumatic—comes from two completely different sets of images: they could be called “images of atrocity” and emblemized by images of the destruction of the wholeness of the body, bodies sometimes maimed beyond recognition, a figure inaugurated by the images of the American Civil War burials discussed above. The others are the exact opposite: images that completely eschew the visualization of the process of violence, or of its aftermath or even of the moment of death itself, but instead focus on what comes before: the soon-to-be dead, what Barbie Zelizer calls the “as-if moment.”³⁷ What makes the pictures of those who are still alive but about to die so powerful in representing death itself is that although many knew their fate, there was still a glimmer of hope, the odd chance that the inevitable would not happen, at least not then.³⁸ In this respect, a special mention should be made of a sniper’s-eye view of a man in Gaza (plate 96), which epitomizes the terrible predicament of people caught in modern guerilla wars. We, on the other hand, have a considerable—even terrifying—power over them—at least for the time being—in that we know they did die. In that respect, some of the most gripping images of all times are the series of identity pictures made by the Khmers Rouges of their victims just before they were executed.³⁹

One can hypothesize that our fascination for the (potential) presence of death in life that animates the whole narrative of the exhibition is the result of a *memento mori* effect that these images exert, or more exactly we (unconsciously) *use* these images as if they were an experiment: we test our own death by looking at that of others. Of course, like all vicarious experiences, there is something deeply obscene in it, which is probably why we cannot quite look nor can we quite avert our eyes.⁴⁰

This fact must also be situated in the context of our Western societies from which death has largely disappeared in everyday experience, almost in inverse proportion of the presence of death in contemporary images, which may explain the success of such exhibitions as *War/Photography*. *War/Photography*, however, is situated. It’s an exhibition made in a country at war whose young men still die in numbers in faraway lands *and* in a society which, like many Western societies, hides death in its daily practice.

In that respect, the telling of the inception of the project by the director of the museum is quite intriguing. Forewords are pieces that most of the time one doesn’t bother to read, as they merely exist to respect a protocol.⁴¹ This one, however, is different. We first learn that everything started with the acquisition of “the iconic photograph *Old Glory Goes Up on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima*, taken by Joe Rosenthal in 1945,” and then that “Rosenthal’s image has come to embody the American values associated with the pursuit of a noble endeavor—pride, honor, sacrifice, and perseverance.” The ideological power of the image could not be stated more clearly. Similarly, in our over-visualized environment in which we photograph all the time, funerals

and the dead in general seem to be off limits. Unless the person is newsworthy, in which case news photographers attend the funeral—and they do it a lot in war zones—our traditional Western funerals are one of the last few places escaping the ubiquitous lens.

In this chapter I have argued that one of the least noticed effects of *War/Photography* is to tell us about death more than “just” war itself. As death is being more and more euphemized, sanitized and technologized in Western societies and especially the United States, it takes the secular space of the museum to confront us with it.⁴² And one of the ways it does, is indirectly, by showing “soon-to-die” people—which, after all, is the case of all of us. Those have made a rather visible entry in the museum in the form of famine victims, series showing cancer or HIV patients dying under the eyes of the camera or even series on aging parents.⁴³ Most are made by creative photographers and are thus associated with the art scene. *War/Photography*, however, associates various picture genres, from the most technical to the most artistic, to remind us that for all its cultural, industrial and mechanical aspect in war, death remains a fact that all of us have to confront for ourselves.

Notes

- 1 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, translated by Annette Lavers (London: Random House, 1993 [1957]), 100–103.
- 2 Albeit *mutatis mutandis* as times are so different that photo exhibitions have a very different status. For *The Family of Man* exhibition, see its reconstitution at <http://www.steichencollections.lu/en/the-family-of-man> and Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). This chapter is based on a close reading of the choices made by the curators of the exhibition through interviews and the catalogue, and a specific observation of the Brooklyn Museum venue. A thorough analysis of public response on an experimental basis had originally been planned at the Brooklyn Museum but proved to be methodologically impractical and leading to flawed results.
- 3 See Conor Risch, “War Correspondence,” *PDN*, November 9, 2012, accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.pdnonline.com/features/War-Correspondence-6979.shtml>. To quote from the Houston Museum of Fine Arts website: “Images recorded by more than 280 photographers, from 28 nations, span 6 continents and more than 165 years, from the Mexican-American War in the mid-1800s to present-day conflicts. Iconic photographs as well as previously unknown images are featured, taken by military photographers, commercial photographers (portrait and photojournalist), amateurs, and artists,” (accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.mfah.org/exhibitions/past/warphotography-photographs-armed-conflict-and-its-/>). The catalogue itself is a mammoth object (over 600 pages), with over 23 detailed essays introducing sections and issues, supported by a huge bibliography and displaying 482 images.
- 4 It was shown at the Annenberg Space for Photography in Los Angeles from March 23 to June 2, 2013; at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., from June 29 to September 29, 2013; and at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City from November 8, 2013, to February 2, 2014.

- 5 Anne Tucker and Will Michels with Nathalie Zelt, *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath* (Houston and New Haven: Museum of Fine Arts; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2012), 3. Hereafter *War/Photography*, my emphasis.
- 6 <https://vimeo.com/18497543>, accessed March 25, 2016. The display at the Brooklyn Museum can be seen at https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibitions/3297/WARPHOTOGRAPHY%3A_Images_of_Armed_Conflict_and_Its_Aftermath.
- 7 Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York and Cambridge, MA: Zone Books ; Distributed by The MIT Press, 2008), 17.
- 8 Azoulay, *Civil Contract*, 86.
- 9 Azoulay, *Civil Contract*, 17.
- 10 See the exhibition catalogue and most of the interviews the curators, especially Ann Tucker, gave on the occasion of the first opening at the HMFA.
- 11 The discourse of exhibitions does not travel well abroad. Exhibitions—even art ones—often have be adapted, and may elicit very different responses. *The Family of Man* is interesting in that it was predicated on a sufficiently universalist idea that seems to have been rather well received abroad. See Sandeen, *Picturing An Exhibition*. The topic is also Olivier Lugon’s present research project: “Exposition moderne de la photographie, 1920–1970” at the University of Lausanne (accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.unil.ch/expophoto/home.html>).
- 12 Ariella Azoulay, *Death’s Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 271.
- 13 Bourdieu is probably the sociologist who best exemplifies this approach to cultural “consumption.” See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991 [1969]) and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984 [1979]).
- 14 The exhibition did include a few artifacts, but all of them connected to the making and transmission of images, not to war actions.
- 15 I strongly disagree with the idea of the loss of power of photography to *move* people, which is Susan Sontag’s main argument in both Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978) and *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003), and also John Berger’s in “Photographs of Agony,” in *About Looking* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1980 [1972]), 37–40. By “move,” Sontag the modernist meant move to (political) action and reaction. If photographs hardly do that, as has repeatedly been argued, their “presence” make them powerful stimulators of affects, which in turn may lead to action or reaction, albeit not necessarily of a political nature. The present exhibition is a case in point. The argument is also criticized—although on different premises—both by Judith Butler, “Photography, War, Outrage,” *Publications of the MLA of America* 120, no. 3 (2005): 822–827, and most famously by Ariella Azoulay in *Civil Imagination* (2012). Yet both authors use deductive (philosophical) methods and never look at the actual reception by viewers.
- 16 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* and *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgement*, edited by Paul Guyer, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially the First Book.
- 17 Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *El 3 de mayo en Madrid, o “Los fusilamientos,”* 1814, oil on canvas, 268 cm x 347 cm, Prado Museum, Madrid. See also: Nigel Spivey, *Enduring Creation: Art, Pain and Fortitude* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

- 18 Among the famous examples are Robert Capa, *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936*, whose authenticity has been debated (*War/Photography*, plate 159), the cover of the *New York Daily News* of January 13, 1928 showing the execution of Ruth Snyder, and Eddie Adams' *Execution of Vietcong Lieutenant by South Vietnamese National Police Chief Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, Saigon, South Vietnam*, February 1, 1968 (*War/Photography*, plate 194).
- 19 All comments below transcribed by the author.
- 20 A similar phenomenon takes place with internet comments on articles and blogs. See Brett A. Borton, "What Can Reader Comments to News Online Contribute to Engagement and Interactivity? A Quantitative Approach," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2013. Available at ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, Ann Arbor. ISBN 9781303352645.
- 21 See Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography America, 1890–1950* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 69–70.
- 22 I am thinking here of the post-Wannsee-conference implementation of the extermination, after the original "smaller-scale" operations of the *Einsatzgruppen*.
- 23 The elaboration process of the exhibition was described by Anne W. Tucker in an interview with the author at the HMFA, April 17, 2014.
- 24 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpb.01276> (accessed March 25, 2016).
- 25 Jay Prosser, ed., *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 11.
- 26 Susie Linfield, in one of the best books on the subject of photography and violence, has a powerful argument against confusing pornography and the exhibition of suffering in photographs: she states that pornography is the exhibition of what should not be seen (and thus makes it degrading), whereas the photographs of cruelty is "revelation of something *that ought not exist*." (Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 40–42. Italics in the original). Spivey in *Enduring Creation* follows a different line by suggesting the sexual arousal, or at least the thrill, drawn from the view of the suffering of others (ch.11), and so does Sontag in "Regarding the Torture of Others," *New York Times*, May 23, 2004, accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html>.
- 27 See above.
- 28 A famous French sonnet on a dead soldier by Arthur Rimbaud, entitled "The Sleeper in the Vale" (1870), is a forward traveling towards a man who looks perfectly at rest and asleep until the eye getting very close—at the last line—sees two red bullet wounds in his side.
- 29 Hence, in the exhibition, several of the earliest images of war being images of dead soldiers, the other type being posed portraits of soldiers and still lifes or landscapes. See *War/Photography, first shown in 2012*, 200.
- 30 The only picture of mass deaths in the camps is classified under "Retribution," as it deals with former guards being used to bury the dead. On the photographs of death camps, see Sontag, *Regarding* and Georges Didi-Hubermann, "Images malgré tout," in *Mémoires des Camps Mémoire des camps: photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis, 1933–1999* (Paris: Marval, 2001).
- 31 *War/Photography*, plate 445.
- 32 Although there were smaller patches for Jewish and Muslim dead, the overwhelming sign on the Western front was the cross.
- 33 American cemeteries are much more standardized in their memorialization, despite the existence of a few monumental historical cemeteries throughout the country.
- 34 *War/Photography*, plate 140.

- 35 I am not aware of any scientific study of viewers' behavior in front of sensitive images in museums (violence, sex, etc.). I tried to conduct a brief survey of the amount of time people spent on what I identified as the most "difficult to watch" images (see above). Given the number of variables and the complexity of observation, this survey was limited and could not be fully validated. My own observation of the way people visited the exhibited showed, not surprisingly, that they tended to spend less time over those images (2 seconds vs an average of 8–10 seconds).
- 36 That is not counting the fact that this exhibition was visited by veterans and families of veterans. Here again very little quantitative data are available from the four venues, apart from the fact that the museums worked with local veterans' associations to organize meetings and special events around the exhibition. The actual response of veterans to this exhibition as opposed to an audience with no personal contacts with the war has not been scientifically measured. However, previous studies on the influence of audiences' "previous knowledge" on the perception of museum exhibits suggests that the correlation is strong. See, for instance, Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination* (London: Sage, 1998), John H. Falk and Lynn Dierking, *Learning from Museums: Visitors Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000), Brian Longhurst, Gaynor Bagnall and Mike Savage, "Audiences, Museums and the English Middle-class," *Museum and Society* 2 (2004): 104–124, E. Hooper-Greenhill, "Studying Visitors," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 362–376, G. Fyfe, "Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 33–49, G. Fyfe and M. Ross, "Decoding the Visitors' Gaze," in *Theorizing Museums*, edited by S. Macdonald and G. Fyfe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 83–104.
- In the case under scrutiny, we can hypothesize not only a much greater proximity and emotional involvement—or identification—in the case of veteran visitors, but also some cynicism and/criticism, as could be felt in a few of the Post-Its quoted above.
- 37 *Picturing Atrocity*, 155. Linfield, *Cruel Radiance*, 66ff., makes a similar argument although to a different purpose. She draws the conclusion (67) that the absence of shame in a Nazi photographer taking pictures of Warsaw Ghetto Jews negates the universality of the feeling and thus of the "foundational principles of documentary photography." This expands on the point Barthes was making in the review quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The possibility for the existence of "documentary" photography depends on a cultural/historical context, thus making the questioning of photographic practices an act of cultural critique.
- 38 The same could be said of images of (young) people leaving joyfully for the front. In the West, the most archetypal of all are those of the French and German youths in 1914. The TV images of young Muslims telling journalists that they are ready to die as martyrs—and we know they will—obviously meets our modern sensibilities with complete "un-understanding" after the two world wars and the disappearance of the notion of sacrifice in Western culture. See also Nicholas Brooks and Gregor Thuswaldner, eds., *Making Sacrifices—Opfer bringen, Visions of Sacrifice in European and American Cultures—Opfervorstellungen in europäischen und amerikanischen Kulturen* (Wien: New Academic Press, 2014).
- 39 *War/Photography*, plate 264. See also the cover of Linfield's *Cruel Radiance* and her comments, 54–59.
- 40 Another instance of this displacement is to be found in the series by Lucinda Devlin on execution chambers in the United States: *Omega Suites (1991–1998): The*

Architecture of Capital Punishment. It simply shows these chambers in their pristine state, shot with a view camera in soft hues.

- 41 Gary Tinterow, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, *War/Photography*, 1.
- 42 See Richard Huntington and Peter Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Clive Seale, *Constructing Death: The Sociology of Dying and Bereavement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Phyllis Palgi and Henry Abramovitch, "Death: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 13 (1984): 385–417. See also a review of the literature on the topic in Allan Kellehear, "Are We a 'Death-Denying' Society? A Sociological Review," *Social Science & Medicine* 18 (1984): 713–721.
- 43 By Darcy Padilla, Nicholas Nixon, Richard Avedon, Nobuyoshi Araki and Rosalind Solomon, to name just a few.

Bibliography

- Abercrombie, Nicholas and Brian Longhurst. *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. London: Sage, 1998.
- Azoulay, Ariella. *Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- Azoulay, Ariella. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York and Cambridge, MA: Zone Books; Distributed by The MIT Press, 2008.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. London: Random House, 1993 [1957].
- Berger, John. "Photographs of Agony." In *About Looking*, 37–40. London: Writers and Readers, 1980 [1972].
- Borton, Brett A. "What Can Reader Comments to News Online Contribute to Engagement and Interactivity? A Quantitative Approach." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2013. Available at ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, Ann Arbor.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984 [1979].
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991 [1969].
- Brooks, Nicholas and Gregor Thuswaldner, eds. *Making Sacrifices—Opfer bringen, Visions of Sacrifice in European and American Cultures—Opfervorstellungen in europäischen und amerikanischen Kulturen*. Wien: New Academic Press, 2014.
- Butler, Judith. "Photography, War, Outrage." *Publications of the MLA of America* 120, no. 3 (2005): 822–827.
- Didi-Hubermann, Georges. "Images malgré tout." In *Mémoires des Camps Mémoire des camps: photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis, 1933–1999*. Paris: Marval, 2001.
- Falk, John H. and Lynn Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitors Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 2000.
- Fyfe, G. "Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon Macdonald, 33–49. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- Fyfe, G. and M. Ross. "Decoding the Visitors' Gaze." In *Theorizing Museums*, edited by S. Macdonald and G. Fyfe, 83–104. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

- Hooper-Greenhill, E. "Studying Visitors." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon Macdonald, 362–376. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- Huntington, Richard and Peter Metcalf. *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Edited by Paul Guyer, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Kellehear, Allan. "Are We a 'Death-Denying' Society? A Sociological Review." *Social Science & Medicine* 18 (1984): 713–721.
- Linfield, Susie. *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Longhurst, Brian, Gaynor Bagnall and Mike Savage. "Audiences, Museums and the English Middle-class." *Museum and Society* 2 (2004): 104–124.
- Palgi, Phyllis and Henry Abramovitch. "Death: A Cross-Cultural Perspective." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 13 (1984): 385–417.
- Prosser, Jay, ed. *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.
- Risch, Conor. "War Correspondence." *PDN*, November 9, 2012. Accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.pdnonline.com/features/War-Correspondence-6979.shtml>.
- Sandeen, Eric J. *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995.
- Seale, Clive. *Constructing Death: The Sociology of Dying and Bereavement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003.
- Sontag, Susan. "Regarding the Torture of Others." *New York Times*, May 23, 2004. Accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html>.
- Stange, Maren. *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography America, 1890–1950*. Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Tucker, Anne and Will Michels with Nathalie Zelt. *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath*. Houston, New Haven: Museum of Fine Arts; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2012.

7 Persons Unknown

Lynching Photographs in the Museum

RM Wolff

In January of 2000, James Allen opened the exhibition *Witness: Photographs of Lynchings from the Collection of James Allen* at the Roth Horowitz Gallery on Manhattan's Upper East Side. In partnership with John Littlefield, Allen spent years collecting and preserving lynching photographs and postcards before presenting a portion of them with an accompanying publication. The popularity of *Witness* prompted a re-tooling of the exhibition with the aid of the New York Historical Society (NYHS), where it opened in March of 2000 as *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, and was attended by a record 50,000 people in the first four months.¹ The exhibition then went on a tour that included the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, the Chicago Historical Society (CHS, now the Chicago History Museum), and the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. In each location, curators sought to create a particular viewing atmosphere to meet the demands of the throngs of visitors. Though installation and programming choices varied, in all of the exhibition iterations the photographs were shown with supporting materials—such as books, posters, videos, and music—meant to contextualize both the images and their history.

The exhibition brings together a large number of lynching images all in one place, effectively asserting lynching as a central activity in a long and heinous American history of white supremacy.² As I will discuss, organizers emphasized the exhibition as an opportunity to *feel* something, soliciting sentimental responses to images positioned firmly in the past. *Without Sanctuary* invited viewers to look with what Baldwin calls “wet eyes,” while the larger purpose of showing such images remains unresolved. The emphasis on sentimentality, rather than the promotion of structural and systemic change, prompts the primary questions of my inquiry: Who is looking at these photographs, and why? What are the responsibilities of looking at such images? And why would museums display death in this way?

In intersecting these questions with overwhelmingly high attendance numbers (for which no demographic data was recorded), I take seriously the criticism leveled by historian Grace Hale about the exhibition

in Atlanta: “Viewers are left with an exhibit that is too close to the spectacle created by the lynchers themselves.”³ Art historian Anthony W. Lee expands on this idea in his account of attending the exhibition at the Roth Horowitz Gallery: “As [viewers] strained for a better view, they felt the warmth and nearness of the person next to them, jostling and angling their bodies this way and that as they moved past images of the victims. They appeared, and possibly felt, like the people in the pictures.”⁴ In referencing Hale and Lee, I want to begin with the notion that these exhibitions created spectacle and also point to the assumption that the “people in the pictures” with whom viewers identify are the white mobs. In drawing comparisons between these installations and two anti-lynching exhibitions from 1935, I will show that the exhibition strategies employed by the NYHS and other venues of *Without Sanctuary* were aimed toward a white experience of spectacular sentimentality. Ultimately, I argue that the installation of *Without Sanctuary* at the NYHS and its other venues results in a setting aside of political and personal accountability by appealing to those viewers who see themselves as the lynchers, rather than reckoning with the experiences of those viewers who look at these photographs and see themselves as the lynched, or in other words, those who understand the museum to be displaying their own deaths.

Lynching as a Practice of Modern Consumer Culture

Hale’s and Lee’s concern over the display of lynching photographs in museums calls up a United States of 100 years earlier, when “lynch parties” and “lynch carnivals” described the mob murders of many black Americans.⁵ These so-labeled revelries were sometimes—and by no means accidentally—recorded on camera. Amateur photographers might have brought a camera to the scene, but more often, professional photographers set up printing studios at lynchings to sell mementos of the event. According to African American studies scholar Leigh Raiford, the photographers of these images were extremely active in their production and distribution:

For professional photographers, lynchings spawned a cottage industry in which picture makers conspired with mob members and even local officials for the best vantage point, constructed portable darkrooms for quick turnaround, and pedaled their product ‘through newspapers, in drug-stores, on the street—even . . . door to door.’⁶

Along with first-page billing in newspapers and reproduction in both pro- and anti-lynching publications, some photographs were also turned into postcards, sent by lynching revelers to farther-flung family members as a “wish you were here” sentiment and to prominent anti-lynching figures as a method of intimidation.⁷

Contrary to a backwards—or even backwoods—stereotype, lynchings have always been a modern, if sentimental, practice that took place in the North and South, in cities and in rural areas.⁸ The rise of popular photography and the mass consumption of images seamlessly combined with the more medieval elements of lynching, primarily that of gathering “relics” upon the pronouncement of death. Following a lynching, participants and observers often scrambled for chain links, rope, pieces of hair, teeth, bones, fingers, and even genitals to keep as souvenirs that could be displayed in the home or sold for profit. If a viewer could not obtain one of these objects, a photograph of the lynching was the next best thing. The photographs were then circulated within a financial economy (which, particularly during the 1930s, was failing many whites and blacks), as well as a personal economy, in which white supremacist sentiments were not only acceptable but celebrated. Thus, the images had value as purchased souvenirs and as racist icons, magnified and re-asserted through exchange.

This circulation depended on a model of modern consumption that arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Raiford makes a compelling argument that lynching “needs to be considered a leisure activity deeply embedded in the rise of consumer culture,” one that was working to re-commodify black bodies after the de-commodification of emancipation, which legally separated black bodies from monetary value. In this way, the production and circulation of lynching images relied on political, economical, and technological advancements.⁹ It was this modern landscape, according to Raiford, that created “a commodity culture in which only whites could experience or consume the ‘amusement’ of lynching, and only blacks could be lynched and consumed, often literally by fire.”¹⁰

Lynching Images as Art

In her essay “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” Shawn Michelle Smith describes a particularly strange object: a double-matted lynching photograph, inscribed with the message “Klan 4th, Joplin, Mo. 33, Bo, pointn to his nig” and framed with pieces of curly black hair.¹¹ The photograph was taken by Lawrence Beitler of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith in Marion, Indiana, in 1930, and has had a particularly wide distribution. Frequently reproduced as a postcard, in newspapers, and in white and black presses of the time, it also has more recently been included in textbooks as well as featured as the cover of rap group Public Enemy’s album “Hazy Shade of Criminal.”¹² Due to this heavy circulation, Beitler’s shot of Shipp and Smith surrounded by a large crowd of smiling, pointing, and generally amused-looking white people has become known as “*the* generic lynching photograph.”¹³ But classified as generic and therefore indiscriminate, Beitler’s image performs the same threat of actual lynching: any black body, anywhere, at any time, for any crime.

Smith positions her object of study, which is the photograph plus inscription and hair, within a longer history of sentimental photography, stating:

At the time it was made, family members and lovers commonly kept strands of a beloved's hair in a lock that also held a photograph. As a manifestation of the material presence of the person photographed, the hair was meant to draw the beloved closer to the viewer, to make the absent subject more present. As memorial objects, such artifacts marked the continued presence of the subject, suggesting a kind of life beyond death.¹⁴

Smith argues that this example of a lynching photograph with hair “utterly distorts” traditional sentimental photographic practices.¹⁵ By turning the sentimental from personal remembrance into leering spectacle, sentimentality is not expressed over beloved absence, but instead over deathly triumph, where Bo—the man doing the pointing in this photograph—celebrates the activity of his life by commemorating the brutal death of another human being.

Smith's take on this perversion within lynching photographs helps to elucidate why—despite their vast collection and reproduction—lynching photographs were not considered fine art objects that would be displayed on museum walls (though, of course, there are plenty of instances of their racist display on the walls of personal homes and businesses). Thus, in the case of two anti-lynching exhibitions in New York City in the spring of 1935, lynching photographs were explicitly excluded. One exhibition was organized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the other by members of the Artists' Union in partnership with several Communist-affiliated organizations, including the John Reed Club, which had the specific mission of fostering political activism among artists. Though the two groups were at significant odds about how to pursue their politics (the NAACP focused on respectability while more leftist organizations called for radicalism), both were responding to a 1934 Congressional bill that proposed federal trials for law enforcement officers who failed to exercise their legal responsibilities during a lynching, as often these officers were complicit if not active in lynching activities. These exhibitions, and the works included in them, were “consciously meant to elicit outrage,” according to Helen Langa.¹⁶ Their purpose, presented back-to-back in the first months of 1935, was to “mov[e] viewers from empathy to active support for proposed legislative remedies.”¹⁷ Indeed, an introductory essay for the Artists' Union exhibition *Struggle for Negro Rights* was titled “Pictures Can Fight!”¹⁸

Several accounts of the NAACP exhibition, titled *An Art Commentary on Lynching*, are available in the *Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP founded by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1910. The exhibition was originally slated to be in the Jacques Seligmann Galleries, though just four days beforehand, the

NAACP was informed that due to “political, social and economic pressure, the gallery would be unable to go through with the exhibit.”¹⁹ With a sense of the stakes surrounding presentation of both exhibitions, the *Crisis* notes that the change of venue and surrounding publicity “served only to increase the number of visitors to the show when it finally opened.”²⁰ Over 3,000 people saw the exhibition, and the gallery book records attendants from as far away as London, Rome, and Paris.²¹

Each exhibition drew over 40 participants, with five artists participating in both.²² Some of the artists were well known at the time, including George Bellows, John Steuart Curry, and Reginald Marsh, whose drawing *This Is Her First Lynching*—showing a mother holding her young daughter up over the shoulders of the mob—was reproduced in the *Crisis* as well as the *New Yorker*.²³ Emphasis in both exhibitions was placed on individual artists invoking lynching and lynching-related imagery through drawing, sculpture, painting, and lithograph, though the NAACP exhibition solicited more explicit imagery of lynching violence, while *Struggle for Negro Rights* included more symbolic works that broadly aligned lynching with the failures and corruptions of capitalism.²⁴ Given the exhibitions’ commitment to anti-lynching, photographs of lynchings and photographers themselves were accurately perceived as a direct part of the proceedings of such an event. Because of this, the photographers’ takes (both visual and personal) were not oriented toward political action, but instead toward easy advertising and economic gain (if not in addition to expressing their own racist sentiments).²⁵ Thus, to include the photographers among artists committed to the anti-lynching cause would have been to undermine the exhibitions’ goals.

However, the absence of the photographs does not mean that lynching photography as a visual practice was not present in the artworks. Perhaps the most prominent example is Isamu Noguchi’s *Death* (1934), which was included in both exhibitions. Noguchi’s figure—a steel sculpture of an aestheticized body hanging from the neck by an actual rope—is a clear reference to a widely circulated lynching photograph from 1930 that depicts the burning of George Hughes in Sherman, Texas. Anyone visiting either exhibition would almost certainly be familiar with this image, as it appeared not only in the southern white press but also in both black and political northern presses, including the *Chicago Defender* and the *Labor Defender*.²⁶ Even without the inclusion of the actual photographs, these references made the exhibitions quite powerful. A critic for *The New York World-Telegram* stated that the NAACP exhibition “tears the heart and chills the blood. Remember, this is not an exhibition for softies. It may upset your stomach. If it upsets your complacency on this subject it will have been successful.”²⁷

The Trouble with Lynching Photographs as Evidential

In the case of *Without Sanctuary*, opening in New York City 65 years later, photographs are present but artistically and politically muddled. Given

that they were shown in both art and history museums, I want to release the photographs and myself from a debate about their status as art objects (which would certainly be lively and valid). Instead, I am working from the understanding that encountering lynching photographs, and photographs of death in general, in all kinds of museums is far from out of the ordinary. Furthermore, all types of photographs regularly serve multiple purposes in museum spaces, as both art objects themselves and as legitimizing tools when installed among other items.

Yet in the case of *Without Sanctuary*, the practice of creating firm historical relationships between lynching photographs and other objects reveals a certain reluctance to see the images as political. In general, while emotional response to the content of the 1935 exhibitions was certainly credible, the political drive behind the exhibitions ruled both the curatorial choices as well as responses in the press. Thus, while the 1935 exhibition organizers understood the same photographs shown within *Without Sanctuary* as assuredly and willingly on the side of pro-lynching and white supremacist ideals, their 21st-century en masse installation positions the photographers as primarily anonymous (not in that the names are unavailable, but in that the names are not important) and the photographs themselves as neutral, or—to use another attribute that photography both requires and resists—they are “evidential.”²⁸ I put evidential in quotes here because, as I will explain, even as *Without Sanctuary* presents past events, the exhibition does not put images to work as evidence in the legal sense, in order to bring forth indictments or prompt verdicts.

In the foreword to the *Without Sanctuary* publication, Congressman John Lewis—a son of sharecroppers who was a Chairman of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee during the 1960s and was elected as a US Representative of Georgia in 1986—states, “The photographs in this [exhibition] make real the hideous crimes that were committed against humanity.”²⁹ In the summer of 2005, leaders in the passage of a United States Senate Anti-Lynching Apology Resolution stated that lynching photographs provide “indisputable evidence of what has occurred.”³⁰ Thus, the Senate was prompted to finally offer an apology to “the victims of lynching and the descendents of those victims for the failure of the Senate to enact anti-lynching legislation.”³¹

The closure potentially provided by the Senate’s apology in 2005 comes after centuries of government inaction on the federal, state, and local levels, including the failure of the 1935 exhibitions to spur Congress to pass an anti-lynching bill. In his pivotal book *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America*, James H. Madison walks slowly and painfully through the ways in which the legal system—from false accusations to failed prosecutions—supported lynch mob violence, creating the sense that these crimes were ordinary and unavoidable. His primary case study is the lynching of Shipp and Smith, the scene depicted in Beitley’s famous photograph mentioned earlier. According to Madison, “Because the formal legal process failed to convict any member of the lynch mob [which numbered in

the tens of thousands], there was no closure and no way to erase the tragedy from the community's history."³² Madison's example is one among the many cases in which members of lynch mobs (as well as law enforcement officers who looked the other way and photographers who profited from the proceedings) were determined by the law to be "persons unknown." With calculated consistency, sheriffs, judges, and juries found these acts un-attributable, even in cases where there were photographs. Thus, lynch-ers were rarely held accountable for the events, furthering the message of intimidation and fear sought in the first place. Throughout his book, Madison argues that this disconnect between knowable crimes committed by unknowable persons makes impossible any proper remembrance much less reconciliation.

Thus, despite the Senate's present-day proclamations, a notion of these photographs as actors of "indisputable evidence" is historically tenuous at best, given that the "evidence" they provide was not sufficient to save lives at the time of their production. By documenting crimes without designating blame, *Without Sanctuary* confuses exactly what side—politically and personally—those who produce and circulate these images are on. The pro- and anti-lynching contexts are no longer clear given that the value of a collection such as Allen's is rooted in its quantity rather than its specificity, where the photographs show the past but are not positioned as relevant to present conditions or experiences of racism.³³ Whereas the 1935 exhibitions called for political action that would alter systemic racism, a sentimental apology prompted by *Without Sanctuary* is now taken as sufficient.

Crickets and Opportunities: Sentimental Exhibition Strategies

Throughout its installations, organizers of *Without Sanctuary* sought sentimental responses—those based on feeling rather than doing—by creating immersive experiences. When *Without Sanctuary* was at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in 2002, curators piped in black spirituals throughout the exhibition space.³⁴ When the exhibition traveled to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in 2010, visitors heard Motown standards as well as crickets.³⁵ Beyond these auditory additions, both installations at the Warhol and the CHS included exhibition spaces specifically designed for emoting. Low lighting, benches, and boxes of tissues encouraged viewers to let their feelings out.³⁶ The dig for such an emotional response reveals that exhibition organizers assumed that their viewing public both desired and required an opportunity to *feel* about the past as a form of release or redemption. In this way, sentimentality did not incite action; rather, it was an experience intended to be satisfying only in its performance of emotion as an end in itself. Indeed, in the case of the Warhol Museum, rhetoric about emotion (not to be confused with emotional rhetoric) was at the forefront of the exhibition planning process. I will not fully explore the case of the Warhol here, as Roger I. Simon's book *A Pedagogy*

of *Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice* compiles years of research on both the Warhol's and the CHS's *Without Sanctuary* exhibitions. Rather, for the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the language of the Warhol's public materials regarding the goals of the exhibition.

Jessica Gogan, who was the Assistant Director for Education and Interpretation at the Warhol at the time of *Without Sanctuary* and the exhibition's primary organizer, wrote at length about the exhibition's implementation "The Warhol: Museum as Artist: Creative, Dialogic & Civic Practice," published in *Animating Democracy*. The exhibition was presented with support from the Animating Democracy Initiative, a program of Americans for the Arts whose mission states that the organization "inspires, informs, promotes, and connects arts and culture as potent contributors to community, civic, and social change."³⁷ With this backing in mind, Gogan noted that the "*Without Sanctuary* Project offered the Museum the opportunity to affirm, build, and reflect on its practice and to explore new ways of working."³⁸ To this end, the exhibition programming included community conversations while emphasizing personal viewer response through video comments, written comments, and displayed postcards that were then sent to viewers once the exhibition ended.

Gogan's writing on *Without Sanctuary* echoes the NYHS's justifications of the exhibition.³⁹ In the press release for the NYHS exhibition, David R. Jones, Esq., President of the Community Service Society (a partner with the NYHS in organizing the exhibition) stated, "It is important that New Yorkers have the opportunity to learn about this previously neglected aspect of American history." Betsy Gotbaum, then-President of the NYHS, added,

The photographs provide an opportunity for a dialogue among New Yorkers about a part of our past that is difficult for us to confront. We expect to provide a setting that will allow people to learn about the photographs and to share their responses with one another and with special facilitators we have enlisted to address their questions and emotions.

The NYHS thus held frequent facilitated community dialogues, though their archives contain little information about what was discussed.

Both the Warhol's and the NYHS's stated interest in presenting *Without Sanctuary* focuses on opportunities for an imagined community of well-intentioned viewers to affirm, build, reflect, engage, and—most importantly—emote. But the emphasis on the photographs as opportunities is misleading. The photographs may be "springboards" or "teaching moments" as Gogan calls them, as well as visual motivators toward education or exchange, as the NYHS emphasizes.⁴⁰ And when placed in dimly lit rooms, they may very well fill viewers with feelings, as crickets chirp in their ears. But the presentation of these photographs is not an "opportunity" for *all* visitors. That is because these photographs show, in overwhelming numbers, young black boys with names and families and whole lives hanging from trees or burned to death, being smiled or pointed at by white faces

that are clearly legible even after all these years. These photographs are not opportunities; they are deaths. Perhaps this problem is most succinctly revealed by questioning *who* exactly Gotbaum is picturing will do all of this imagined discussing; her statement assumes that lynching—and its accompanying messages of white supremacy, threat, and exploitation—is firmly of the past and relatively unconsidered, even as writers of color routinely deny and deconstruct this presumption. Thus, to be clear, these photographs in this exhibition make visual the reality of opportunities lost by blacks, even as the images are put to work as opportunities gained for whites.

Mired in opportunity, here I want to clarify the difference between soliciting a sentimental response and supporting an emotional one. Upon visiting the NYHS, Jimi Izrael, a black author and reporter, published an intimate account of his experience on *Africana.com*, a now-defunct website founded by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah. He concluded:

By the time I made the round of the room, the captions by the pictures began to offer subtle justification, and portraits of abolitionists and other well-meaning white folks find their way among the photos. By the time I sat at a table where a brief movie featuring a monologue from James Allen, purveyor of snuff, was playing on video, I felt a shiver from the neck up. A gentle wind whistled through my bones. Then I heard a voice, quiet at first but soon loud and resounding off the walls of the place, distracting the patrons as they stared, gaping, in my direction. I looked about and behind and to the side of me to find the voice—who IS that crazy muthaf—?—to find it in my own throat: loud, plaintive and inconsolable. My girl embraced me and muffled my scream in her bosom, violently waving off police and other well-meaning white folks who were poised to comfort me. I fell out of my seat, into her lap, and onto the floor in a fetal position, shaking violently. All those men had friends like mine, a life like mine. . . skin like mine. The sound of the voices in the photos was deafening. The reality of my surroundings shook me like only police sirens and the evening news had done before.⁴¹

Izrael is not without emotion; in fact, his emotions push the boundaries of civility, in terms of both museum spaces and the act of mourning itself. A lack of civility, which has long been a codeword for the policing of behavior, is what calls the attention of “police and other well-meaning white folks,” as if Izrael’s response to the horror of these photographs is out of place. His feelings cannot be resolved by benches and boxes of tissues; rather, what is at stake in his response is the impact of encountering death in a museum, where wet eyes are expected to be the extent of emotion.

One young visitor of color, Gregorio Malena, picked up on this as well in his review of the NYHS exhibition for *Harlem Overheard*, a former quarterly newspaper produced by teenagers and published by the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families (now the Harlem Children’s Zone). In an

article entitled “Still Without Sanctuary,” Malena observed that the NYHS worked against possible emotional responses to such photographs, writing,

Though very powerful, the museum seemed very matter-of-fact about the images and artifacts in the exhibit, which included a whip with a wooden handle carved into the shape of a screaming black man’s head at the base. The room looked like it was simply holding a baseball card collection.

Malena noted that the exhibition included Claude McKay’s poem “If We Must Die,” where McKay acknowledges “the murderous, cowardly pack” with a plea to “let us nobly die.” For Malena, “If The New York Historical Society had built the exhibit around the poem’s demand for justice in the face of horror, it would have made a world of difference. Since it did not, the exhibit gives the strange feeling that those victims, years after their horrific deaths, are still without sanctuary.”

With Malena’s call in mind, what might an exhibition that focused on a “demand for justice in the face of horror” look like? Here, I take a cue from Patricia J. Williams, who has become a major proponent of critical race theory in both her books and her column in *The Nation* entitled “Diary of a Mad Law Professor.” In her review of *Without Sanctuary*, Williams is skeptical of the exhibition’s potential to do something other than create an emotional loop with no resulting action. Williams discusses growing up in a black family where lynching photographs were circulated most often as memorials to certain victims as well as object lessons and warnings. This perspective, under- or even un-represented in iterations of *Without Sanctuary*, calls attention to the spectacle created by looking. She references an exhibition review from the *New York Times* that quotes one viewer as saying, “Look at those guys—doesn’t even seem like real people.”⁴² Williams’s concern that viewers may indeed classify—purposefully or subconsciously—lynching victims as unreal culminates in her conclusion that history presented without question is ultimately always merely spectacular. “Lynching is not a relic of the ancient past, but a piece of our modernity,” she states, because its “repercussions shape not just blacks but millions of white people who are very much alive.”⁴³ In connecting spectacle to feeling free of implication, she concludes with a series of questions about the present, rather than the past. “Not then but now, where are those surviving perpetrators who still walk free?” she asks. “Not then but now, where are the children in those pictures, and the children of those children . . . whose schools declared a holiday [to] watch the communionlike dispersal of black flesh and bits of bone?” she persists, before ending with a final chilling query: “Not then but now, how does this traumatic violence repeat itself, re-view itself, and yet remain so mystically unreal, so stunningly routine?”⁴⁴

Williams’s insistence on questioning the “not then but now” challenges me to envision an exhibition that is not about evoking a sentimental response or presenting an opportunity to dialogue on the seemingly distant past, but rather one that is interrogative of the many roles viewers play in instances

of systemic racism. I can imagine an exhibition in which the wall text is neither a timeline (as at the Warhol) nor a matter-of-fact description of events (as with the informative labels at the NYHS), nor even pictures of abolition and anti-lynching activists (the NYHS exhibition included images of Ida B. Wells, Frederick Douglass, and W. E. B. Du Bois, among others). Rather, keeping in mind Judith Butler's observation that death only registers as significant upon realization that the life lost did indeed matter, an exhibition on the horror of lynching could gather together stories and photographs of those lynched while still alive, not yet fatal victims of the racism's injustices.⁴⁵ Or perhaps, with an eye toward the white audiences that flooded these spaces and caused Hale and Lee to fret in the first place, the wall text could read, "Do you recognize any of the people in the crowd of this photograph?" or "Does your family have a picture like this in an album?" or "When have you witnessed violence against black male bodies? What did you do?"⁴⁶ This could, in many ways, be an exhibition not about sentiments that are squarely and safely placed on the actions of "persons unknown," but instead focused on a level of accountability that denies the ability of perpetrators of crimes—of all scales, and viewers included—to continue to move through the world unharmed, unafraid, and unaffected.

Accounting for Sentimentality

In his essay "Everybody's Protest Novel," James Baldwin writes,

Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty.⁴⁷

To understand Baldwin's diagnosis of sentimentality as cruelty, I turn here to the relationship of accountability and sentimentality proposed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her 1990 book *Epistemology of the Closet*, in which she dissects Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in order to identify sentimentality as composed of a range of meanings that are all rooted in relations between an audience and a spectacle, including "the *insincere*, the *manipulative*, the *vicarious*, [and] the *morbid*."⁴⁸ Vicariousness becomes of most importance to Sedgwick, by which she means that while the subject matter of sentimentality is consistently shifting, the consistency of sentimentality is in "the nature of the investment by a viewer *in* a subject matter."⁴⁹ In this way, "sentimental spectatorship" is in actuality a practice of exploitation of feeling through another's experience, "perpetuated or accelerated by the nonaccountable viewer."⁵⁰ The tension that Sedgwick identifies between the "tacitness and the consequent nonaccountability of the identification between sufferer and sentimental spectator" is, in her writing,

the line sentimentality treads between a potentially positive relation versus a detrimental one.⁵¹

While Sedgwick's full chapter navigates the risks of both sentimentality and antisentimentality, I want to pull out her proposal that the sentimental relies on a *non-accountable* exchange that can take place within emotional spectatorship. Here, I argue, is where installations of *Without Sanctuary* become trapped in the concern Sedgwick identifies, as white viewers in particular practice exploitation through their own emotional but not political responses. Roger Simon considers this to some extent in his quantitative study of visitor comments left at both the Warhol and the CHS, in which he coded different observations and expressions in order to produce numerical evaluations of visitor responses. Looking at these comments reveals that part of the trouble with understanding what to do after seeing these images is a question of identity, in that Simon observes divisions among those who in their comments identify themselves as black, those who identify themselves as some other type of minority and in many cases compare their experiences to being black, and those who identify as white and often call for the recognition of commonalities and respect for all humanity—as with one comment left at the CHS: “It is unbelievable that we as human beings could be so cruel to other people because they are of a different race.”⁵²

But who is this “they” and “we”? I ask because “we” is used not just by visitors, but also routinely by exhibition organizers. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag questions accountability through the use of “we,” referencing lynching photographs and *Without Sanctuary* as an example. Sontag's name comes up throughout exhibition reviews as well, and my questions at the beginning of this chapter mirror Sontag's own:

What is the point of exhibiting these pictures? To awaken indignation? To make us feel ‘bad’; that is, to appall and sadden? To help us mourn? Is looking at such pictures really necessary, given that these horrors lie in the past remote enough to be beyond punishment? Do they actually teach us anything? Don't they rather just confirm what we already know (or want to know)? . . . The question is, Whom do we wish to blame? More precisely, Whom do we believe we have the right to blame?⁵³

There are no easy answers for Sontag, and rightly so. To read these photographs generally, collectively, as if their purpose is to create opportunity for feeling, is to “dismiss politics” in Sontag's words, which I take to mean dismissing their specificities of threat, supremacy, advertising, and economic gain. This dismissal serves to create consensus about lynching as bad but also as passed and past, feeling the moral relief of expressing emotion without having to account for what has been done.⁵⁴

Even James Allen, the original collector of these images, seems unclear about what “we” is at stake in showing the photographs, even as Sontag argues that “No ‘we’ should be taken for granted when the subject is looking

at other people's pain."⁵⁵ The exhibition came about because, according to Simon, "Allen suggested that Americans were not talking straightforwardly about racism primarily because they aren't aware of its severity, thus suggesting that, 'Americans have to have a visual vocabulary of racism before they can talk honestly about it.'"⁵⁶ Here, I am not sure which "Americans" Allen thinks lack the words and images to express experiences of racism—surely, those who in the 1930s flew the NAACP flag that read "A man was lynched yesterday," those who marched in the 1960s with "I AM A MAN" placards, and those who today unfurl banners reading "Black Lives Matter" are American and understand the severity of racism. While I am not denying that straightforward conversations about race and racism are not nearly as common enough, I find it urgent to call out how easily the audience for lynching photographs is reduced to "whites," or "naïve/innocent whites," or—in the case above—"Americans." In this reduction, exhibition organizers and even viewers continue to posit museums as spaces for normalizing and elevating white perspectives and culture. This returns *Without Sanctuary* back to an opportunity for whites to see, learn, dialogue, and feel, and in doing so, reiterates lynching as an activity of white spectacle. Failing to mark lynching as such an activity, both then and now, dodges accountability by keeping the "we"—of perpetrators, conspirators, photographers, curators, viewers—anonymous and, thereby, un-accountable.

Persisting as "Persons Unknown"

With disruption rather than normalization in mind, I want to conclude with a story relayed by Dora Apel in "Lynching Photographs and the Politics of Public Shaming," where Apel shares the experience of Thomas Shipp's family members—for whom the image of his lynching is anything but generic.⁵⁷ In 2003, black and white churches in Marion, Indiana, suggested placing a plaque on the site of the lynching in the Courthouse Square. The debate about exactly what type of "racial reconciliation" such a plaque would provide was varied, particularly given the refusal of City Commissioner David Glickfield to support any wording that directly referenced the 1930 event.⁵⁸ Ruth Ann Nash, a niece of Thomas Shipp, responded by telling Marion leaders, "We resent the implications that this act will bring closure to us . . . being that the town is still very prejudiced towards blacks of any age, past or present. There is no closure of any kind to the horrible injustice done to these two black men that were hung on the Courthouse Square."⁵⁹ Roberta Richard, another family member, also argued against placement of the plaque, stating that it made inevitable the moment of explaining to her nephew that his great-great-uncle was lynched, causing a violent impediment to her day-to-day life.⁶⁰ She told commissioners, "We're the ones that are going to have to live with it until the day we die."⁶¹ In the words of these two women, the "we" has become much more specific: we who are the family of Thomas Shipp, we who must continue to suffer racism and threat, we

who do not need a community facilitated discussion to remember our past because we live with it every day.

Apel's account highlights two significant aspects of reconciliation: "the failure to mention the lynchings [specifically in the plaque] as the community's failure to meet its responsibility" and a "plaque, by perpetuating the public humiliation and degradation of lynching, echoed the violence of the original act, just as the multiplication of lynching images in public exhibitions and in print causes pain."⁶² In such a circumstance, the pitfalls of *Without Sanctuary* become clear, as the exhibition neither asks for viewers to claim responsibility nor fully addresses its own participation in the further circulation of these images to be a re-iteration of violence. For family members, the event or image of Shipp's lynching is not a springboard, a teaching moment, or an opportunity for an unspecified, non-accountable, presumed-white viewer to dialogue about feelings. Rather, images, plaques, exhibitions, and other collective memory exercises are records of violence done to actual bodies in existing places at specific times for which there continues to be no justice.

In *Without Sanctuary*, lynching photographs become pieces of evidence spectacularly compiled for a case never to actually be filed. If contemporary viewing of lynching photographs depends upon the images operating as they always have, then the threat they pose—as well as the threat they capture—has not been eradicated.⁶³ The danger in displaying these deaths, then, is that when looking at a lynching photograph, viewers themselves can persist as "persons unknown." Here, I think again of Sedgwick's writing about the fate of Dorian Gray, consumed not only by his own greed but also by rabid readers of the serial sentimental. Sedgwick sees the novel as hinging on the "framing and hanging of the beautiful male body as a visual index of vicarious expiation."⁶⁴ Though Sedgwick is explaining the painting that absorbs Dorian's sins but eventually takes his life, the overlap of language urges me to cry out, chasing away any potential for tears. To be both framed for a crime and framed as a picture, hanged in the open air and hung on the wall—I am certain that my white spectatorship of these black bodies does not qualify as reparation or atonement.

Notes

- 1 Anthony W. Lee, "Introduction," in *Lynching Photographs, vol. 2, Defining Moments in American Photography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), 3.
- 2 The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) of Montgomery, Alabama released a report—*Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*—in 2015, presenting their research in the 12 most active lynching states in America, all of which are in the American South. In just these 12 states between 1877 and 1950, the EJI documented 3,959 lynchings of black people. This report was cited in a February 10, 2015 article in the *New York Times*, one of many media outlets to present lynching numbers, prompting contemporary conversation about wider

lynching practices, which included lynchings of Latinos, Indian Americans, and Asian Americans in the American West (see: Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935*, Duke University Press, 2006). My intention here is not to dismiss this important and often visually equally gruesome aspect of lynching history, but to take *Without Sanctuary* as my cue for consideration, focusing primarily on the histories surrounding lynchings of black people. Furthermore, my use of the terms “black” and “white” in this essay is in acknowledgement of complicated racial categories that are continually socially constructed and philosophically contested while playing out physically, legally, and socially on actual bodies. My approach to this thinking is deeply informed by work done by bell hooks, Michael Omi, Howard Winant, and Ian Haney-Lopez, among others.

- 3 Grace Elizabeth Hale, “Without Sanctuary,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 3 (December 2002): 993.
- 4 Lee, “Introduction,” 6.
- 5 For a more detailed look at the spectacle of lynching, see: Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
- 6 Leigh Raiford, “The Consumption of Lynching Images,” in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (International Center of Photography, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 269–270.
- 7 Circulation of these postcards became so prominent as to interrupt regular mail activity, causing the United States Postal Office to finally ban their transmission in 1908, though this rule was inconsistently upheld.
- 8 While lynching is stereotypically associated with only the South, records show that lynchings occurred across the United States and well above the Mason-Dixon line (including that of Marion, Indiana, resulting in the “generic lynching photograph” I reference in this text). Though notably, H.L. Mencken—cultural critic and anti-lynching advocate—is known to have attributed the South’s lynchings as directly related to its lack of cultural institutions, quipping, “[Lynching] shows itself in inverse proportion to the number of shoot-the-chutes, symphony orchestras, roof gardens, theaters, horse races, yellow journals . . . No one ever heard of a lynching in Paris, in Munich, in Rome or in London. But there are incessant lynchings . . . in such barbarous American states as Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina” (“The Confederate Pastime,” in the *Smart Set Magazine*, February 1920: 45).
- 9 *Ibid.*, 267.
- 10 Raiford, “The Consumption of Lynching Images,” 268.
- 11 Shawn Michelle Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” in *Lynching Photographs, vol. 2, Defining Moments in American Photography*, edited by Anthony W. Lee (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), 25.
- 12 In her essay “How Come Nobody Told Me about the Lynching?,” Jacquie Jones discusses confronting this image in her high school history textbook with no warning, causing her to realize that those white and pictured were still alive: “That little boy could be my history teacher.” See: Jacquie Jones, “How Come Nobody Told Me about the Lynching?,” in *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, edited by Deborah Willis (New York: The New Press, 1994), 154.
- 13 James H. Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America*, 1st Palgrave Macmillan paperback edition (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 116. *Italics original.*
- 14 Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” 25–26.

- 15 Ibid., 25.
- 16 Helen Langa, "Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions: Politicized Viewpoints, Racial Perspectives, Gendered Constraints," *American Art* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 27. See also: "An Art Exhibition against Lynching," *Crisis* (April 1935): 106; Margaret Rose Vendryes, "Hanging on Their Walls: A Commentary on Lynching, the Forgotten 1935 Exhibition," in *Race Consciousness: African-American Studies for the New Century*, edited by Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffrey A. Tucker (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 153–176.
- 17 Ibid., 11.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 "An Art Exhibit against Lynching," *Crisis* 42, no. 2 (April 1935): 106.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Langa, "Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions," 18.
- 23 "An Art Exhibit against Lynching."
- 24 Langa, "Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions," 15.
- 25 Smith discusses a specific instance of this in her essay "The Evidence of Lynching" through the story of Lawrence Beitler's sales of a lynching photograph from Marion, Indiana. Smith argues that "he not only participated in the lynching but also profited from it, making souvenir copies of the image to sell for fifty cents apiece, and stamping the photographs to advertise his studio and affirm his credentials in a white community. His project was lucrative until Flossie Bailey, head of the local NAACP, convinced the state police to stop him from selling his photograph of the lynching." For further information on this exchange, see: James H. Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America*, 1st Palgrave Macmillan paperback edition (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 113.
- 26 Smith, "The Evidence of Lynching Photographs," 51.
- 27 "An Art Exhibit against Lynching."
- 28 For discussions of photographs and evidence, see: Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence the Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance*, 1st edition (Amsterdam: New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004); John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); and Alan Trachtenberg, "Signifying the Real: Documentary Photography in the 1930s," in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, edited by Alejandro Anreus, Jonathan Weinberg and Diana Linden (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 3–20.
- 29 John Lewis, "Foreword," in *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, edited by James Allen (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Twin Palms, 2000), 7.
- 30 See the C-SPAN video of the discussion of the Anti-Lynching Apology Resolution.
- 31 A transcript of the resolution as well as its supporters can be viewed on Congress's own website, available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/senate-resolution/39?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22sres39%22%5D%7D>. According to a June 14, 2005 article in the *New York Times* by Sheryl Gay Stolberg, this resolution marked the first time that members of Congress had apologized to black Americans for any reason, despite various calls throughout the last two centuries related to slavery, lynching, Jim Crow laws, and reparations, among other issues. The Anti-Lynching Apology Resolution joined the ranks of other Congressional apologies, including those made to Japanese-Americans in 1988 for their internment during World War II and to Hawaiians in 1993 for overthrowing their kingdom in 1893. Family members of those lynched attended the resolution ceremony, though not all were convinced of

the significance of its passage. According to the *New York Times*, a member of the family of Anthony Crawford, who in 1916 was hanged and shot over 200 times in Abbeville, South Carolina, despite his prominent positive role in the local community as a landowner and founder of a school for black children and whose only crime was disputing with a white man over the price of cotton, attended and remarked: "I have to let God be the judge because I don't know if [the senators] meant it out of their heart or they're just saying it out of their mouth." Indeed, it was a voice vote, in which the names and numbers of votes on each side are not recorded, with co-sponsorship from only 80 (rather than all 100) members of the Senate.

32 Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland*, 2.

33 This is not dissimilar from more general curatorial approaches in the United States that present photographs of disasters, wars, and other tragedies as valuable only within the context of a collection, while art photographs gain and maintain value through the authorship of an individual artist.

34 Lee, "Introduction," 3.

35 Personal conversation between Christopher Steiner and Jennifer J. Marshall, relayed to the author.

36 These installation choices are recorded in the institutions' own records as well as Roger Simon's chapter "Without Sanctuary Exhibitions at the Andy Warhol Museum and Chicago Historical Society" in his 2014 book *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*.

37 More information on the goals, history, and programming of the Animating Democracy Initiative can be found at <http://animatingdemocracy.org/>.

38 Jessica Gogan, "The Warhol: Museum as Artist: Creative, Dialogic and Civic Practice," in *Animating Democracy* (Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, n.d.), 3.

39 Here I refer to the exhibition at the NYHS as the original exhibition in order to create a timeline of *Without Sanctuary's* presentation under that name and in major institutions. The installation under the name *Witness: Photographs of Lynchings from the Collection of James Allen* at the Roth Horowitz Gallery is certainly still the origin point of these photographs.

40 Gogan, "The Warhol: Museum as Artist," 3.

41 Jimi Izrael, "Voices: Gimme Shelter: Going to See Sanctuary," *Africana.com*, March 2, 2001. This article is no longer available online, but can be accessed at the NYHS archives.

42 Though the *New York Times* published nearly 40 articles about or mentioning *Without Sanctuary*, I cannot locate one that features this line.

43 Patricia J. Williams, "Without Sanctuary," *The Nation*, February 14, 2000: 9.

44 Ibid.

45 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010).

46 It is significant to note here that several newspaper writers attribute the slowness of *Without Sanctuary* to come to Southern venues, particularly Atlanta, despite the fact that it is Allen's hometown, to be the fact that white people in the photographs might still be alive and recognizable. See: Brent Staples, "The Disciples of Hatred, in Their Own Words and Images," *The New York Times*, December 22, 2008 and Catherine Fox, "Images Too Painful to See? Atlantans Squabble over How and When to Exhibit Lynching Photographs," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, August 2, 2001 among others.

47 James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," in *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 14. Originally published in 1955.

48 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Some Binarisms (II): Wilde, Nietzsche, and the Sentimental Relations of the Male Body," in *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 143. Itals original.

49 Ibid., 150 Itals original.

- 50 Patricia J. Williams, "Without Sanctuary," *The Nation*, February 14, 2000: 9.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Simon, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*, 142. For a full discussion of Simon's analysis of visitor comments, see the chapter "Public Performance in the Social Space of Museum Comment Books."
- 53 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 1st edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 91–93.
- 54 Ibid., 9.
- 55 Ibid., 7.
- 56 Ibid., 164–165. Original citation: James Allen, as reported in Caroline Abels, "Collector Says Exhibit Provides 'Visual Vocabulary' of Racism," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 22, 2001.
- 57 For Apel's full account, see "Lynching Photographs and the Politics of Public Shaming," in *Lynching Photographs (Defining Moments in American Photography)*, edited by Doral Apel Shawn Michelle Smith (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), 68–69. Also: Kristin Harty, "Family of Lynched Black Man Unimpressed with Plaque Commemorating Racial Reconciliation," *Chronicle-Tribune* (Marion, IN), October 10, 2003.
- 58 Apel notes that Glickfield believed that "more general wording would better help to heal contemporary race relations": 68.
- 59 Brent Staples, "The Perils of Growing Comfortable with Evil," *Nieman Reports* 54, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 52.
- 60 Ibid., 69.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid., 68, 69.
- 63 Certainly, there is overwhelming affirmation of this lack of eradication. I see my writing here as in direct discussion with many contemporary conversations, including: comparisons between lynched bodies left strung up in public squares and Michael Brown's body being left in the street in Ferguson (as well as the rumor mill of false accusations against Brown used by the police as justification of their pursuit); multiple police officers overtaking and killing Eric Garner for a petty crime (and resulting policy about police body-cams); revisiting the American history of burning black bodies in the revelation of recent actions by ISIS; and calls to remove the Confederate Flag—hoisted as a sign of intimidation during the Civil Rights era—from state properties. Failures of the legal system continue, while the debate around the use of photographic documentation as evidence escalates.
- 64 Sedgwick, "Some Binarisms (II)," 148.

Bibliography

- Allen, James et al. "An Art Exhibit against Lynching." *Crisis* 42, no. 2 (April 1935): 106.
- Allen, James et al. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Twin Palms, 2000.
- Apel, Dora. *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- Apel, Dora. "Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib." *Art Journal* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 88–100.
- Apel, Dora. "Lynching Photographs and the Politics of Public Shaming." In *Lynching Photographs (Defining Moments in American Photography)*, edited by Doral Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.

- Baer, Ulrich. *Spectral Evidence the Photography of Trauma*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Baldwin, James. *Going to Meet the Man*. New York: Dial, 1965.
- Baldwin, James. "Everybody's Protest Novel." In *Notes of a Native Son*, 13–23. Boston: Beacon, 2012.
- Carby, Hazel V. "‘On the Threshold of Woman’s Era’: Lynching, Empire, and Sexuality in Black Feminist Theory." In "Race," *Writing, and Difference*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr., 301–316. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Equal Justice Initiative. *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*. Published 2015. Report summary accessed February 10, 2015: <http://www.eji.org/files/EJI%20Lynching%20in%20America%20SUMMARY.pdf>.
- Gogan, Jessica. "The Warhol: Museum as Artist: Creative, Dialogic and Civic Practice." In *Animating Democracy*, 1–32. Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, n.d.
- Gonzales-Day, Ken. *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. "Review: Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America." *Journal of American History* 89, no. 3 (December 2002): 989–993.
- Jones, Jacquie. "How Come Nobody Told Me about the Lynching?" In *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, edited by Deborah Willis, 153–158. New York: The New Press, 1994.
- Langa, Helen. "Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions: Politicized Viewpoints, Racial Perspectives, Gendered Constraints." *American Art* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 10–39.
- Lee, Anthony W. "Introduction." In *Lynching Photographs*, 1–9; *Defining Moments in American Photography*, 2. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Madison, James H. *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America*. New York: Palgrave, 2003.
- "Marion Is Quiet after Double Lynching." *Anderson Daily Bulletin*, August 8, 1930.
- Moehringer, J.R. "An Obsessive Quest to Make People See." *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 2000. Accessed May 1, 2015. <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/aug/27/news/mn-11152>.
- Raiford, Leigh. "The Consumption of Lynching Images." In *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis, 267–274. International Center of Photography, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003.
- Robertson, Campbell. "History of Lynchings in the South Documents Nearly 4,000 Names." *The New York Times*, February 10, 2015. Accessed February 10, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/10/us/history-of-lynchings-in-the-south-documents-nearly-4000-names.html>.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Some Binarisms (II): Wilde, Nietzsche, and the Sentimental Relations of the Male Body." In *Epistemology of the Closet*, 131–181. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Simon, Roger I. *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2014.
- Smith, Shawn Michelle. "The Evidence of Lynching Photographs." In *Lynching Photographs*, edited by Anthony W. Lee, 10–41; *Defining Moments in American*

- Photography, 2. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003.
- Staples, Brent. "The Perils of Growing Comfortable with Evil." *Nieman Reports* 54, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 52–53.
- Staples, Brent. "Editorial Observer: The Perils of Growing Comfortable with Evil." *The New York Times*, April 9, 2000. Accessed May 1, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/09/opinion/editorial-observer-the-perils-of-growing-comfortable-with-evil.html>.
- Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Vendryes, Margaret Rose. "Hanging on Their Walls: An Art Commentary on Lynching, the Forgotten 1935 Art Exhibition." In *Race Consciousness: African-American Studies for the New Century*, edited by Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffrey A. Tucker, 153–176. New York and London: New York University Press, 1997.
- Wells-Barnett, Ida B. *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors, a Red Record, Mob Rule in New Orleans*. New York: Arno, 1969.
- Wood, Amy Louise. *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

8 Human Skulls and Photographs of Dead Bandits

The Problems of Presenting a Nineteenth-Century Museum to Twenty-First-Century Audiences

Silvano Montaldo and Eleanor Chiari

Turin's Museo di Antropologia Criminale Cesare Lombroso is housed in a grand nineteenth-century building on the University of Turin premises, just across the hall from the skeletons and dissected bodies of the human anatomy museum. It contains an eclectic collection of objects gathered together by Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), a physician, voracious intellectual and primary representative of Italian positivism.¹ Lombroso's most famous theories, which found a supposed connection between physical traits and deviance (in criminals, in the mentally ill and in geniuses) were refuted during his lifetime, yet Lombroso is unanimously considered one of the founding fathers of the field of criminology.² His analysis of the relationship between biological determinism and free will sparked debates and shaped social policy for the prevention and punishment of crimes across the world. To this day, the historical judgment of Lombroso's work is inevitably linked to the inner workings of the field of criminology, which is constantly grappling with the tension between biological theory and sociological interpretation.

Lombroso's collection of human skulls, murder weapons, criminal and psychiatric artifacts and funerary masks was part of a museum, which Lombroso made available only to what he called "fellow scientists" and was not meant for the general public. It contained materials that he personally gathered in Italian prisons and psychiatric hospitals but also a very wide collection of photographs, murder weapons and even human tattoos, which Lombroso received from criminologists and crime enthusiasts from all over the world. Lombroso's museum inspired similar institutions in Europe and America and reinforced his notoriety amongst scientists and the general public as many of the museum's objects were displayed in the great international exhibitions of his time.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the museum was absorbed into the University of Turin and officially recognized by the Italian Government. After the death of Lombroso's followers, the museum fell into obscurity until it was rediscovered in the 1970s when, with the popularity of writings

by Foucault, Goffman, Fanon and Basaglia, Lombroso's ideas were used as examples of the relationship between bourgeois science and class domination and as being at the root of so-called "total institutions." After several incarnations, the museum was thoughtfully curated and partially reconstructed in its current location in 2009 by a group of psychiatrists, historians and museum experts who were consciously grappling with the complexity of displaying such a rich and sensitive collection.³ The museum provides a unique insight into both the contents and forms of the scientific mentality of the nineteenth century, while indirectly also paying testament to materials and voices otherwise neglected by the historic record: from the graffiti carvings of prison inmates to the desperate and meticulous artwork of psychiatric patients. While the science and cultural assumptions behind many of the displays clearly belong to the past, their relevance to the history of science and material culture makes them protected heritage for the future.

Most of the objects in the museum can be associated with death, either as belonging to people who are now dead or more explicitly consisting of human remains. The skulls in the museum have recently come into public focus due to the complex way a movement of revisionist activists has challenged their presence in the museum by drawing parallels between the presence of aboriginal human remains in Western museums and Lombroso's collection.⁴ In the eyes of the revisionists, who see Italy's unification as a colonial war of occupation against the people of southern Italy, the skulls in the museum are sacred relics to be returned and their very use as scientific objects is a proof of violation and conquest.⁵

In 2011, around the 150th anniversary of Italian unification, the museum became the target of street demonstrations and a media campaign whose most extreme expression consisted of online photographs showing rows and rows of skulls under the inscription "the mass grave of southern Italian bandits is in the Lombroso Museum." Such claims made direct visual and symbolic connections between the events of the Italian Risorgimento and genocides (particularly that in Rwanda) but were radically ahistorical.⁶ Not only did such claims completely ignore the real origins of Lombroso's collection of skulls (largely collected via legal means from psychiatric institutions and prisons mainly located in northern Italy), but they reduced the very messy and complicated period of history surrounding and following Italian unification to an ethnically driven civil war, which it was not.

The Italian Risorgimento encompassed many political and military events leading up to the unification of several diverse kingdoms into a single national state under the Savoia kings. In that context, the collapse of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in southern Italy led to a civil war, which for several years devastated many provinces in the south of Italy. Behind these bloody conflicts lay a range of motivating factors: loyalty towards the deposed Bourbon dynasty, hostility towards the new state on the part of the church over some of its secularizing policies, clashes within inner factions

of local communities and the persistence of traditional forms of organised crime in some of the poorest and most isolated parts of the kingdom.

“Brigantaggio” (brigandage) was one of the first great problems that the new rulers of unified Italy had to face. It was fought with an iron fist, without any consideration for the underlying social causes, and it was the object of a deep and lasting condemnation on the part of the intellectual establishment on the victors’ side (not only northern). After 150 years, following the failures of the policies for the development of the so-called “Mezzogiorno”⁷ and the deep crisis that the Italian nation-state has been facing, the figure of the brigand has shifted from its true historic dimension to a purely mythical and heroic one. This is due to the rediscovery of community traditions, the rise of histories inspired by sociology and anthropology and to the success of books offering an imaginative reinvention of Italian history. No longer seen as a feared enemy of a shared state, the bandit is now seen as a brave defender of southern Italian people from the brutal conquest of the North, a conquest which is now seen as the underlying cause of the consistent gap between North and South as far as economic prosperity and wealth.

As a museum of science located in northern Italy, Lombroso’s museum was accused of racism and genocide. Such accusations, which ignored Lombroso’s progressive politics and Jewish origins, added to the much more measured and complex post-structural critiques of nineteenth-century scientific thought, of which Lombroso was a prime example. It is with these two critical assumptions waged against the museum in mind that this chapter will concentrate on the photographs of dead “briganti” housed in Lombroso’s museum. Their hollowed eyes and inert bodies shattered by bullets tell stories of violence, which do not necessarily sit comfortably within a science museum. Like photographs of lynching in the USA or the photographs taken by soldiers of all eras posing with enemy corpses, the photographs of dead brigands raise questions about the power implicit in the taking, the displaying and the viewing of such images. The photographs help highlight the political, ethical and symbolic complexity implicit in dealing with mortuary photographs, especially within the context of curating a museum of a museum. When objects from the past are organized according to the logic and intent of an earlier scientific mind, today’s curators are charged with the sometimes heavy burden of exhibiting both the original objects and the processes and assumptions that went with them.

The Photographs

Lombroso’s museum collection provides visitors with a rare opportunity to access a visible record of raw scientific data. Among these material objects gathered by Lombroso⁸ is a collection of photographs of murdered southern Italian brigands, which he organised within two albums called “Album dei delinquenti n.1” and “Album dei delinquenti n.2.” These albums contain drawings, prints and photographs going back to the 1860s and 1870s and

relating to a wide range of individuals. They include both *carte de visite* images of living brigands sold as celebrity images while they were alive, as well as violent images of brigand corpses being propped up in their still bloody clothes by their very killers. Such images may not have been preserved had it not been for the interest that criminal anthropologists showed in collecting them for scientific purposes.⁹ Like other photographic materials in Lombroso's collection, these photographs were intended for measurement, as evidence of deviance and to demonstrate particular physical links between cranial features and criminal tendencies.¹⁰ To Lombroso there was no difference between the photographs of living or dead brigands, just as he took anthropometric measurements of facial features and characteristics even from drawings¹¹ of living prisoners alongside those of corpses acquired post-mortem from prison institutions.

Lombroso's albums contain two pages that stand out for their symmetrical structure and for the brutality of some of the images they contain. The first page, organized in a geometric composition, gathers together the images of the heads and the half busts of living and dead brigands belonging to the Ciccone band, who were arrested or killed on April 21, 1868 in the mountains of Abruzzo. Nine medallions are arranged attached to each other in the vague shape of a family tree, whose central "branches" depict three young dead men, surrounded by six living brigands proudly posing for the camera. The portraits of the dead are kept to the same scale as the mugshots of the living so that at first glance they all appear to be the same but for unnatural expressions: half-closed eyes and gaping mouths on the deceased.

The second page contains four medallion images of dead brigands from the Guerra gang, all executed on August 30, 1868, arranged in the form of a cross with a descriptive text in the middle. At the top and bottom of the cross are the two most gruesome images of the set: the half-naked bust of Michelina di Cesare and the shattered face of Giuseppe Sliano, which appears to have been pieced together after a shot to the back of the skull. The photographs were taken by photographer Bissi of Caserta in a style very similar to that of the more notorious photographer Emanuele Russi (1844–1929), who was closely connected to the general Pallavicini and was hired by the Italian army for explicit propaganda purposes.¹² Like Russi's photographs, Bissi's images were medium-shot portraits concentrating on the faces of the brigands while mimicking the identity photographs taken of criminals at the time, almost as if to create an *ex post facto* mugshot of the victims. The photographs had both celebratory and intimidating intents, as they were meant to confirm and celebrate the capture and final defeat of known criminals as well as for anti-brigand propaganda. The dates of the brigands' criminal activities were listed alongside their names to draw a connection between their criminal choice and the brutal destiny they faced.¹³ The photographs would have been known to non-scientists due to their wide circulation. Newspapers at the time justified the great hunger that the general public had towards such violent images of brigands as stemming



Figure 8.1 “Ciccone Band,” Bissis, Lombroso Album dei delinquenti n.1. Museo di Antropologia Criminale ‘Cesare Lombroso’. © Museo di Antropologia Criminale ‘Cesare Lombroso’.

from their need for reassurance and confirmation of the death of these known criminals.¹⁴

The photograph of the dead body of Michelina di Cesare is particularly problematic. Di Cesare had been a beautiful and famous brigand fighter



Figure 8.2 “Guerra Band,” Bissi Lombroso Album dei delinquenti n.1. Museo di Antropologia Criminale ‘Cesare Lombroso’. © Museo di Antropologia Criminale ‘Cesare Lombroso’.

who had appeared in well-known Bourbon propaganda images resting on her rifle and dressed in traditional clothes with the dreamy yet fiercely confident gaze of some of the operatic divas of her day.¹⁵

In contrast to that image, the photograph contained in Lombroso’s museum depicts her dead, her teeth protruding from her lips in a skeletal smile as her vacant eyes recede into her skull above her naked and bruised breasts, scandalously exposed. The top inscription above the dead woman’s



Figure 8.3 Michelina di Cesare, Migliorato, Museo Centrale del Risorgimento. Rome. © Museo Centrale del Risorgimento.

photograph states “incinta di 4 mesi” —four months pregnant—and along her name she is labelled as “druda” —lover—of the gang chief.

The photograph of Michelina is undeniably a violent image, which contains all the elements of desecration and pornographic scorn given, for

example, to the defeated body of Claretta Petacci.¹⁶ The photographer's shot confirmed the death of the famous woman, whose body was displayed in the public square of the town of Mignano Monte Lungo where she was killed, and laid her bare a second time for curious and prying eyes to see. The detail of her pregnancy, which might have been supplied by an autopsy, suggests a further violation of her body for the scientific gaze. Such information would have also been used to further a propaganda message on the sexual deviance of brigands aimed at those segments of the Catholic Church that supported and protected brigandage. The two contrasting photographs of Michelina—alive and dead—could also stand to highlight the extent to which the war on brigandage was as much a media war as a physical and military one.

Viewers of the photograph today are faced with the shock produced by the violence it contains. Removed from the context of the bloody civil wars that tore southern Italy apart in the years after unification, Michelina di Cesare becomes an unknown murder victim violated once by her killers, a second time by the camera and finally by the objectification implicit in her transformation into a museum object.

Postmodern Foucaultian or feminist readings of Lombroso's materials inevitably see the transformation of people into objects as the product of positivist grand narratives in which the collecting gaze is male and implicitly violent towards its subjects.¹⁷ While such readings are well established and perhaps facile, we are interested in highlighting the alterity of these images, whose status as scientific objects places them in a separate sphere from the grotesque and quasi-pornographic war trophies they could appear to be had they not existed within the collection. How then does the context of Lombroso's museum alter the violence implicit in the photographs? How does it perpetuate it?

The "Album dei delinquenti n.1" appears in the museum in virtual form, in a video that shows some of the more perishable contents of Lombroso's wide collection. On a screen of their own, the photographs of dead and living brigands serve to provide an insight into the methods of Lombroso's scientific thinking and the mechanisms of his collecting.

For Lombroso, those photographs were supposedly raw data, which he gathered for the purposes of providing scientific evidence of deviance. Influenced by social darwinism and by the excitement surrounding the discovery of the first human fossils, Lombroso was convinced that certain types of criminals were the result of an interruption in development of savages hidden within European society. These atavistic creatures, whom he defined "born-delinquents" and which he considered impossible to reform, were supposedly carriers of the bloody, animalistic and antisocial tendencies that the anthropology of Lombroso's time attributed to primitive men. In their "raw" form, Lombroso's gathered photographic materials provide today's visitors with unique access to a discredited scientific method while still allowing them access to the objects themselves, which may not have been preserved otherwise. Uninterested in their political content, Lombroso



Figure 8.4 Museo di Antropologia Criminale ‘Cesare Lombroso’. © Museo di Antropologia Criminale ‘Cesare Lombroso’ and Paolo Giagheddu.

was collecting propaganda objects to construct his own scientific narrative around the photographs, which were his data. For similar reasons, the museum curators continue to use the photographs as “data” in order to illustrate key features of Lombroso’s scientific method.

Photographs of dead bodies in museums generally contain within them the problem of depicting a taboo (that of showing gruesome images of death) as well as the controversial transformation of human beings into museum objects. Much like skulls and other body parts, photographs of the dead made into museum objects subject the person to the gaze of the collector, curator and museum visitor. Lombroso would have viewed the photographs in the “Album dei delinquenti n.1” as providing him with useful measurements only possible once the brigands were dead, and he would have assessed the photographs through the impersonal gaze of the physician that he was, trained to view corpses as material for autopsy and dissection.

Lombroso’s way of seeing human bodies as objects links him strongly to the scientific tradition of nineteenth-century anthropology. As Glenn Penny and Matti Punzi noted: “treating the human as pure object was a defining theoretical feature of . . . anthropology, which considered itself a natural scientific discipline, opposed and superior to humanistic studies of humankind.”¹⁸ Today’s museum cannot get around the objectification of human beings implicit in Lombroso’s data. The museum reproduces this in its displays as part of its larger project of creating a museum of a museum. As Giacobini, Cilli and Malerba state, this type of tension is part and parcel of the museum’s intents, as its primary function is:

Educational and aimed at showing how the construction of scientific knowledge is a process that moves forward thanks to the demonstration not so much of truths as of the ‘falsifiability’ of data and theories that cannot withstand criticism. As a corollary of this educational function the museum can therefore represent a warning towards scientific certainties.¹⁹

The educational power of Lombroso’s museum rests precisely in challenging visitors to work out for themselves the discomfort that may emerge from the gap between nineteenth-century assumptions and twenty-first-century sensibilities. Yet the particular place that photography holds in twenty-first-century knowledge complicates this already delicate process further when it comes to the photographs of dead brigands.

We are living in what we might call a post-photographic era, where digital communication has transformed the way that we relate to and use photographic images. More than ever, we communicate through photographs and use them as a language of its own, omitting context to such an extent that we come to fetishize photographic content more than ever before. When we view the images of the “Album dei delinquenti n.1,” the photographs take us outside of the museum and give us the seductive illusion of our being “there,” just beyond a bullet-riddled tree back in 1868. As we view the photographs, we see the horrors of the violence of Italy’s post-unification civil war, and they shock us with their morbid content. In forcing this uncomfortable and shocking encounter with death and with the scientific mentality

that ignored their human tragedy, the photographs also disrupt the flow of museum communication by the propagandistic nature of their framing.

The people in the photographs cannot be “read” by visitors concentrating on their images displayed on screen simply as “specimens,” and the logic of their collection is lost as they are shocked by the taboo of death and its photographic corollary. The gap in time between the taking of the photograph and its viewing today does not create a distancing between the viewers and the subjects of the photographs. The images, even when seen for the first time, provoke a discomfort that rests in the very familiarity with images of death, particularly of violent, disfiguring death. Death photography and its particular repetitive composition makes inert disfigured corpses appear familiar whether they belong to crime scenes from the nineteenth century or to news images from the present. Thus, in death photography, the illusion of the portrayed image simply presenting a fragment of lost time is shattered by the contemporaneity of the shock the images evoke.

Lombroso’s collection, however, engrossed in telling a scientific narrative that made a very different use of photographic materials from the photo-focused approaches of today’s audiences, did not view these images as shocking in the least. This had more to do with the collecting mentality of nineteenth-century science and with Lombroso’s research methods than with any political consideration of the victims in the photographs. Photographs did not exist as a separate historic entity for Lombroso but were integrated into his studies along with other material objects—from corpses to weapons used in specific crimes—seen to have a material and symbolic connection to the crime itself. To remove them from the collection, however disquieting they may be, would constitute an act of censorship, which would erase the complexity of both the history the photographs are still preserving, and of nineteenth-century science’s relationship with photography itself.

Notes

- 1 Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* (New York: Praeger, 2002).
- 2 See, for example: Kate Bradley, “Cesare Lombroso 1835–1909,” in *Fifty Key Thinkers in Criminology* (London: Routledge, 2009); Hermann Mannheim, *Pioneers in Criminology* (London: Stevens and Sons, 1960).
- 3 Silvano Montaldo and Paolo Tappero, eds., *Il museo di Antropologia criminale Cesare Lombroso* (Turin: Utet, 2009).
- 4 See editorial “Homes for Bones: A Dispute over the Skull of an Italian Cheese Thief Highlights the Enduring Debate over Repatriation,” *Nature* 501 (2013): 462.
- 5 For more on this, see: Maria Teresa Milicia, *Lombroso e il brigante* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2014) and Silvano Montaldo, “La ‘fossa comune’ del Museo Lombroso e il ‘lager’ di Fenestrelle: il centocinquantesimo dei Neoborbonici,” *Passato e presente*, a. 30, no. 87 (2012): 105–118.

- 6 Per Jørgen Ystehede, “Contested Spaces: On Crime Museums, Monuments and Memorials”; Silvano Montaldo, “Il cranio, il sindaco, l’ingegnere, il giudice e il comico: Un Feuilleton museale italiano,” *Museologia Scientifica* nuova serie 6, no. 1–2 (2012): 137–146 and “Sudismo: guerre di crani e trappole identitarie,” in *Passato e presente*, a. 32, no. 93 (2014): 5–18.
- 7 Literally, “Midday” refers to regions of southern Italy and the island of Sardinia.
- 8 At the height of his fame, Lombroso corresponded with hundreds of prison directors, doctors, scientists and scholars from as far away as Australia, Russia and Argentina. He was sent objects and materials by reputed scientists as well as by admiring enthusiasts, and it is often difficult to trace the exact origin of objects he housed in his collection. This is particularly true for his photographic collection, which is only now being studied by Nicoletta Leonardi, as mentioned in her article “Il metodo lombrosiano: Le fotografie come oggetti sociali nel fondo fotografico del Museo Lombroso,” in *Il Museo di Antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso” dell’Università di Torino*, edited by Silvano Montaldo (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana editore, 2015), 36–51.
- 9 Brigands were of particular interest to criminal anthropologists such as Salvatore Penta and Angelo Zuccarelli, for example, who played a part in the preservation of a large collection of photographs shown in the 1911 *Mostra di ricordi storici del Risorgimento nel mezzogiorno d’Italia* on the 50th anniversary of Italian unification. The writer Salvatore di Giacomo, who was one of the planners of the exhibition, had been collecting photographs of brigands having gathered a great number from a book seller who had acquired them from a police commissioner.
- 10 Cesare Lombroso, *L’uomo delinquente in rapporto all’antropologia, alla giurisprudenza e alla psichiatria: Quinta edizione—1897* (Milan: Bompiani, 2013), 1189.
- 11 It is particularly important to note that within his album he included the drawn portraits of members of the infamous La Gala band which he took from the work of one of the last followers of frenology in Italy. See Biagio Miraglia, *Parere frenologico sui famosi delinquenti Cipriano e Giona La Gala, Domenico Papa e Giovanni D’Avanzo, con un cenno sulle prigioni di S. Maria Capua Vetere* (Aversa: s.n., 1864).
- 12 Ugo Di Pace, “La fotografia,” in *Brigantaggio, lealismo, repressione nel Mezzogiorno 1860–1870* (Naples: G. Macchiaroli, 1984), 53.
- 13 Salvatore Di Giacomo, *Per la storia del brigantaggio nel Napoletano* (Venosa: Osanna, 1990), 9–12 (original appeared in *Emporium*, 1904); Emma Giammatei, ed., *Mostra di ricordi storici del Risorgimento meridionale d’Italia* (Naples: Comune di Napoli, 2011), 153–159.
- 14 Di Pace, *ibid.*, 53. Newspaper propaganda from the time would have treated brigands much like “terrorists” today are presented, with little differentiation between political movements and violent petty criminals engaged in kidnappings and killings.
- 15 Maurizio Restivo, *Ritratti di brigantesse: il dramma della disperazione* (Mantua: Pietro Lacaita Editore, 1997); Fulvio D’Amore, *Michelina di Cesare, brigantessa per amore: Le gesta eroiche della brigantessa tra Campania, Lazio, Abruzzo e Molise (1862–1868)* (Naples: Controcorrente, 2012).
- 16 Sergio Luzzatto, *The Body of the Duce* (New York: Metropolitan Book, 2005).
- 17 See, for example, Sandra Ponzanesi, “Beyond the Black Venus: Colonial Sexual Politics and Contemporary Visual Practices,” in *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*, edited by Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan (Oxford: Lang, 2005), 165–190; Or T. Deane Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus, Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears and Primitive Narratives in French* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

- 18 Glenn Penny and Matti Punzi, *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 158.
- 19 Giacomo Giacobini, Cristina Cilli and Giancarla Malerba, “Il nuovo allestimento: patrimonio in beni culturali e strumento di educazione museale,” in *Il Museo di Antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso” dell’Università di Torino*, edited by Silvano Montaldo in collaboration with Cristina Cilli (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana editore, 2015), 23–29.

Bibliography

- Bradley, Kate. “Cesare Lombroso 1835–1909.” In *Fifty Key Thinkers in Criminology*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- D’Amore, Fulvio. *Michelina di Cesare, brigantessa per amore: Le gesta eroiche della brigantessa tra Campania, Lazio, Abruzzo e Molise (1862–1868)*. Naples: Controcorrente, 2012.
- Di Giacomo, Salvatore. *Per la storia del brigantaggio nel Napoletano*. Venosa: Osanna, 1990, 9–12 [original appeared in *Emporium*, 1904].
- Di Pace, Ugo. “La fotografia.” In *Brigantaggio, lealismo, repressione nel Mezzogiorno 1860–1870*. Naples: G. Macchiaroli, 1984.
- Giacobini, Giacomo, Cristina Cilli and Giancarla Malerba. “Il nuovo allestimento: patrimonio in beni culturali e strumento di educazione museale.” In *Il Museo di Antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso” dell’Università di Torino*, edited by S. Montaldo, in collaboration with C. Cilli, 23–29. Cinisello Balsamo, MI, Italy: Silvana editore, 2015.
- Giammatei, Emma, ed. *Mostra di ricordi storici del Risorgimento meridionale d’Italia*. Naples: Comune di Napoli, 2011.
- Gibson, Mary. *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology*. New York: Praeger, 2002.
- Gould, Stephen J. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1981.
- “Homes for Bones: A Dispute over the Skull of an Italian Cheese Thief Highlights the Enduring Debate over Repatriation.” *Nature* 501, September 26, 2013.
- Leonardi, Nicoletta. “Il metodo lombrosiano e le fotografie come oggetti sociali.” In *Il Museo di antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso” dell’Università di Torino*, edited by Silvano Montaldo in collaborazione con Cristina Cilli, 36–51. Cinisello Balsamo, MI, Italy: Silvana Editore, 2015.
- Lombroso, Cesare. *L’uomo delinquente in rapporto all’antropologia, alla giurisprudenza e alla psichiatria: Quinta edizione—1897*. Milan: Bompiani, 2013.
- Luzzatto, Sergio. *The Body of the Duce*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005.
- Mannheim, Hermann. *Pioneers in Criminology*. London: Stevens and Sons, 1960.
- Milicia, Maria Teresa. *Lombroso e il brigante*. Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2014.
- Miraglia, Biagio. *Parere frenologico sui famosi delinquenti Cipriano e Giona La Gala, Domenico Papa e Giovanni D’Avanzo, con un cenno sulle prigioni di S. Maria Capua Vetere*. Aversa: s.n., 1864.
- Montaldo, Silvano. “Il cranio, il sindaco, l’ingegnere, il giudice e il comico: Un Feuilleton museale italiano.” *Museologia Scientifica* nuova serie 6, no. 1–2 (2012): 137–146.
- Montaldo, Silvano. “La ‘fossa comune’ del Museo Lombroso e il ‘lager’ di Fenestrelle: il centocinquantesimo dei Neoborbonici.” *Passato e presente* a. 30, no. 87 (2012): 105–118.

- Montaldo, Silvano. "Sudismo: guerre di crani e trappole identitarie." *Passato e presente* a. 32, no. 93 (2014): 5–18.
- Montaldo, Silvano and Paolo Tappero, eds. *Il museo di Antropologia criminale Cesare Lombroso*. Turin: Utet, 2009.
- Penny, Glenn and Matti Punzi. *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.
- Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Beyond the Black Venus: Colonial Sexual Politics and Contemporary Visual Practices." In *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*, edited by Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, 165–190. Oxford: Lang, 2005.
- Restivo, Maurizio. *Ritratti di brigantesse: il dramma della disperazione*. Manturia: Pietro Lacaita Editore, 1997.
- Sharpley-Whiting, T. Denean. *Black Venus, Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears and Primitive Narratives in French*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Ystehede, Per Jørgen. "Contested Spaces: On Crime Museums, Monuments and Memorials." In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe and North America, 1750–1945*, edited by Paul Knepper and Anja Johansen, 338–352. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

9 Our First Murder

Exhibiting Evidence Outside the Police Archive

Stella Pekiari

Introduction

A subject under wide discussion in the art world is that photographs once made in order to function as documents may take different paths, due to the continuous transformation of the photographic medium. Firstly, performing the archive has been a common practice amongst curators and artists alike during the last decade; the archive is no longer treated as a repository of documents but as a living body—a tendency that has been described, among others, as “archive fever”¹ or “archival impulse.”² In addition, the decontextualization of information has been a major aspect of the post-modern condition and, in the case of photographs, this procedure becomes even more effortless due to their reproducibility. As a result of the aforementioned practices, the museum and the photo gallery often become the new context for a series of documents which comprised, or were a part of, an archive formerly not accessible to the public. Interestingly enough, not even the content of a hermetically sealed police archive can escape this fate nowadays; in the course of the last decade, the police photo archive, which contains, among other subjects, a certain amount of visualized crime, violence and death, has formed a source of inspiration for curators and has found subsequently its place on the art gallery’s white walls.

This chapter is an attempt to trace the shifts of meaning that occur when crime scene photographs, and more specifically, the ones representing death scenes, are displaced from their original context of production, circulation and presentation and become the content of a museum or gallery exhibition. This examination is held through the case study of two different book publications, which were both the accompanying material of two photo exhibitions: the American photo book *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*, Abrams, 2004, which was the outcome of the *LAPD archives* exhibition at the Fototeka Gallery in Los Angeles in September, 2001, and the Dutch photo book *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam*,³ New Amsterdam, 2005, which was the stimulus for the homonymous exhibition at the Foam Gallery in Amsterdam in January, 2007.

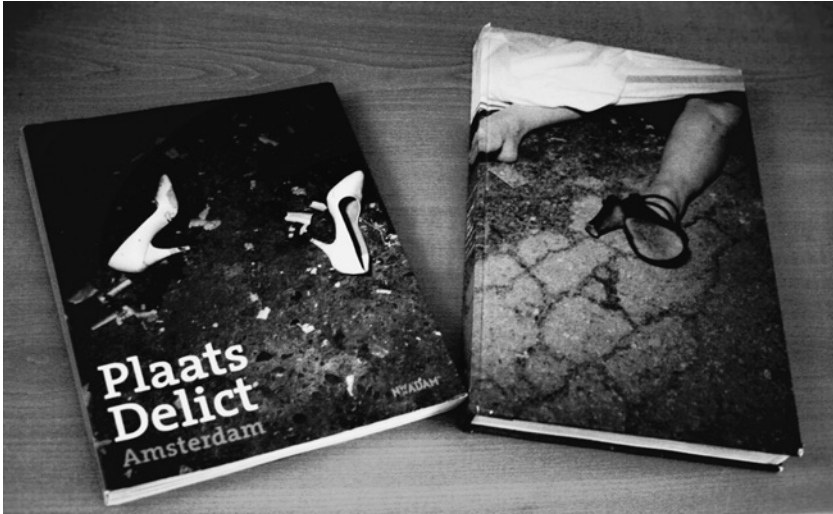


Figure 9.1 The covers of the photo books *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam* (left) and *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive* (right). © Stella Pekiariidi.

As suggested by both titles, the books include photographs from the police archives of Los Angeles and Amsterdam, with a variety of images from the daily routine of the police such as mug shots, close-ups of forensic evidence, images of dead bodies or vacant interiors of crime scenes.

The LAPD Archives

The first exhibition, entitled *To Protect and Serve: The LAPD Archives*, was curated by Fototeka Gallery's owner and director Robin Blackman and photographer Merrick Morton in collaboration with Tim Wride, associate curator of photography at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It was presented for the first time at Fototeka Gallery in Los Angeles in September 2001 and has since been hosted at, among other venues, the Duke University Museum of Art, Durham (2002), the North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks (2002) and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco (2003). The exhibition traveled to Europe as well, in 2005, and was presented at the Kunsthhaus Museum, Zurich, Switzerland under the title *The Art of the Archive*, this time curated by Tobia Bezzola. It has since been hosted in additional venues, with the most recent being the Multimedia Art Museum in Moscow in March 2012.

The motivation behind these exhibitions stemmed from the incidental discovery of a collection of images from the Special Investigations Division of

the City Records Center in downtown Los Angeles, America's oldest crime lab, which was established in the 1920s. In 2001, Merrick Morton, a photographer and LAPD reserve officer, had the idea of organizing an exhibition based on LAPD photographs at Fototeka, the gallery he owned with his wife, Robin Blackman. After a series of unsuccessful searches in the collection of the Los Angeles Police Historical Society, he managed to gain unprecedented access to the content of the police archive thanks to his serendipitous encounter and collaboration with Lieutenant John Thomas, who had researched and written articles on LAPD history in the past. As mentioned in the editor's note in the catalog, when it was discovered that some of the boxes contained decomposing inflammable cellulose nitrate negatives, the Fire Department recommended that all the negatives be destroyed. The exhibition's research team though, which consisted of LAPD reserve officer Merrick Morton, Lieutenant and LAPD historian John Thomas and Fototeka gallery co-owner Robin Blackman, intervened and succeeded in saving at least the salvageable part of the archive.

The exhibited result is a selection that the research team made of the saved material, a collection of black and white photographs spanning a period from 1927 to 1974. The order of their presentation is neither chronological nor does it demonstrate a thematic coherence. The visitor sees a variety of photographs ranging from mug shots, close-ups of forensic evidence, crime weapons and wounds of victims. Other images present accumulated dead bodies in various contexts, followed up by deserted interiors including a detail—an allusion to what had previously happened there—such as scenes where it is not obvious whether the subject is sleeping or dead, as well as scenes where the immobility of a dead body comes in contrast to the spectral presence of a police investigator, captured on the low speed film. The majority of the images are identified by numbers with a diverse codification—assigned to them by the Los Angeles Police Department—along with the name of the photographer. This information is engraved on the surface of each photograph.

The photographs were exhibited without explanatory captions below them. At the end of the exhibition, however, the visitor could find a section of independent “captions” with some information about the facts related to some of the shots. For a few of the photographs there was no information at all. Thus, there were two ways to read them: either by relating them to their remote “caption,” which occurred however at a later stage in the exhibition, or by ignoring the story behind each photograph.

The publication *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*, a hardcover coffee-table edition, was one of the outcomes of the Fototeka exhibition. The photographic material in the catalogue is accompanied by several essays: a foreword by William J. Bratton, Chief of Police at the Los Angeles Police Department, an introduction by crime fiction writer James Ellroy, a note from the exhibition's curator Tim B. Wride, an epilogue from Art Sjoquist, retired captain of the Los Angeles Police Department and the

editor's note. Very briefly, the point of view reflected in all the contributors' texts—except for the one of the curator—could be summarized in the phrase of the chief of the police who argues that “these photographs do provide a brief glimpse into the world of police work and the reality of a police officer's job.”⁴ The curator, however, prefers to emphasize the way these photographs depict the reality of the city of Los Angeles and also the way they play their own part in enhancing the city's mythology, namely as an addition to its fictional imagery, which has been built up from hard-boiled detective fiction, movies and television.

Plaats Delict: Amsterdam

The second exhibition, entitled *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam*, was curated by police photographer Myriam Missana in collaboration with the Police Archive of Amsterdam-Amstelland. The exhibition was hosted at the Foam Gallery in Amsterdam for the period of January–February 2007 as a parallel event to the publication of a collection of photographs from the Amsterdam Police Archive in a photo book a few weeks earlier—the book that also comprised the exhibition's catalog. As the press release of the Foam Gallery suggests, “for this exhibition there was made a selection of photographs originally taken purely for limited professional use. They served as proof that a crime had been committed, as a description of the situation and as an illustration of the crime scene for the court.”⁵ Indeed, the content of the exhibition and the accompanying publication share the same thematic pattern as the LAPD exhibition; they consist of pictures of crime scenes outdoors, in Amsterdam cafés, nightclubs, hotel rooms, coffee shops and in private homes along with images that document a police officer's professional routine and shots of victims and perpetrators etc.

The photographs cover the period from 1965 to 1985 and are divided into two parts (1965–1975 and 1975–1985). The basic difference in this exhibition and book is that the images are presented in a chronological order from the oldest to the most recent ones. The narration begins with a section of black and white photos from the '60s and the mid-'70s and continues through the mid-'80s with colored photographs. An attempt to balance crime-related material and highlights from the police routine is observable.

The photographs were presented without information about the crimes that they documented, except for a brief caption with a simple description of the subject such as “corpse finding,” “victim of abuse,” “victim of suicide,” “weapons and stolen goods at the police department,” “police equipment” etc.

Special care, regarding the protection of the victims' and the perpetrators' privacy, is demonstrated not only from the selection of the photographs itself but also from a particular note at the end of the catalog, where this intention is expressed explicitly. The catalog also presents the photographs

in chronological order, accompanied by five texts. The first one is an introduction by the Chief of Police Bernard Welten, who argues that through this book, the reader has the opportunity to come close to these scenes and to realize how touching, bizarre and unimaginable they are. The second and the fourth texts are notes by journalist Ruud Buurman based on the memories of technical researchers and professional police photographers from the period 1965–1975 and 1975–1985 respectively. The third text, entitled “Forgetting and looking,” is a literary approach to the project by Dutch writer Martin Bril. The fifth and last text comprises a brief history of forensic photography written by photography theorist Rik Suermondt.

The Path from the Filing Box to the Wall of the White Cube

In order to explore the shifts in perception about these photographs we must attempt to trace their itinerary from the archive to the public domain, through their exhibition and dissemination through publication, as well as their transformation into the main content of two different yet quite comparable photo exhibitions.

The police archive is official, institutional and sovereign; it is a carrier of power—a kind of power in the Foucauldian sense, which is constituted through a form of knowledge and truth; the archive’s basic instrumental use, namely documentation and evidence, adds to it also a mantle of surveillance, reinforcing this power⁶. Although it is not created with an intention of uniformity per se, inevitably its content demonstrates a few forms of typologies—such as meticulous shots with precision and thoroughness, shots that point out scales, shots with particular lighting etc., which draw their origin from Alphonse Bertillon’s standardization of police photographic methods back in late 19th century.⁷ In any case, these photographs were initially produced in order to be seen by a restricted and specialized audience such as police officers, investigators, judges. Thus, when displayed in a gallery, their state of visibility automatically changes.

What should draw our attention in both of these projects is the common aim of curatorial teams to stress the role of the police as valuable custodians of knowledge who generously share the power of this knowledge with a broader group of viewers. The prestige of the police seems to be additionally reinforced by the curators’ choice to merge crime scene photographs with photographs documenting aspects of the police professional universe, always reminding the viewer of the source of the exhibits, and—most importantly—highlighting the originality of the content: these crimes really happened, these people were really murdered and/or abused, these places were really perforated by bullets. It is not realism but reality that pervades these images. Even more noteworthy, however, is the need of both catalogs’ editors to include a text by a fiction writer to facilitate a fusion between reality and illusion, surely not a coincidental choice. Given the fact that the viewer’s prior experiences with such images would have most possibly been only mediated through literature, films and television, this choice

is indicative of the curatorial intention to facilitate viewers' engagement with the imagery.

It is remarkable that in both exhibitions, the police are presented as the sentry of the exhibitions' content—the *archon* to use the Derridian term⁸—the guarantor of their authenticity, and the institution under the auspices of which these exhibitions are organized. In terms of the first function, it is as if these photographs were preserved by the police in order to be exhibited one day. One could say that this role is attributable to any owner of an archive, since they retain the authority to form the archive, to collect, catalog, arrange, preserve and keep “safe” its contents, and simultaneously they are authorized to expose this content in public. Derrida notes, “There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside.”⁹ In short, in both cases, the police archive comprises nothing but a source for the creation of a new archive with aesthetic pretensions that appear as soon as it enters the white cube and is presented as a result of curation, reflecting Derrida's argument that archivization produces as much as it records.¹⁰ Under this light, the curators are presented as the liberators of the material from hermetically closed repositories and file cabinets. Specifically, in the case of the LAPD photographs, they are even the rescuers of this material, given the fact that they saved a large part of the archive that would have otherwise been destroyed. The function of the police as guarantors of the photographs' authenticity is the exact factor that makes these exhibitions and publications attractive; violence, death, atrocities and in general, macabre spectacles are certainly a part of contemporary visual culture, visible in a variety of contexts. In this case, however, these photographs are “the real thing.” Finally, we could say that it is more than obvious by the highlighted role of the police in the curation of both publications and exhibitions that its main intention is to continue to have the power of the material as a vehicle of meaning and knowledge. To a certain extent, this is achieved. What the police probably overlooked in both cases is that, with their agreement to allow the exploitation of the material, inevitably however this power also circulates. As soon as these images get exposed in a public environment, not remaining reposed in an archival box, but hung on the wall according to the interpretation of the curator or covering a full page according to the choices of the editor, this power passes partly to them and through them to the spectators. The curators and the editors, as new interpreters, and the museums and galleries, as new systems of representation, have a share in this power. Although the accompanying texts of the exhibitions, which are not written by police officers, both emphasize the role of the police as co-curators, the curators themselves do not hide their personal, almost contradictory, translations of the content. As Tim B. Wride, the curator of LAPD exhibition, argues:

the photographs contained in the LAPD archive do not tell the definitive tale of the city or its police department. They do not even tell the

complete story of each individual event they purport to document. What they provide is the raw materials from which many histories can be constructed; histories that are crafted without regard to original intentions and agendas, histories that reach across and beyond the archive itself.¹¹

On the other hand, the press release of the Dutch exhibition claims that the photographs

give an accurate picture of the period, from the dingy Amsterdam interiors of the early 1960s to the exuberant explosion of color on the walls in the 1970s. The enormous changes in Amsterdam over the years and the hardening of society between 1965 and 1985 are reflected in the photographs of this significant documentary show. No additional context has been employed for this exhibition; the photographs have been selected purely on their own merit. Without their accompanying files, the photographs refer only to themselves. Despite the painful and gruesome scenes of murder, suicide and crime, the photographs have a touching beauty.¹²

These statements could not but refer directly to Alan Sekula's seminal essay "Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital." There, among other points, Sekula, when referring to the photographic archive's tendency to suspend meaning and use, argues that "within the archive meaning exists in a state that is both residual and potential. The suggestion of past uses coexists with a plenitude of possibilities."¹³ In the same direction, Crimp observes that the result of the ghettoization of the photograph and the loss of its informative, documentary, evidentiary, illustrative and reporting function is its reduction to a single, all-encompassing aesthetic.¹⁴

Most of the photographs of the police archives were made by photographers who worked for the police departments of Los Angeles and Amsterdam, except for the earliest photographs which were shot by professional photographers who occasionally worked for the police or even by police officers who were simply a bit familiar with the use of a photographic camera. As a result, one of the most crucial questions that the encounter with such a photographic corpus brings up is the dilemma that curator Tim B. Wride points out: "What is the difference between those images that are aesthetic statements masquerading as evidence and those that are forensic images masquerading as art?"¹⁵ As the original archive is fragmented and dissolved into its original elements, it is transformed into a completely different, new archive, the *archon* of which is now the curator or the editor, with the full consent of the former *archon*. Still, though, the police remain as an entity of power—not, however, of a negative one, as implied by their original function as a mechanism of discipline and suppression, but of a positive one; they are transformed by default into a "collector" who shares his collection with the public, a disseminator of knowledge. Moreover, these

photographs, in their new context of consumption, do not cease to function as part of a society of surveillance; instead, in the gallery or the book, it is not the state's surveillance in the Foucauldian sense that prevails, but the individual surveillance deriving from the viewers' gaze.

The Discreet Charm of the Death of Others

When dealing with issues of the photographs' displacement and exposure, it is inevitable to refer to the debate about photography's artistic essence—a debate as old as the medium itself; it is well known that when photography was still in its infancy, its utilitarian applications in combination with its reproducibility were considered as oppositional factors to its aesthetic pretensions.

Forensic photography occupies a particular position within this discourse: from Atget's denial to put his name on his photographs, as he regarded them “simply documents,”¹⁶ to Walter Benjamin's remark that Atget photographed the deserted streets of Paris as if they were crime scenes;¹⁷ from Weegee's unique tabloid style photos, which were very soon exhibited in galleries, to the repetitive car crash motifs of Andy Warhol and the photographic projects of Joel Peter Witkin with real dead bodies from the morgue.

Certainly, the spectacle of death is neither new in photography nor in the space of the museum; apart from predominantly encompassing death,¹⁸ photography itself has been interested in death as a subject since the very beginning of its history, which coincided with a time period when society was quite familiar with death. As Mirzoeff puts it, photography “participated in a new means of configuring death at the same time as it offered an everyday reminder of death.”¹⁹ From the *memento mori*, the post-mortem portraits of the 19th century, which were created in order to be exhibited in living-rooms, to the first samples of war photojournalism during the American Civil War, which were exhibited in Brady's gallery in New York and subsequently released as *cartes-de-visite* for domestic use, death was considered photographable and exposable.²⁰

Nowadays, death has a privileged position in contemporary visual culture as well; Azoulay describes three formations of its display: the psychoanalyst's clinic, the modern museum of art and the television screen. As far as the museum and photography are concerned, the authorized display of death oscillates between a spectacle and an exhibit. Azoulay claims that

the museum and photography are two distinct, though closely related cultural practices with a great impact on the construction of the visual in general and on the public display of death in particular. Despite the fact that they use different mechanisms to achieve this display, they both function as an interface through which individuals are invited to look at framed segments of an inaccessible visual world and to relate the sayable to the visible.²¹

Death, according to Azoulay, is created in a space created by the gap between these two elements.²² No matter how confusing this kind of spectacle might be, it is perhaps a relief for viewers to come so close to the death of the others without having to engage in it ourselves. Apart from satisfying our voyeuristic tendencies, these images manage to appease us not only by dissociating us from the victims but from the criminals as well; we feel fortunate that we are not them.

Another issue that arises through the perplexity of this spectacle, however, lies in the “selective kinship”—as Metz puts it—of photography with death as “by virtue of the objective suggestions of its signifier,” it “maintains the memory of the dead as being dead”;²³ when the photograph immortalizes the very state of death, it becomes a *memento mori* which does not function as a reminder of the beloved subject in this case, but as a souvenir from the realm of death itself. These projects offer the viewer an encounter of safe proximity to what is socially regarded as unmentionable and invisible. From this aspect, they become part of what Gorer described as the “Pornography of Death”;²⁴ the imagery of anodyne, distant death produced, exposed and disseminated, because our “personal” death is regarded as taboo and hence censored. In any case, despite the subjectivity of the viewer, the interpretation of these new collections of photographs is guided by the curators’ and the editors’ intentions to present a work of fiction enhanced by authentic details and to offer a guaranteed safe, vicarious experience, where everything is evidently under control.

Regarding the “pornographic” aspect of the spectacle, we could not overlook the fact that any image that includes bodies inevitably encourages the voyeuristic gaze. As Susan Sontag points out:

To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them, as they can never have. Just as the camera is the sublimation of a gun, to photograph someone is a sublimated murder—a soft murder appropriate to a sad frightened time.²⁵

In the case of the photographs from the police archive, the level of voyeurism reaches its peak, given the fact that we deal with photographed subjects, that not only they have not given their consent to be photographed, but they have never even realized that they have been photographed. These bodies laid unprotected in front of the camera lense simply because they could not have been photographed otherwise. Their last photo becomes in this way their second, “softer,” murder, in Sontag’s words.

On the basis of their new context of interpretation, these photographs are a sample of the society of the spectacle and this “spectaclization” is certainly a result of cultural fetishism, a fetishism that is encouraged by the fragmentary narration, the absence of coherence and the aestheticization of the material through curatorial practices, and through the very choice

of the curators to hang these photographs on the walls of a gallery and of the editors to publish them in the form of coffee-table books. They have deployed every means to make these new narrations worth following, without intervening directly on the material but through using techniques of conceptualization. The curatorial and editorial choices serve to guarantee the maximum remoteness possible on behalf of the spectator: for example, the black and white color²⁶ prevalence, the selection of photographs that do not depict victims' bodies and faces with extreme alterations, the framing and cropping of the photos with the intent to conceal victims' identities. The names, the places, the victims, the criminals, the stories as they really happened do not matter at all in these new contexts. As Susan Sontag claims, "for all the voyeuristic lure, it seems normal for people to fend off thinking about the ordeals of others, even others with whom it would be easy to identify."²⁷ The spectators are given the opportunity to observe the dead bodies as meticulously as they wish, choosing how long they will spend in front of each exhibit or before they turn the page; they can assume the role of a forensic expert, or turn their gaze away.

Concluding Remarks

New forms of decontextualization arise as new agents of meaning get involved in the procedure of meaning production—an increasing occurrence especially in an era when digital media open an immense field of potential new frames. During the last decades, a series of seminal photography theorists have been trying to shed light onto the political and aesthetic implications of how these phenomena take place. Paradoxically, though, it seems that the contemporary curatorial practices see in these theoretical approaches a source of documentation and a basis to present work outside of its historical context. Thus, the texts that highlighted the importance of the awareness of the historical origin of photographs deriving from any kind of archive are the same texts that gave birth to a curatorial tendency which denies the historical aspect of the photograph and emphasizes the formalistic one.

Another related subject to consider is that death will always remain a mystery and that man will do anything in order to domesticate it. One attempt to do this is through its inscription in the visual culture of each society. When images of death escape from formerly sealed repositories and are exposed to a broad audience, something about our attitude towards death itself is demonstrated. The transformation of these images into a form of consumable, pop-culturesque spectacle signals a new era dawning in our cultural view of death, a reconfiguration of our relationship with it.

In any case, when the decontextualization concerns images of a certain fragility, its support by a new theoretical toolkit is indispensable. The main point raised in this chapter is the need for a new orientation of photographic writing, which includes the interpretation of new forms of spectatorship

arising, not due to new artistic tendencies, but due to the involvement of new and diverse agents in the production of meaning and the management of power. After the “release” of a photograph from an archive’s custody, the photography theorist is, more than anyone, responsible to highlight its tracks and repercussions until its next destination.

Notes

- 1 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 35.
- 2 Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 3–22.
- 3 The title of the book translated in English is “Place of the Crime: Amsterdam.”
- 4 Tim Wride, James Ellroy and William J. Bratton *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive* (Los Angeles: Abrams, 2004), 7.
- 5 FOAM official press release, Amsterdam, 28 November 2006.
- 6 Foucault’s theory about the society of surveillance and the microphysics of power find a full implementation in the police archive. On the one hand, the registration itself is the basis of surveillance. On the other hand, gathering and ordering knowledge is one of the main vehicles to exert control. Thus, the police archive, as an archive of a disciplinary institution, is only a part of a proliferating system of documentation—as Tagg describes it—that aims to produce, train and position a hierarchy of docile social subjects in advanced capitalist societies. See also John Tagg, “Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State,” in *Visual Culture: the reader*, edited by Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications), 244–273.
- 7 Gail Buckland and Harold Evans, *Shots in the Dark: True Crime Pictures* (Boston, London and New York: Little Brown, 2001), 33–34.
- 8 In *Archive Fever*, Derrida defines three basic factors that support an archive: the archon, the place and the law.
- 9 Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, 11.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 11 Wride et al, *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*, 22.
- 12 FOAM official press release.
- 13 Alan Sekula, “Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital,” in *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 445.
- 14 Douglas Crimp, “The Museum’s Old, the Library’s New Subject,” in *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 423.
- 15 Wride et al, *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*, 21.
- 16 French photographer Eugène Atget’s depreciation for his own photographs is proverbial, a fact that appears even more interesting if one takes into consideration that he was one of the par excellence photographers who experimented with the modern medium to capture the Parisian urban landscape in the turn of the century. A very interesting presentation of Atget’s attitude towards his profession can be found in Molly Nesbit, *Atget’s Seven Albums* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992) and, of course, in the seminal essay of Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility,” in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968).
- 17 It is quite obvious that the case of Atget attracted Walter Benjamin’s interest to that extent that he refers to him quite a few times in his writings. According to Ian Walker, Benjamin made this observation inspired by author and critic Pierre Mac Orlan who had included the photograph of a blood-soaked room in the

- illustration of his essay “Images du fantastique social” in 1929. The next year he wrote the first book about Atget’s art entitled *Atget: Photograph de Paris*. Mac Orlan argued that police photography and Atget’s photography were both manifestations of the social fantastic. See Ian Walker, *City Gorged in Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 101.
- 18 See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 13–14; Christian Metz, “Photography and Fetish,” in *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 140–141; and Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 70–71.
 - 19 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 75.
 - 20 Regarding the evolution of the *carte-de-visite* from a family souvenir into a popular decorative item, see Liz Wells, ed., *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003). Regarding the commodification of the American Civil War and the passion for collecting see Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History—Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989).
 - 21 Ariella Azoulay, *Death’s Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 5.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, 7.
 - 23 Metz, “Photography and Fetish,” in *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 141.
 - 24 Geoffrey Gorer, “The Pornography of Death,” *Encounter* (October 1955), 49–53.
 - 25 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 10.
 - 26 The LAPD project includes exclusively black and white photographs given the period it spans. In the *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam* project, the black and white photos reach the year 1976, which is half represented through color photos. The part of the photographic corpus in color does not include any image where blood is noticeable, with only exception the image of the book cover and the poster of the exhibition which depicts a pair of white high heels, the one of which is stained with blood. While the black and white part of the corpus mainly contains scenes of murder or suicide, the part in color lacks of images with gruesome details, focusing on crime scenes without any human presence, weapons and elements of forensic evidence.
 - 27 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the pain of the Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 78.

Bibliography

- Arendt, Hannah, ed. *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968.
- Azoulay, Ariella. *Death’s Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981.
- Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility.” In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, 217–252. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968.

- Buckland, Gail and Harold Evans. *Shots in the Dark: True Crime Pictures*. Boston, London and New York: Little Brown, 2001.
- Buurman, R., Martin Brill and Rik Suermondt. *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: New Amsterdam, 2005.
- Crimp, Douglas. "The Museum's Old, the Library's New Subject." In *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells, 422–427. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Foster, Hal. "An Archival Impulse." *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 3–22.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Gorer, Geoffrey. "The Pornography of Death." *Encounter* (October 1955): 49–53.
- Metz, Christian. "Photography and Fetish." In *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells, 138–147. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Mitchell, W.T.J. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Nesbit, Molly. *Atget's Seven Albums*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Sekula, Alan. "Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital." In *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells, 443–452. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of the Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003.
- Tagg, John. "Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State." In *Visual Culture: the reader*, edited by Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, 244–273. London: Sage Publications.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photographs: Images as History—Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1989.
- Walker, Ian. *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.
- Wells, Liz, ed. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2003.
- Wride, Tim B., James Ellroy and William J. Bratton. *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*. Los Angeles: Abrams, 2004.

Part III

Empathy and Escaping Anonymity



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

10 A Gallery of Martyrs – The Martyr in the Gallery

Public Display and the Artistic Appropriation of Martyr Images in the Middle East

Verena Straub

Images of the dead are omnipresent in Palestine. Ever since the Second Intifada,¹ almost every public wall, every café or shop, is pasted with photographs and poster-collages in which deceased members of the Palestinian community are commemorated as *shaheeds* (martyrs). A similar visual culture also developed in Lebanon during the civil war (1975–1990) and in the 2006 war with Israel, during which innumerable “martyr posters” of deceased fighters were publicly displayed. Despite the ubiquity of martyr images in Palestinian and Lebanese public life, they have not been the topic of much critical debate. As Elias Chad has noted on the martyr posters in Lebanon, “Their silent presence gives them a paradoxical status; they are both commonplace and taboo.”² In this chapter I examine the work of two artists—the Palestinian photographer Ahlam Shibli and Lebanese performance artist Rabih Mroué—and their attempts to break this “taboo” by engaging with different image cultures of martyrdom. In order to address how these images are appropriated and reevaluated in the art context, I examine the shift from the exhibition of martyr images as they are framed in their original context in Palestine and Lebanon to the ways in which they have been reframed in contemporary art spaces beyond their original sites of display.

In my first example of such a shift in framing, I draw from an art scandal in the Parisian gallery Jeu de Paume. In 2013, the gallery curated an exhibition with works by Palestinian photographer Ahlam Shibli, which included her series *Death* (2011–12). Shibli’s 68 photographs with accompanying texts document images of *shaheeds* as they appear in private and public spaces in the city of Nablus, a bastion of resistance during the Second Intifada. Shibli’s photographs confronted visitors of her Paris exhibition with this everyday presence of martyr images in public spaces. Some photographs in her series reflect on the way in which these martyr images also permeate the intimate space of ordinary Palestinian families, fluctuating between a deep reverence for them as quasi-religious icons and the banality of pop-star posters.³ The paintings or Photoshopped images depicted in Shibli’s photographs typically show the *shaheeds* posing with an assault rifle, next to a medley of political and national slogans and the image of the Dome of the

Rock, idealizing the depicted not only as national heroes but also as saintly defenders of Jerusalem.

Soon after the exhibition's opening, the president of the *Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions* officially denounced the exhibition as "an apology of terrorism, [. . .] in the heart of Paris."⁴ The controversy seemed to revolve around the fact that the depicted martyr images make no distinction between civilians killed during an Israeli attack and active militants who died as a result of suicide bomb attacks.⁵ *Shaheed* is a term used by Palestinians to refer to "anyone who is deemed to have died as a result of the occupation."⁶ Some of Shibli's photographs show martyr images of innocent boys who were shot during protests or men, women and children killed by an Israeli attack. Other photographs, however, depict posters of men or women who participated in "martyrdom operations," meaning they strapped explosives to their bodies and killed both themselves and their chosen targets.⁷ The Arabic term *istishhad* (martyrdom) is indeed very ambiguous in that it is not only used to honor the dead but has also been widely exploited by secular and religious militant groups in Palestine to justify suicide attacks and has functioned as an umbrella term for national resistance and *holy war*.⁸ Lori A. Allen has commented on the "polysemic" nature of martyr commemoration during the Second Intifada, noting how large sections of Palestinian society associated martyr posters with "social, emotional and (for some more than others) religious values," whereas political factions have taken advantage of this symbolic capital represented by martyrs to promote political and militant messages.⁹ Militant groups such as the military wing of the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), Islamic Jihad, Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades design martyr posters for those participating in "martyrdom operations" but also co-opt the death of civilians by sponsoring the production of their martyr posters, thereby claiming them as their own in an effort to bolster support within Palestinian communities. Thus, the martyr posters are not only obituaries remembering the dead and signs of respect for their families, but are also used as political tools to promote the agenda of militant factions and to legitimize suicide attacks against Israel. Taking into account the political impact and legitimizing power of such martyr images, the inevitable question is: Do art spaces (like Jeu de Paume) run the risk of participating in the glorification of Palestinian militants as *shaheeds* by providing a stage of display? Or does the framing of such images in an art institution offer a different evaluation of the aesthetics of martyrdom?

The *Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions* criticized Shibli's work for what it saw as an implicit empathy for the glorification of suicide bombers and called for the immediate suspension of the exhibition. In the following weeks, the gallery received bomb threats, and various pro-Israeli organizations called for protests against the exhibition. The situation escalated with the French Ministry of Culture calling on the gallery to clarify its official position. Jeu de Paume's response to this request led to

the placement of signs in the gallery in which the institution distanced itself from these various accusations, accompanied by a statement from the artist that read, “I am not a militant. My work is to show, not to denounce or to judge.”

The outrage stirred by this exhibition shows that the display of these specific martyr images in an art institution has been viewed as a form of affirmation of the “cult of suicide bombing,”¹⁰ regardless of the photographs’ actual framing or contextualization. The controversy surrounding Ahlam Shibli’s exhibition stands as a prime example of how museums are faced with difficult ethical decisions when displaying “sensitive” subject matters that run the risk of being seen to promote political agendas. But does the display of Palestinian martyr images alone amount to an act that supports the glorification of suicide bombers? When Palestinian city spaces, private homes and media turn into galleries of the dead, through the public display of martyr images, then one cannot but wonder whether something different occurs in how these images are perceived when they are displayed in art spaces.

According to Judith Butler, it is precisely a change in context and framing of images that can lead to a different moral evaluation.¹¹ Using the images of Abu Ghraib as an example, Butler suggests that the recontextualization of the torture photographs from the original scene to the media landscape and their presentation in art exhibitions:

gave rise to a different gaze than the one that would ask for a repetition of the scene, and so we probably need to accept that the photograph neither tortures nor redeems, but can be instrumentalized in radically different directions, depending on how it is discursively framed and through what form of media presentation it is displayed.¹²

Building on Butler’s remarks on the changing reception of the Abu Ghraib images, in this chapter I consider how martyr images in an art context can be “framed” in such a manner as to allow for a critical evaluation beyond simply mirroring the militant factions’ cult of martyrdom, as Shibli’s exhibition was accused of doing.

A Public Gallery of Martyrs

A similar image culture to that documented by Ahlam Shibli in Nablus took shape in Lebanon during the civil war (1975–1990), a period when virtually every square inch of public space in Beirut was plastered with poster-collages of martyrs.¹³ In Lebanon, political posters were designed and printed by a broad spectrum of competing militant factions in an attempt to claim a visual military dominance.¹⁴ The tense rivalry between military groups in Lebanon can be seen as the driving force in the prolific production of images and the development of the visual culture of martyrdom.¹⁵ Martyr

images of suicide bombers have in fact proven to be a more powerful political tool than the suicide attacks themselves, given that the “success” of this image culture, particularly in attracting new suicide recruits and promoting the party’s political agenda, often outweighs the frontline results of tactical military operations.¹⁶ In addition to their function as “symbolic sites of struggle over meaning and political discourse,”¹⁷ martyr posters remain the most significant medium for announcing the martyrdom of an individual to local communities in Lebanon and Palestine until the present day.¹⁸ While the internet provides a platform for the worldwide circulation of the cult of martyrdom, poster culture addresses and galvanizes local communities as “an indirect obituary and at the same time a celebratory announcement of death.”¹⁹

The design of martyr posters both in Lebanon and in Palestine follows a graphic standardization. During the Lebanese civil war, martyr posters were most often “produced under time pressure and conditions of limited communication and mobility during the war.”²⁰ To simplify and accelerate the publication of these posters, their design and layout were often produced directly at a printing press affiliated with the respective party and “would usually follow basic layouts and standard templates in their composition, repetitively applied for recurrent subjects.”²¹ This basic template often included the party’s emblem, accompanied by political slogans or an image of the party’s leader in the background. Each party emphasized its “corporate identity” with a distinct color design. All that was left to do was to simply insert the photograph of the individual martyr. During the Second Palestinian Intifada, martyr posters became graphically standardized in a way similar to the Lebanese posters, typically showing a portrait of the individual, often posing with an assault rifle, accompanied by a short obituary text, national symbols like the Palestinian flag and, especially in the case of Islamic parties, religious references such as the image of the Dome of the Rock and verses from the Qur’an (see Figure 10.1).

While each martyr is recognized and named, their individuality is subsumed in the uniformity of these images. This highlights the “dual nature of martyrs as social beings.”²² As Allen emphasizes, “[t]he posters are semiotically complex, representing both the person who was killed and the martyr that person has become.”²³ The graphic standardization of martyr posters ultimately results in the creation of a collective identity of martyrdom. The martyr poster itself can be interpreted as a stage where the transformation from mortal individual to eternally living “martyr” takes place.²⁴ In this sense, martyr posters play a critical role in the social fabrication of martyrdom.

The framing of these artifacts in public spaces is a defining aspect in the reception of the martyr posters as a genre. As a medium, posters are inherently ephemeral due to weather conditions, acts of political vandalism and the constant appearance of new posters. Martyr posters rarely appear on their own; they are pasted over old ones and appear next to each other. This



Figure 10.1 Palestinian boys with martyr posters in Nablus, Palestine, photograph, 2003. © Kevin Toolis.

visual coexistence and temporal accumulation creates a multilayered genealogy of martyrdom in everyday spaces. As Abu Hashhash has commented,

There is always space for one more poster on the walls of Palestinian towns. If the walls are overcrowded with posters, the new can always find a place over an older one. To strip the many layers of posters from a wall is to carry out a form of archaeology. One thick layer of posters will mark the history of the Al-Aqsa Intifada over the previous five years.²⁵

In Palestine, this constantly transforming exhibition of martyr images has created a “culture of sacrifice [. . .] with the martyrs as culture-heroes.”²⁶ The walls and streets of Palestine thereby become spaces of cultural and political significance as they are experienced as spatially and temporally expanding galleries of martyrdom, with death positioned at the center of daily life.

But public streets are not the only exhibition space where the images of martyrs haunt Middle Eastern society. During the Lebanese civil war, video testimonies of suicide bombers were regularly broadcast on the evening news, whereas in recent years the internet has transformed the reception and

viewing practices of these images by allowing for a more interactive process that can also lead to the production and circulation of user-generated images or video clips in honor of particularly popular martyrs.

Video testimonies of suicide bombers confront viewers with a particularly unsettling situation: as self-appointed “living martyrs,” the dead address audiences directly after their attacks. Such video testimonies first appeared in the mid-1980s, during the Lebanese civil war, amongst secular, Marxist militant organizations and were later adopted by Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas, Islamic Jihad or the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades in Palestine. They have since become an intrinsic feature of the cult of martyrdom. In addition to declaring themselves martyrs, the individuals seen in these videos announce their intentions and state their motivation for committing a suicide attack. Similar to martyr posters, video testimonies follow strict aesthetic prescripts, which only vary according to political party affiliation. While the soon-to-be martyrs of secular political parties such as the Lebanese Communist Party and Syrian Social Nationalist Party in the 1980s were seen rigidly seated and facing the camera while reading their testimonies, since the 1990s Islamic militant groups have added a more developed choreography to the visual narrative of this genre. As well as reading their testimony to the camera, the self-declared “living martyr” kneels down to pray and is seen striking various poses with a Qur’an and a Kalashnikov.

Regardless of their political affiliation, whether secular or religious, the most common feature in the video testimonies is the recurring motif of verbal and visual reference to previous martyrs. In most videos, the self-declared martyrs are seen in front of walls covered with recognizable images of preceding martyrs. Similar to the act of pasting over old martyr posters in public spaces, the appearance of each new video testimony establishes a new link in the visual chronology of martyrdom. Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué has commented on this accumulative genealogy of martyr images in consecutive video testimonies created by the Lebanese Communist Party in 1985 (Figure 10.2). He writes,

Lola died, and became a picture behind Wafaa, who died in her turn, and both of them became pictures behind Jamal, who died in his turn, and the three of them became pictures behind Elias, who died in his turn, and became a picture behind Khaled, who died in his turn, and so on and so forth.²⁷

This perpetual referencing of earlier martyrs creates “an imagined *mise en abîme* illusory game” of a potentially endless repetition of martyr images within martyr images.²⁸ The accumulation of posters on city walls, their spatial sequencing and temporal linkage, as well as the visual echo of martyr images in video testimonies, do not solely reflect the commemoration of the individual; rather, I suggest they contribute to the creation of a *collective*



Figure 10.2 *On Three Posters: Reflections on a Video Performance* by Rabih Mroué, video and lecture-performance, video stills, 2004. © Rabih Mroué.

image and identity of “martyrdom.” The modes of presentation and framing are a defining aspect of this ever expanding collection of images, which I argue creates a public “gallery” of martyrs.

Reframing the Martyr in the Art Gallery

Based on my reading of Middle Eastern streets and media as exhibition spaces, or public galleries of martyrdom, the question is how one ethically approaches the same martyr images once they are placed in the space of the art gallery.

While the video testimonies do not depict violence directly, they are nonetheless deeply bound to the violent act of suicide bombing. I understand video testimonies of suicide bombers as images of atrocity, even though they may not necessarily show the atrocity itself. By contrast, the martyr posters are a more ambiguous genre in that they indiscriminately incorporate pictures of civilian victims into the same uniform graphic design as images of suicide bombers. Even though martyr posters are not necessarily linked with militant acts and are subject to different social uses such as the private commemoration in their family’s home, the cult of martyrdom is co-opted and instrumentalized by militant parties. By displaying these images, art institutions are faced with the ethical question of whether they are perpetuating the visual cult of suicide bombing.

The presentation of Shibli’s series *Death* in an institutional art space was received by some art critics with skepticism. Kim Bradley, writing for *Art in America*, wondered “if the questions that ‘Death’ poses are best served by its presentation in the rarefied context of a contemporary art museum.”²⁹ Similarly, German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* stated, “That the bereaved families of suicide bombers are allowed to mourn is taken at face value. But perhaps such scenes do not necessarily belong in a state-sponsored museum.”³⁰ Both authors seem to be torn between the respect for the mourning of the families of the deceased and a fear of legitimizing the deeds of some of the depicted, solely by documenting the rituals of veneration through their martyr images.

In her final book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Susan Sontag reflects on the presence of images of atrocity in art spaces. Reformulating her skeptical view of the public display of such images as outlined in her famous study *On Photography* (1977), Sontag concedes that such images can be “an invitation to pay attention, to reflect, to learn, to examine the rationalizations for mass suffering offered by established powers.” However, she does not see the art gallery as the appropriate space for such reflection.³¹ Sontag sees images of atrocity, terror and agony as out of place in art galleries stating that they, “partake of the fate of all wall-hung or floor-supported art displayed in public spaces. That is, they are stations along a—usually accompanied—stroll.”³² For Sontag, “[a] museum or gallery visit is a social situation, riddled with distractions, in the course of which art is seen and

commented on,” thereby precluding a contemplative mode of perception.³³ As such, she concludes that “[u]p to a point, the weight and seriousness of such photographs survive better in a book, where one can look privately, linger over the pictures, without talking.”³⁴ In contrast to Sontag’s critique of the display of images of atrocity in art spaces, Charlotte Klonk advocates a differentiated approach when deciding “which images we can look at with good conscience and which we should reject.”³⁵ Critical of Sontag’s stance, Klonk argues that “under different circumstances, some of those images can develop an iconic presence that, much like certain artworks, opens a place of reflection in the space between viewer and work.”³⁶ Investigating three examples where martyr images are re-appropriated as art pieces, I build on Klonk’s and Butler’s suggestions by considering if and how the art gallery can provide a space that transfers such images into a new reflexivity.

Even though Shibli does not explicitly distance herself from the political implications of martyr images in her accompanying texts, the photographs themselves offer what I see as a critical perspective on the ambiguous phenomenon of martyr commemoration in Palestinian public spaces. What critics of Shibli’s exhibition overlooked was the fact that the focus of her photographs is not the martyr images per se but the ways in which they are framed, positioned and viewed in Palestinian daily life. Shibli’s *Untitled (Death, no. 59)*, for instance, shows several posters covering the gate of a shop, among them a Fatah poster with a picture of Yasser Arafat stating, “We are following your way” next to another poster produced by Fatah, commemorating “the martyr Ahmad Hleilah.”³⁷ Seen right underneath this martyr poster a sticker is visible depicting a comic-like hero figure drawing back his arm to deliver a punch. Below that, another poster reveals what appears to be an advertisement for a Barbie doll wearing a *keffiyeh* (Palestinian scarf). By framing this juxtaposition of martyr posters and the pop-cultural/commercial co-option of the icons of resistance, this photograph can be interpreted as a critical take on the popular status of martyr images, suggesting they have become the new pop icons and role models, with martyrdom as a glorified lifestyle for impressionable youth.³⁸ Other photographs from Shibli’s series show weather-worn posters with colors faded from the sun, some of them torn to fragments or occupying remote places like the wall behind an abandoned market stall, such as in *Untitled (Death, no. 53)*. Shibli’s work reveals the martyr posters as omnipresent, yet simultaneously ephemeral and ultimately abandoned artifacts. Far from creating a stage to glorify the martyrs depicted, her photographs of public walls and deserted city streets convey a sense of a melancholic atmosphere due to the omnipresence of death.

Shibli’s photographs of martyr commemoration in private homes offer just as little space for uncritical identification with the families of martyrs. *Untitled (Death, no. 37)* depicts a large-scale painting of Kayed Abu Mustafa showing the young man holding his finger on the trigger of a Kalashnikov. The painting takes up one entire corner of the living room of the martyr’s

family and is placed next to the couch as if the deceased were still a living member of the family. A little boy, perhaps the son of the deceased, sits on the family couch and looks up the martyr's portrait with pride. T.J. Demos sees the boy's

admiring gaze alerting us to the social function of such imagery beyond the death of its sitter, exemplifying a repeated comment during the height of the Second Intifada: 'For every activist killed, ten more would become involved in life.'³⁹

Another photograph shows a young girl dusting a framed martyr poster of her brother Khalil Mashroud in the family living room, thus creating a disturbing tension between veneration of the martyr image and its banal position in daily household duties. Photographs like these reflect how martyr images function as desirable role models and at the same time how they are normalized in the everyday setting of family life. Shibli's photographs not only focus "on how the dead figure in the political program of various militant organizations"⁴⁰ but also on the social use of these martyr images, how they are presented and framed in the public and private space.

By revealing the various contexts and uses of martyr images, I suggest that Shibli's photographs document rather than glorify their subject matter. In doing so, they reflect the potential in establishing a new contextualization of images, similar to what Judith Butler has described with the use of the images of Abu Ghraib, which were shown in a curated exhibition by Brian Wallis at the International Center of Photography in New York. The significant new contextualization of the Abu Ghraib torture photographs was crediting not their authors but rather the news organizations that first published them. As such, Butler states, "The photographer, though not photographed, remains part of the scene that is published, so exposing his or her clear complicity."⁴¹ According to Judith Butler, it is precisely this change in framing that led to an ethical outcry and the possibility of viewing these images with a "renewed critical capacity":

In this sense, the exhibition of the photographs with caption and commentary on the history of their publication and reception becomes a way of exposing and countering the closed circuit of triumphalist and sadistic exchange that formed the original scene of the photograph itself. That scene now becomes the object, and we are not so much directed by the frame as directed toward it with a renewed critical capacity.⁴²

In my opinion, Butler's observation directly applies to Shibli's photographs that expose the framing of how martyr images are presented and perceived in Palestine, which in turn pushes the *frame* itself into the center of discussion. Much like the exhibition of the Abu Ghraib photographs in New York, her documentary series not only makes these images available but

exposes the context in which they are distributed and viewed. However, whereas the production of the Abu Ghraib torture photographs was clearly connected with violent acts, this is not as straightforward in the case with martyr posters, which depict suicide bombers alongside innocent victims. In contrast to the criticism of Shibli's work, her photographs perform what I see as an insightful view into this complex and, to use Allen's term, "poly-valent" reality of the Palestinian cult of martyrdom instead of merely glorifying the depicted.⁴³

The martyr images on display at Jeu de Paume were framed twice: once by Shibli's choice of perspective and detail, by her composition as photographer, and a second time by the re-contextualization within the art gallery. The question of artistic engagement with martyr images presents a different set of questions when the only intervention is the change of location and institutional framing. This is the case with another artist who appropriated the imagery of self-acclaimed martyrs in his artistic work, even though these "martyrs" stem from an entirely different context. Khaled D. Ramadan's three-screen video installation *Someone Else's Everyday Reality* (2004) takes segments from an al-Qaeda video portraying the nineteen men involved in the 9/11 attacks and presents them unaltered in an art context.⁴⁴ The original one-hour video, which became known under the title *The Nineteen Martyrs*, was released by al-Qaeda's as-Sahab Institute for Media Production exactly one year after the attacks, on September 11, 2002. It contains the martyrdom message of one of the 9/11 hijackers as well as footage of the other hijackers planning their attack and excerpts from Osama bin Laden's speeches. Ramadan uses this image material without modification in the setting of a museum space. According to Graham Coulter-Smith, Ramadan's video can be understood as a "readymade" in the Duchampian sense:

Indeed the issue surrounding the artistic value of *Someone Else's Everyday Reality* ultimately hinges on the question of whether to show these images or not. The artistic credibility of the entire piece hangs entirely on the role of censorship in a democratic society.⁴⁵

Unlike Shibli's interpretation through composition and photographic framing, Ramadan decided to present the original video without any aesthetic intervention, emphasizing the importance to make these images available to the public. Even though this approach can lead to the audience's recognition of the impact of video testimonies, the mere refusal to censor such images, in my opinion, does not immediately lend them an artistic value or for that matter lead to a better understanding of the object itself. In contrast to the curated exhibition of the Abu Ghraib images and Shibli's "Death" series, which made the context of production and reception part of the "artwork," Ramadan's work fails to provide viewers with any form of contextualization. The use and consequences of the video testimony of the 9/11 hijackers is neither addressed, nor is the background of the video's distribution or

reception clarified. Thus, Ramadan's "readymade" is not in the position to expose the frame that would break and counter the original intentions of the video. In this sense, the mere presentation of al-Qaeda's video seems instead to highlight the sheer force of these images and reflects what I see as an act of submission to their overwhelming power.

In sharp contrast to this absence of artistic intervention, Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué offers an explicitly subjective and interpretative answer to images of martyrs. In his lecture-performance *The Inhabitants of Images*, first performed in 2009, Mroué shares his own personal experience of encountering martyr posters in everyday Lebanese life. Throughout the performance Mroué sits behind a desk and reads from a paper he wrote, while projecting images on a screen behind him. In one of the three sections of his performance, he talks about the posters of Hezbollah martyrs killed in the 2006 war with Israel (Figure 10.3). The posters are mounted on metal structures at a fixed height of three meters on lampposts in the middle of a boulevard in southern Beirut, an area which was heavily affected by Israeli attacks. Passing these posters in a moving vehicle, Mroué describes how each poster is experienced not singularly but as part of a visual sequence of martyrdom, just like the coexistence of posters on public walls.⁴⁶ The horizontal succession of almost identical martyr posters, each differing only in the face of the individual portrayed, is interpreted by Mroué as Hezbollah's attempt to establish a continuous line and temporal chronology of



Figure 10.3 *The Inhabitants of Images*, lecture-performance, detail, Hezbollah martyr posters on a boulevard in southern Beirut, Lebanon, 2009. © Rabih Mroué.

martyrdom, starting with the Shiites' Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet considered by Shiites as the "original" martyr, to the martyrs of the present day.⁴⁷ By looking closely at the posters, Mroué identifies the military fighting uniform of each single martyr as a copy of one and the same image. "Thanks to Photoshop, the head in the original photo is cut and pasted on the readymade body in the poster."⁴⁸ Mroué describes this editing as "a very violent, sadistic act, the fact that someone would willingly cut and mutilate the picture of a dead person, even with good intentions."⁴⁹ By suggesting that the poster-montages do not immortalize nor glorify the dead individuals, but in fact kill them a second time, Mroué's lecture-performance sets up a critical space to undermine the intended message of Hezbollah's posters.

Since these posters can only be experienced while in transit, they become even more unified as they are seen in rapid succession when passing by in a moving car. As a result, the individual images become condensed into one consistent image of "[t]he martyr' with a capital M."⁵⁰ Mroué remarks:

Since the frames are all similar, except for the head and the name, we end up seeing only one, still image; the image of the martyr Mujahid, in the body of a warrior, without a name or a face. The speed of motion will erase both the names and the faces.⁵¹

It is precisely the repetition and uniformity of the martyr image, their framing on Beirut streets, Mroué claims, that eventually lead to absence. Mroué therefore interprets Hezbollah's glorious procession of martyrs as a gallery of disappearance, in which even the images of the dead are doomed to death. Similar to Shibli's photographs, the framing and display of martyr posters itself is put in the center of discussion. In contrast to Shibli's documentary approach, however, Mroué's chosen frame of the "non-academic lecture-performance" can be viewed as a process of deconstructing the images he shows, simply by demonstrating the instability and hybridity of the "truths" they project. By adding his own, subjective (and fictional) narratives to the martyr posters, Mroué appropriates the images originating from Hezbollah, "hijacks" their intentions and presents counter-narratives instead.

A similar play with the pseudo-documentary status of martyr images is at stake in the theatrical performance *Three Posters* (2000), which Mroué developed together with Lebanese writer Elias Houry. Here, the artists brought the production of a video testimony to a Beirut theatre stage. At the beginning of the performance, viewers witnessed the screening of a video showing Mroué, who takes on the role of a fictitious martyr named Khaled Rahhal, reading his testimony. During the video screening, a door on stage opens and reveals to the audience that the video is in fact a live performance, thus pointing to the martyr's paradoxical status in limbo between life and death. "At that instant," Mroué wrote later, "the fabrication of the false moment was made apparent; it was as if the martyr had come to life before them."⁵² After taking off his military jacket and beret as a living actor on

stage, Mroué starts reading another testimony stating to the camera and the audience, “I am the martyr Rabih Mroué” (Figure 10.4). By re-enacting the recording of a video testimony in his own name, Mroué blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, thereby questioning the documentary status of video testimonies in general. In contrast to Shibli’s rather documentary claim (“My work is to show, not to denounce or to judge”), Mroué chooses an entirely different, deliberately subjective approach that highlights the fabricated reality of the martyr images themselves.

The fictional performance in *Three Posters* is followed by the screening of three almost identical takes of a real video testimony showing Jamal Satti, a member of the Lebanese Communist Party who committed a suicide attack on August 6, 1985. One of these takes was used in the official broadcast on Lebanese television two days after the attack, on August 8, 1985. Viewed together with the outtakes on the videocassette, which a friend of the artists accidentally discovered in the bureau of a former party member, the video testimony starts to resemble a rehearsal in which the actor tests out his appearance as a martyr. Fascinated by the performative nature of Satti’s video, Mroué comments, “As soon as he steps before the camera to film his testimony, his words betray him, hesitating and stumbling between his lips.



Figure 10.4 *Three Posters*, Rabih Mroué / Elias Khoury, performance, detail, photograph, 2000. © Rabih Mroué.

His gaze is unable to focus, it wavers, and gets lost. These different takes are like those of an actor getting ready to play his role.”⁵³ Khoury and Mroué’s work critically unmasks the martyrdom of Jamal Satti as a “fabrication of truth” that takes place *in the image*.⁵⁴ By framing the original video document within a performance on the theatre stage, the testimony of the self-acclaimed “martyr” Jamal Satti is laid bare as the nervous performance of a mortal human being.

In his later comments on the performance, Mroué reflects on the questions about ethical responsibility that underpinned the conception of the original performance:

The decision to present the video ‘as is’ did not come easily. Should we allow a public foreign to the Party and the family to witness a martyr’s emotions before his death? Could we present a tape that did not belong to us? Would he have wanted this video to be seen? Were we exploiting this tape to make an ‘artwork’ from which we would draw both moral and financial profit? Were we, in a sense, violating the sacred space of the martyr in order to critique the concept of martyrdom and, by extension, the powers that nourish and encourage such ideologies, official or otherwise?⁵⁵

In contrast to the criticism surrounding Shibli’s exhibition, Mroué’s and Khoury’s ethical concern is not the question whether the display of Satti’s video partakes in the glorification of his deed. Rather, they are concerned about whether it is ethical to take advantage of images of deceased individuals in the framework of art institutions. In effect, however, Mroué and Khoury came to the conclusion that the debated issue is not so much an ethical one. What they were interested in were questions touching on the power of media and the status of the video-image in this respect: “What is the use of media in politics and its relationship to, or correlation with, death? How does video relate to an action that is going to happen, particularly when we are accustomed to thinking of video as the recording of something that has already happened?”⁵⁶ According to Mroué, “These questions permitted us to make the decision to present the video ‘as is,’ completely unedited, and assume responsibility for it.”⁵⁷ The artists’ initial concern of “violating the sacred space of the martyr” and of the family’s emotions was discarded by their focus on image-theoretical issues that would open up an entirely different set of questions.

Similar to Butler’s remarks on the curated exhibition of the Abu Ghraib photographs, the audiences of *Three Posters* are no longer able to look at the martyr image in an uncomplicated, one-dimensional way. By framing Satti’s video “as is” within the new context of a theatrical performance Mroué and Khoury used the art institution as a framework to appropriate and eventually deconstruct the image that originally attempted to create and affirm a “martyr.” The presentation of the uncut video testimony in this context avoids glorifying Satti as a martyr. Instead, the performance

opens a “place of reflection in the space between viewer and work,”⁵⁸ or, to use Butler’s term once again, leads to a perception of martyr images with a “renewed critical capacity,” which in my opinion outweighs the ethical concerns of whether such images should be displayed at all.

Framing the Art Frame

The *framing* of the image of the martyr, as discussed in this chapter, occurs on different levels. On a basic level, martyr posters themselves are framed in Palestinian and Lebanese cities by the way they are presented on the street, pasted over and next to each other, or mounted on successive lampposts, thus forming a temporarily and spatially expanding “gallery” of martyrs. The visual design of these posters and the choreographed images of video testimonies recorded by self-acclaimed martyrs reveals a second level of framing in that they establish visual links and references to previous martyrs *within* the image. This multi-layered, interconnected gallery of martyrs not only fulfills a commemorative function but has a political agenda in that it constructs and fabricates the identity of martyrdom in the Middle East. By appropriating this gallery and transferring it into a different viewing context, both Ahlam Shibli’s series *Death* and Rabih Mroué’s *Three Posters* and *The Inhabitants of Images* precisely point to this framework and expose how martyrdom is visually constructed in the Middle East. The double reframing of martyr images—once by choosing a new aesthetic format (documentary photographic series and theatre performance) and a second time by transferring it into the art institution—allows for a new engagement with the complex image culture of the martyr. For Butler, the affective power of images is dependent on the frame in which they are presented. While the change of location alone does not necessarily lead to a “renewed critical capacity,” as exemplified by the “readymade” by Khaled Ramadan, artworks like Shibli’s or Mroué’s can provide frameworks in which the image that originally attempted to create and affirm a “martyr” is drawn into question.

However, as the outcry over Ahlam Shibli’s exhibition in Paris brought to light, artists engaging with the image culture of martyrdom face certain challenges and skepticism when presenting their work in art spaces, especially seen in a context beyond the Middle East. The perception of martyr images is not only dependent on the reframing within art institutions, but also on the cultural background of the audience. Rabih Mroué experienced how his use of Satti’s video testimony was perceived differently by European audiences based on their cultural background and the timing of its reception in a post-9/11 world. Originally conceived in 2000 with a Beirut audience in mind, the nuances of the performance addressing the history and specifics of the Lebanese civil war were lost when presented on European stages in the following years. Even though the video testimony discussed in *Three Posters* was produced by a communist militant belonging to a secular, left-wing party, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the second Palestinian

Intifada both influenced and overshadowed the reception of Mroué's performance. European audiences equated Satti's suicide attack during the Lebanese civil war with those carried out by Islamic fundamentalist groups in an age of global terror. Disenchanted by the misunderstanding of his performance, which originally attempted "to re-evaluate the politics and role of the Lebanese Left during the civil war," Mroué decided to stop performing *Three Posters* altogether.⁵⁹ Instead of the theatrical performance, Mroué would later create a lecture-performance and video entitled *On Three Posters* (2004), which reflects on the cultural translatability of *Three Posters* for a European audience. In his performance *about a performance*, Mroué again uses the art space to expose yet another frame, namely the frame of perception by different audiences, revealing the challenges and cultural misunderstandings when dealing with the Middle Eastern image culture of the martyr. I regard this continuous movement and re-appropriation of images, as seen in Mroué's work, as an ongoing process of framing and reframing martyr images and thus fulfilling the "critical role for visual culture during times of war."⁶⁰ While *Three Posters* exposes how the martyr persona is constructed in front of the video camera, *On Three Posters* exposes the construction of the martyr in the imagination of Western audiences after 9/11. More than just pointing to the frame in which martyr images are produced, used and received in their original Middle Eastern context, as Ahlam Shibli's series attempts to, I see Mroué's *On Three Posters* going one step further by also revealing the frames in which these images are then discussed, understood (and misunderstood) by audiences in European art spaces.

Notes

- 1 The Second Intifada refers to the Palestinian uprising against Israel that started in September 2000. The Sharm el-Sheikh Summit and the agreement between President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on February 8, 2005 is often considered to be the end of the Second Intifada.
- 2 Elias Chad, "Martyrdom and Mediation," in *In Focus: "On Three Posters" 2004 by Rabih Mroué*, edited by Elias Chad (London: Tate, 2014), 2, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/rabih-mroue-on-threeposters/martyrdom-and-mediation-r1144502>.
- 3 The artist Ahlam Shibli refused to grant image copyright to the author of this chapter based on her disagreement with the interpretation of her work. The photographs discussed in this chapter are published in the exhibition catalogue *Ahlam Shibli: Phantom Home*, edited by Museu d'art contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Jeu de Paume, Museu de arte contemporanea de serralves (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013). Some of the photographs from her series *Death* can also be viewed online: <http://www.jeudepaume.org/index.php?page=article&idArt=1837> and <http://www.hatjecantz.de/ahlam-shibli-5600-0.html>.
- 4 <http://www.crif.org/fr/lecrifenaction/une-exposition-inacceptable-au-musée-du-jeu-de-paume/37353>.
- 5 Lori A. Allen described the uniform design of martyr posters of the second Intifada: "In their design and immediate visual impression, there was often little to

- distinguish between posters of suicide bombers, armed fighters, youth shot during clashes, and ordinary civilians—men, women or children—killed in Israeli attacks” (Allen, 2006), 117.
- 6 Lori A. Allen, “The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada,” *History and Memory* 18 (2006): 130.
 - 7 One of Shibli’s photographs, for example, shows images of Wafa Idris in her family’s living room. Wafa Idris was the first woman of the Second Intifada to carry out a suicide attack. On January 27, 2002, she detonated a bomb in a shoe shop in Jerusalem, killing an Israeli man and wounding roughly 140 others.
 - 8 Friederike Pannewick, “Tödliche Selbstaufopferung in der Arabischen Literatur: Eine Frage von Macht und Ehre?,” in “*Holy War*” and *Gender/Gotteskrieg und Geschlecht*, edited by Christina von Braun (Berlin, Lit Verlag, 2006), 95.
 - 9 Allen, “Polyvalent Politics,” 113.
 - 10 With this expression, I refer to the three-part documentary movie by Kevin Toolis and Robert Baer entitled *The Cult of the Suicide Bomber* (2005–7), which traces the visual cult of martyr images of suicide bombers from Iran to Lebanon and Palestine up until the rise of terror networks such as al-Qaeda.
 - 11 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2010).
 - 12 *Ibid.*, 92.
 - 13 For a detailed collection and discussion of political posters during the Lebanese civil war, see: Zeina Maasri, *Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).
 - 14 *Ibid.*
 - 15 Joseph Croitoru, *Der Märtyrer als Waffe: Die Historischen Wurzeln des Selbstmordattentats* (München [u.a.]: Hanser, 2003).
 - 16 Martin Kramer emphasizes that even though “the attacks against the United States and French contingents of the Multinational Force in Beirut [on 23 October 1983] were far more deadly,” the bombings by Hezbollah’s Ahmad Qasir in 1982 and by the Amal Movement’s martyr Bilal Fahs in 1984 gained far more celebrity due to their widely disseminated poster visages, which “are readily recognized throughout Shi’ite Lebanon,” whereas the anonymity of the 1983 Beirut barracks bombers “established a distance between the community and the acts.” Martin Kramer, “Sacrifice and ‘Self-Martyrdom’ in Shi’ite Lebanon,” in *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East*, edited by Martin Kramer (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 231–243.
 - 17 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 7.
 - 18 Mahmoud Abu Hashhash, “On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine,” *Third Text* 20, no. 3–4 (May 2006): 391.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, 391–392.
 - 20 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 37.
 - 21 *Ibid.*
 - 22 Allen, “Polyvalent Politics,” 115.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, 115, 117.
 - 24 In Islamic teaching, martyrs are believed to live eternally in the hereafter, where they are granted a unique place and special treatment in the eyes of God.
 - 25 Abu Hashhash, “On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine,” 392.
 - 26 Rivka Yadlin, “Female Martyrdom: The Ultimate Embodiment of Islamic Existence?,” in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?*, edited by Yoram Schweitzer (Tel Aviv, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS): Tel Aviv University, 2006), 53.

- 27 Lola Elias About committed a suicide attack in early April 1985, Wafa Nur al-Din on April 20, 1985, Jamal Satti on August 6 1985 and Elias Harb in October 1985. Rabih Mroué, “The Inhabitants of Images,” in *Rabih Mroué. Image(s), Mon Amour*, edited by CA2M, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (Madrid: CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, 2013), 355.
- 28 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 96.
- 29 Kim Bradley, “Review: Ahlam Shibli,” *Art in America*, 2013, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/ahlam-shibli/>.
- 30 Jürg Altwegg, “Vom Martyrium der Opfer ist keine Rede: Frankreichs Juden protestieren gegen eine Fotoausstellung, die Selbstmordattentäter als Helden feiert,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 13, 2013, my translation.
- 31 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 117.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 Charlotte Klonk, “Beyond Black and White: Reception-Aesthetic Reflections on the Distinction between Image and Art,” *Texte zur Kunst* 24, no. 95 (September 2014): 154.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 All of the discussed photographs of Shibli’s series *Death* are published in the exhibition catalogue: Barcelona, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Paris, Jeu de Paume and Porto, Fundação Serralves, eds., *Ahlam Shibli: Phantom Home* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013).
- 38 The photograph reveals what Daniel Berkowitz has called a “trend” that “has replaced body-builders, movie stars, and singers for young Palestinians, with posters of bombers appearing on walls and windows” (Berkowitz, 2004, 11). Supporting such a view, British artist Simon Tyszko reports an interview with a nine-year-old Palestinian girl who wanted to become a doctor but now changed her aim and wanted to become a martyr instead. Tyszko says, “She has effectively bought the notion of suicide bombing as a lifestyle choice—it has become aspirational, an off the shelf peer led option.” Simon Tyszko, “Suicide Bomber Barbie,” *London Institute of Contemporary Arts*, August 2002, <http://www.the.culture.net/barbie/index.html#texts>.
- 39 T.J. Demos, “Disappearance and Precarity: On the Photography of Ahlam Shibli,” in *Ahlam Shibli: Phantom Home*, edited by Museu d’art contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Jeu de Paume and Museu de arte contemporanea de serralves (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013), 11.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 41 Butler, *Frames of War*, 95.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 95–96.
- 43 Allen, “Polyvalent Politics.”
- 44 The work was presented as part of an exhibition titled *Art in the Age of Terrorism*, co-curated by Graham Coulter-Smith at the Millais Gallery, Southampton, from November 2004 to January 2005.
- 45 Graham Coulter-Smith, “Views from the Epicentre and Elsewhere,” in *Art in the Age of Terrorism*, edited by Coulter-Smith and Owen (London: Holberton, 2005), 161.
- 46 Mroué, “The Inhabitants of Images.”
- 47 Imam Hussein, who died during the famous Battle of Karbala (680), is seen as the role model for Hezbollah martyrs; the heroic narrative of his martyrdom has long been instrumentalized in Shi’a Islam, especially in Iran during the war against Iraq (1980–88), in order to recruit individuals for suicide missions. *Ibid.*, 352.

- 48 Ibid., 349.
 49 Ibid., 350.
 50 Ibid., 349.
 51 Ibid., 354.
 52 Rabih Mroué and Elias Khoury, "Three Posters: Reflections on a Video/Performance," *The Drama Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 184.
 53 Rabih Mroué, "The Fabrication of Truth," in *Tamass: Contemporary Arab Representations, vol. 1*, edited by Fundació Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2002), 114.
 54 Mroué, "The Fabrication of Truth."
 55 Mroué and Khoury, "Three Posters," 184.
 56 Ibid.
 57 Ibid.
 58 Klonk, "Beyond Black and White: Reception-Aesthetic Reflections on the Distinction between Image and Art," 154.
 59 Mroué and Khoury, "Three Posters," 185.
 60 Butler, *Frames of War*, 100.

Bibliography

- Abu Hashhash, Mahmoud. "On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine." *Third Text* 20, no. 3–4 (May 2006): 391–403.
- Allen, Lori A. "The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada." *History and Memory* 18 (2006): 107–138.
- Altwegg, Jürg. "Vom Martyrium der Opfer ist keine Rede: Frankreichs Juden protestieren gegen eine Fotoausstellung, die Selbstmordattentäter als Helden feiert." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 13, 2013.
- Bradley, Kim. "Review: Ahlam Shibli." *Art in America*, 2013. <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/ahlam-shibli/>.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London and New York: Verso, 2010.
- Chad, Elias. "Martyrdom and Mediation." In *In Focus: "On Three Posters" 2004 by Rabih Mroué*, edited by Elias Chad. London: Tate, 2014. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/rabih-mroue-on-threeposters/martyrdom-and-mediation-r1144502>.
- Coulter-Smith, Graham. "Views from the Epicentre and Elsewhere." In *Art in the Age of Terrorism*, edited by Coulter-Smith and Owen, 156–170. London: Holberton, 2005.
- Croituru, Joseph. *Der Märtyrer als Waffe: Die historischen Wurzeln des Selbstmordattentats*. München: Hanser, 2003.
- Demos, T.J. "Disappearance and Precarity: On the Photography of Ahlam Shibli." In *Ahlam Shibli: Phantom Home*, edited by Museu d'art contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Jeu de Paume, Museu de arte contemporanea de serralves, 11–26. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013.
- Klonk, Charlotte. "Beyond Black and White: Reception-Aesthetic Reflections on the Distinction between Image and Art." *Texte zur Kunst* 24, no. 95 (September 2014): 141–155.
- Kramer, Martin. "Sacrifice and 'Self-Martyrdom' in Shi'ite Lebanon." In *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East*, edited by Martin Kramer, 231–243. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction, 1996.

- Maasri, Zeina. *Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009.
- Mroué, Rabih. "The Fabrication of Truth." In *Tamass: Contemporary Arab Representations*, edited by Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1:114–117. Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2002.
- Mroué, Rabih. "The Inhabitants of Images." In *Rabih Mroué: Image(s), Mon Amour*, edited by CA2M, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, 338–356. Madrid: CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, 2013.
- Mroué, Rabih and Elias Khoury. "Three Posters: Reflections on a Video/Performance." *The Drama Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 182–191.
- Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Barcelona, Paris Jeu de Paume and Porto Fundação Serralves, eds. *Ablam Shibli: Phantom Home*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013.
- Pannewick, Friederike. "Tödliche Selbstaufopferung in der Arabischen Literatur: Eine Frage von Macht und Ehre?" In "Holy War" and Gender/'Gotteskrieg' Und Geschlecht, edited by Christina von Braun, 93–119. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003.
- Tyszko, Simon. "Suicide Bomber Barbie." *London Institute of Contemporary Arts* (August 2002). <http://www.theculture.net/barbie/index.html#texts>.
- Yadlin, Rivka. "Female Martyrdom: The Ultimate Embodiment of Islamic Existence?" In *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?*, edited by Yoram Schweitzer, 51–61. Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), Tel Aviv University, 2006.

11 What Will You Remember When I'm Gone? Funerary Photography in the Gallery's Public/Private Space

Rosanne Altstatt

“Look over to the white flowers on the other side of the room, *mielasis*.” I wonder if these are the words that the photographer, Charles Pansirna, said to the little boy tucking himself into his mother’s shoulder, his baleful eyes staring straight at the camera. There is no English translation of the term of endearment *mielasis*, but a family with strong ties to its Lithuanian heritage might use this touch of personal history to soften the request. Mother has her head turned correctly, directly to the left, such that it accentuates a broad part in the right side of her hair. It is difficult to imagine she can look at any specific object through those swollen eyes. The oldest sister sits next to her with forced composure, looking toward the face of a stylized clock set into the center of a wreath. The big hand shoots straight up to twelve and the little hand holds forever still at eight. The middle sister looks leftward, but she seems barely able to raise her eyes from her bowed head. The two older boys stand in the second row with fixed gazes. They back up Father, whose eyes are lost on a rose or a lily in the bouquet just beyond the coffin. In the coffin lies the baby of the family, the one toward whom the family’s gaze should be turned, who until very recently must have been the playmate of the little boy and the middle sister. The wee one would be gazing at the prayer card propped up in her tiny hands, except that her eyelids have been closed. Any words of direction that the photographer spoke are long forgotten. What remains almost a century later is an image that conveys a family deeply stricken by loss. We see a dead child dressed in luminous satin garments with a cross hovering above its body, as though ready to mediate her ascension into heaven.

This funerary photograph was included amongst vernacular studio family photos made by Charles Pansirna in Chicago’s Lithuanian-American community of the early twentieth century in the exhibition *What Will You Remember When I’m Gone?*²¹ My visual reading of the photograph is a combination of observation and speculation, a relationship I have created to it with a story a contemporary viewer might bring to a historic photograph. Vernacular studio photographs do inevitably invoke narrative invention. My free-flowing reading of the photograph is based on my own knowledge and experiences with family grief and the methods of portrait photographers;



Figure 11.1 (untitled), Charles Pansirna, ca. 1916–1936. © Purdue University Galleries.

my own associations and interpretations guide my reading. Margaret Olin proposes that photography’s “meaning is determined not only by what it looks like but also by the relationship we are invited to have with it.”² *What Will You Remember* facilitated precisely this invitation. It extended an invitation to the gallery’s publics to define relationships to funerary photographs in the context of the genre of family photography. The exhibition primed the formation of relationships through the curatorial selection of works from the collection to establish a narrative through display methods that created associative connections between anonymous historical photographs and contemporary personal family histories, and through the formation of contexts within the exhibition that inferred its photos are receptive to being brought into viewers’ own knowledge and narratives. What I suggest here is that gallery space is public space with the potential to re-shape private narratives and, conversely, the public narrative being asserted in the gallery is shaped by private meaning brought to it.

What Will You Remember exhibited the photographs of Charles Pansirna, a Lithuanian immigrant who arrived in the USA in 1907 and worked

in the coal mines of Pennsylvania with many of his compatriots before moving to the Midwest. He opened Pansirna Studios in 1916 and its main customer base was Chicago's Lithuanian-American community involved in the Providence of God (Lithuanian) Roman Catholic parish until he retired in 1952.³ The exhibition was little concerned with the photographer as author of singular works, and focused instead on creating a contemporary connection to a shared history of the photographic genre in which Chicago's Lithuanian-American community portrayed itself.

Pansirna's photographs are undoubtedly still present in boxes and attics of private homes, but they exist as over 1,600 photographic prints and glass plate negatives in Purdue's archive. These photographs are the remainders of what was left in a studio—or a dustbin—decades after the photographer himself had passed. Photographer Stephen Sprague rescued the material in the 1970s when it was discarded from the former site of Pansirna Studios.⁴ Sprague brought them to Purdue University where he sorted and inventoried the photographs according to the taxonomy of the portrait studio commission: weddings together in one section, male portraits, female portraits, children, families posed outside, families posed indoors and photographs taken outdoors or in the city. The funerary photographs have their own section as well.

On display in the exhibition was a broad spectrum of Pansirna's photographs, including a selection of his glass plate negatives and a box camera similar to the one Pansirna would have used. Photographs of Pansirna Studios of 1901 S. Halsted Street and its proprietor were part of the opening section of the exhibition, which also included photographs used as demos and advertisement for the studio, as well as photographs of family members who helped run the business. Another wall of the exhibition was devoted to the commerce of Chicago neighborhood shops in a now-vanished Lithuanian community. The Lithuanian culture that Pansirna was holding onto with film—brass bands, dancers, nuns, priests and students from Providence of God's parish and school—could be reminisced through the exhibition as well.

Two sections of the exhibition featured contemporary artists Owen Mundy and Min Kim Park, who each related a personal and cultural family history to what they read in the Pansirna photographs. This modeled an openness for gallery visitors to connect the contemporary with the historical, the personal and the public display. Each artist worked with visual commonalities between the old and the new as well as spatial proximities within the gallery. Artist Owen Mundy drew parallels between the unchanging genre of the military portrait seen in the proud and brave WWI soldiers of Pansirna's photos and military portraits from his own family's collection, which date back to the Civil War. He grouped Mundy photos together with strikingly similar Pansirna photos and added short biographical information or captions suggesting the relationship between family and duty, such as "A good son," to individual images. The wall texts could have been

switched and created no noticeable change, since the messages and poses of military photographs remain consistent, whether taken in 1915 or 2015. In a sense, Mundy adopted the Pansirna figures.

Min Kim Park, a contemporary Korean-American photographer, created mother-daughter portraits with immigrant mothers, attired in their traditional Korean festive dresses, positioned beside their American-born daughters, the latter dressed in contemporary Western outfits. These were displayed adjacent to mother-daughter portraits out of Pansirna Studios, offering a visual suggestion that the Lithuanian families of Pansirna's sitters may have been living through a similar process of assimilation in early twentieth-century America.

Funerary Photography, Remembered

The family that originally commissioned Pansirna to take the photo in the imagined narrative that opens this chapter would have supplied its own narrative to the image—who died, who stands by the casket, what happened that day. With this photograph on hand, the story may have been told to others viewing the family album, or was perhaps described in letters



Figure 11.2 (untitled), Charles Pansirna, ca. 1916–1936. © Purdue University Galleries.

written to those who could not be present at the funeral.⁵ Viewed today, the anonymity of the exhibition's vintage portraits make it easy to forget that this actual family once existed. As Rob Kroes in his analysis of immigrant photography in *Photographic Memories* argues, with the passing of time the "explanatory voices" latent in family photographs "have gone silent."⁶ New viewers inevitably endow the photographs with new meaning.⁷

The genre of the death portrait is usually referred to as memorial photography or post-mortem photography,⁸ but I propose that the subheading "funerary photography" better suits early twentieth-century post-mortem photography's careful settings at wakes (in the private home or the funeral home), churches or cemeteries rather than what was often earlier more focused on the body.

The shift of the genre into funerary settings reflects the removal of death from private homes to the public rituals that follow death.⁹ Before WWII, it was not uncommon in the United States and Western Europe to hire a portrait photographer who would commemorate this critical moment in a family's history with a final image of the dead.¹⁰ Families commissioned photographs of the dead in order to help in the grieving process, which could last for months or even years. Daguerreotypes of the mid-nineteenth century often show the body propped into a chair or lying peacefully on the deathbed.¹¹ In late nineteenth-century America, the discourse around children in the family and in society had evolved to the point where the death of a child caused enormous pain and grief, and an entire genre of "consolation literature" written for a female audience of mothers emerged.¹² Dead children were, thus, frequently the subjects of portrait photography. This photographic genre also has its roots in sketches of the dead. Sketched portraits were usually unaffordable for the masses. Nevertheless, it was an expense that families were willing to incur upon the loss of a precious child.¹³ Some photographers specialized in death portraits, which cost double and would be more lucrative than in-studio work.¹⁴

Funerary photographs have disappeared from the walls of contemporary America's private homes,¹⁵ though in the late nineteenth-century post-mortem photographs were displayed prominently, "serving as a reminder to loved ones and visitors alike that the deceased remained in the world in the presence of the living."¹⁶ Although the literature on post-mortem photography skirts the naming of an exact date for when this practice ended, it is possible to suggest that such images moved out of the living room at the same time as the corpse moved from the family parlor to the funeral parlor—when the ritual spaces of death were more clearly separated from the spaces of the living. The era of "avoiding death" coincided with the twentieth-century increase of death care services.¹⁷

For funerals, the family of the deceased gathered from near and far, close friends paid last respects, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a photograph captured the final image of the deceased. Carefully composed immigrant photographs of funerals were enclosed in letters back

to the Old Country, to relatives left behind, in order to illustrate their personal narrative of life in the New World.¹⁸ Douglas Petkus, a mortician who serves Chicago's Lithuanian and Russian community today, related that families still photograph themselves with the deceased. "They always gather at the head of the casket," as seen in the historic photographs, "and they still do send them back to the Old Country." However, today it is not part of the ritual to call for a professional photographer when a Smartphone's camera will do.¹⁹ In the digital age, a person is more likely to receive a photo by email than by ship. Some traditions, it seems, evolve while others fade out.

What is extraordinary about Pansirna's funerary photographs is not that he brought a new artistic style to the genre, but that they force us to contend with a genre that has been all but forgotten or largely unacknowledged in American culture until recently.²⁰ While Kroes writes of the role of photography in the lives of Dutch immigrants, László Kürti takes up a visual analysis of the Hiltman-Kinsey funerary photographs from the Hungarian-American community in Toledo, Ohio, between 1918 and 1920.²¹ The Hiltman-Kinsey photographs show the same types of flower-wreaths with stopped clocks in the center, funeral dress, and solemn expressions found in Pansirna's photographs.²² Their settings are also very similar, in front of the family home with the funeral party assembled around the coffin or outside the church serving their ethnic neighborhoods. It is a funeral *arrangement*: every scene is arranged to look the same and convey the sense that this is how death is meant to be dealt with. In the Pansirna photographs, an American flag is often draped along the base of the coffin and it, along with flowers and faces, is the most likely object to be colorized when the customer commissioned hand-tinting, which literally highlights the immigrant's pride in his new nation. Kürti notes that American flags are exclusively seen in male funerary photos, sometimes together with the Hungarian flag in the Hiltman-Kinsey photographs, and he attributes the dual flag imagery to the immigrant experience.²³ Perhaps it is a reference to having fought for the USA or life around the nationalist fervor of WWI, to an attachment and honor that would be carried into the hereafter. There are no dual flags in Pansirna's surviving funerary photographs, though they are often found in his photographs of WWI "dough boys," taken before they went to war overseas. The photographic documentation of a Lithuanian-born man's naturalization papers is amongst Pansirna's works. It, too, was displayed in *What Will You Remember* in order to contextualize the Lithuanian immigrant experience within the exhibition. The photographs portray immigrants with a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic group but also make evident the national pride of belonging to what was considered the "melting pot" of America.

Pansirna's photographs also have a strikingly similar style to those of James Van Der Zee, the now-renowned African-American photographer whose portrait studio opened in Harlem at roughly the same time as Pansirna's, in

1916/17.²⁴ The surface differences between their photographs lie mainly in that the faces in Van Der Zee's photographs are black, of African-Americans, while those in Pansirna's photographs are white. Both photographers trafficked in a similarly leveling aesthetic that served the ordinary citizens who walked into their studios. Van Der Zee made use of props—columns, heavy furniture, painted interior backdrops, flowers and vases—that signified the same middle-class values as those in the photos of many Americans, including Pansirna's sitters, of the time. Their funerary photographs demonstrate a consistency across how death was ritualized in photography across disparate American cultural groups of the time. For each, the body is set into a scene that is lush and paradisiacal, abound with cascades of flowers and fern jungles.

Space for Narrative Adoption Through “Grandmother’s Wall”

Exhibitions and books featuring funerary photographs tend to single out the genre of funerary photographs and locate it outside the larger genre of studio photography.²⁵ Rupturing this academically neat, yet historically inaccurate division, *What Will You Remember* sought to reintegrate the funerary portrait into family portraiture and the narrative of a slice of early twentieth-century Lithuanian-American life that passed through the portrait studio of Charles Pansirna.

Pansirna's nephew, Edward Lapinskas, has attached stories to some photographs in the collection. He has pored over hundreds of photographs and identified a handful of personal photographs of the Pansirna family and the studio, providing context and background information on the ethnic culture of the neighborhood.²⁶ Lapinskas removed at least a portion of the anonymous aspect of these photos with his memories of the neighborhood locations, of the Providence of God parish community, of how the studio was run, and also provided a very personal account of the photographer. Lapinskas has expressed a strong emotional investment in his uncle's photographs and been in intermittent contact with Purdue Galleries since 2005. In his correspondence, he explained that he could not attend his uncle's funeral because Pansirna died the day before Lapinskas returned from the Vietnam War.²⁷ Decades after Pansirna's death, Lapinskas saw these photographs for the first time and wrote, “You have given me the chance to see the past through this man's eyes who was my Uncle and first best friend. This means a lot to me as I have carried a burden of self-imposed guilt for not having been able to see Unc' one more time. It fills a huge void in my soul . . .”²⁸

My curatorial relationship to the Pansirna photographs changed when I read this passage in the archive. I had been investigating the archive in order to conceive an idea for an exhibition I would guest curate from the collection and for a class I would teach. What were previously photographs fascinating for their unanimity, their cookie-cutter studio poses

and photographic types with vintage necklaces and old-fashioned hairstyles, then transformed with Lapinskas's words into real people, with inner lives and complex relationships.

In *Family Frames*, Marianne Hirsch calls this a “narrative act of adoption,” which “transforms rectangular pieces of cardboard into telling details connecting lives and stories across continents and generations.”²⁹ I re-established contact with Lapinskas and, though I learned nothing further about individual images, he reiterated the emotional attachment to his uncle. This new relationship to Lapinskas and my awareness of his memories and emotions shaken loose by Pansirna's photographs, humanized my approach to the unidentified figures haunting Purdue Galleries' archive. The funerary photographs, in particular, felt like more than just curiosities of a forgotten ritual. The communication with Lapinskas connected my reading of these family photographs as an art historian and a curator to his narratives of them as a family member—and it awakened memories of viewing my own family's photographs on display on my grandmother's bedroom wall. I began to adopt the Pansirna photographs by relating them to my family's photographic collection. A curatorial desire to open the possibility of adoption through the gallery display evolved into a desire to spur viewers' own processes of “adoption” of the Pansirna photographs, thereby granting private meaning to anonymous family photographs made public through the exhibition.



Figure 11.3 Grandmother's Wall, 2000. © Janet Altstatt.

Grandmother's Wall

The central section of the *What Will You Remember* would become “grandmother’s wall,” which recreated the form of private viewing display in the family home and connected the collection’s images to the contemporary viewers’ own experiences of looking at family photographs in order to relate and create family narratives. The display of this section of the exhibition consisted of photographs from all genres of vernacular studio photography: from mother-daughter photographs to brides, girls holding diplomas, families sitting for formal photographs and outdoor family portraits. The display of Pansirna’s portraits in an eclectic mix of frames mimicked the wall in my grandmother’s bedroom, a type of private display that is common in middle class homes across the USA. I snuck into that room during family get-togethers, laid on the bed and gazed at images of my mother and father from before I was born, aunts and uncles as brides and grooms; great-grandparents I never knew; childhood photographs of cousins and siblings. Together with stories and snippets of information from my relatives, these photographs shaped my version of our family narrative that was developing in me as I viewed the photographs from my grandmother’s bed, making up my own stories from the bits and pieces of knowledge that had been given to me and what my imagination filled in. It is common to puzzle over an old photograph, search for resemblances to other family members and wonder which great uncle or forgotten aunt appears in any given picture. This process of discovery, through photographs, of relatives who have passed or been forgotten, or transformed dramatically in the time since the picture was taken, is part of our ongoing construction of the family narrative.

The curatorial decision to re-contextualize the Pansirna photos into a “grandmother’s wall” after their double de-contextualization—away from the original family context for which they were made, and into an archival context—is not without risk. *The Family of Man* photographic exhibition of 1955, in which families from cultures all over the world were almost fully decontextualized and depicted as naturally holding the same cohesive structures and values, met with wide criticism for its strained homogeneity. Hirsch summarizes the criticism and argues strongly against the exhibition’s “universalist” message and weighs it against the *Tower of Faces*, which is installed at the center of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The latter consists of hundreds of portraits collected by Yaffa Eliach, a survivor from the Lithuanian town of Ejszyski, and also the granddaughter of the town’s Jewish studio photographers, Yitzak Uri Katz and Alte Katz. Hirsch tenuously accepts that these anonymous vernacular portraits, when included into the museum’s history of the Shoah, facilitate a public adoption of those who faced eradication.³⁰ They are *momento mori* of individuals and families we never knew who are now re-contextualized into a collective history for museum publics through the gallery space.

“Grandmother’s wall” in *What Will You Remember* straddles the contextualizing modi of both exhibitions. As a curatorial act, it takes advantage of the leveling effect of portrait photography with its standard poses and props, directs the viewer away from a strictly formal analysis of the images and reinstates the photographs into family narratives. It is also the heart of an exhibition built from eclectic bits that depict different facets of a community that would soon scatter into the Chicago suburbs. Of course, that does not compare to the decimation of Jewish neighborhoods and families, and their remembrance in the Holocaust Museum. “Grandmother’s wall” instead contextualizes individual photographs into a community of immigrant families that has disappeared as an ethnic locality via disassembly and assimilation.

This feature wall had three distinct variations from the photo wall of my childhood. First, it displayed a false “family history,” because it was made up of photographs whose only known commonality was that they were made by the same photographer. The images were drawn together from many different families in the collection. A man in a coffin surrounded by flowers was hung next to a photo of a baby dressed in his birthday suit and just old enough to sit up for his picture. In the photograph below the baby, a slightly goofy-looking ring bearer and his heart-shaped pillow steals the show from a bride and her bridesmaids ordered in a pretty row



Figure 11.4 Exhibition view at Purdue University Galleries, 2014. © Purdue University Galleries and Michal Hathaway.

with groom and groomsmen standing behind them. This portion of the wall concluded with a photograph of a girl and two boys posing sweetly at the altar to commemorate their first communion. Nested into the context of “grandmother’s wall” were open caskets on display next to other family portraits. Several such subsections of photographs were mounted across the wall in an interlocking expanse that would lead viewers to make connections between small groupings of photographs. It is assumed that the photographed were all from the Lithuanian-American community and judging by the prevalence of Lithuanian themes, they were. Yet few communities are completely homogeneous, and walk-ins to the studio would have been common at the time. Together, they created the false impression of an extended family. Pierre Bourdieu’s “art moyen”³¹—middlebrow art, in which the family photograph’s function is to display and reinforce the cohesive family by documenting its rituals while setting examples of how life will progress—is not just a metaphorical, but a literal construction in this display.

The second variation is the reinstatement of the funerary photographs into the system of family portraiture. Contextualizing the funerary photographs amidst a host of other family portraits not only brought the public remembrance of death back to the family gallery, it took the point of view of a trade photographer’s daily work. “Grandmother’s wall” was the bridge between the exceptionality of professional funerary photos to a contemporary American middle-class viewer and how they were only one part in the depiction of family life as pieced together through the lens of the portrait studio. A portrait photographer might work a funeral in the morning and a wedding in the afternoon. Thus, “grandmother’s wall” hovered between the idea of family remembrance and of remembrance for a time when funerals were standard in a studio photographer’s portfolio.

A third variation was made through the exhibition’s wall labels, which had the potential to open channels of individual meaning for the viewers. Gallery wall labels traditionally provide didactic information as part of an exhibition’s system of representations,³² but here they were sources of both factual and subjective information delivered in a subjective first-person narrative rather than the usual authoritatively third-person institutional voice.

Students from my class on the Pansirna photographs were assigned to research a photograph and write a wall label for the exhibition. Much of what they wrote turned out to be a mix of verifiable information, such as the history of a defunct brewery seen on the label of a pictured beer bottle, and healthy doses of conjecture. The labels were rightly beginner’s work—subjective and wonderful meanderings of suppositions. Admittedly, it was tempting to not use them at all, for to include their unconventionality could be mistaken for “unprofessionality.” But the curatorial process is a creative process, ideally open to serendipity, and the students’ wall labels gave license to viewers to determine meaning through both what they see and the subjectivity they may bring to their relationships with the photographs. The

wall label for an image (circa 1910–20) of men and a girl sitting at a picnic table included this text:

It is hard to identify who is with whom in this photograph. Only two men sat on the left side, but there are four drinks. On the right side there were two men as well, but four drinks are there. It is possible that there were eight men drinking on that bench and then some of them left to go take a walk (you can see them in the background), so the sitters were arranged to sit on the bench to take the shot.

That little girl just looks miserable. I believe she probably had no idea why she was there sitting among those men and hearing things she had no clue about. The man sitting on the left side right next to the little girl is very young as well. . .

The student's wall label breaks the conventions of the rhythm and formality of the institutional label. Instead of clip facts that contextualize the photograph in (art) history, the labels on "grandmother's wall" brought out a sense of narrative conjecture with the aim to illustrate how the exhibition's publics could connect with the photographs on their own terms, as did this student. Which of us has not studied an old photograph and posed internal questions—who is paired with whom, who seems happy, who isn't?—and then embellished the photograph with a narrative born of our own subjective thoughts and experiences? The wall labels reflected the possible perspective of any one visitor and the final curatorial decision to include them in the display was intended to establish an atmosphere of narrative reminiscences and associations. This had the potential to tear little fissures in the dominance of the institutional authoritative voice into which a viewer's thoughts could project more readily.

Forgetting and Remembering in Public/Private Space

Photography theorists Jan Baetens and Mieke Bleyen assert that the cognitive stance of the spectator is "programmed" with a universally built-in desire to look at images in a narrative way that is rewarding, for it "simply helps to better grasp, understand, memorize, communicate, and transform what we see and to make it useful for our own lives."³³ *What Will You Remember* tapped into a tradition of home photography display with the belief that viewers would carry their innate desires for narrative, and knowledge of vernacular studio photographs, onto the Pansirna photographs, which in turn would reframe their own familial remembrances.

This placement of funerary photographs amongst other family and historical photographs into the space of the gallery—a public space that encourages private reflection in the context of the collective creation of cultural memory—slid the now-forgotten practice of their private display into a

public sphere where they can be related to on both an individual and a public level.

In the learner's intellectual processes, everything discovered is compared to past experiences and previous knowledge. (Of course, he or she also carries a history of confusion, questioning, and mystery.) Not only does the user encounter the new and the historic, he or she also encounters the past that is carried within, as well as an emerging new idea. The here and now blends its dimensions with the once and past.³⁴

In this passage on the museum and library experience, David Carr illuminates how the public's, or in his term, the "user's," embodiment of the past and present are integrated in the cultural institution. As a public space of reflection, the gallery is a semi-isolated area for considering culture(s) of the past and present, which continue to unfold.

In the public/private space of *What Will You Remember When I'm Gone?* several visitors were compelled to tell their own family stories of funeral photographs. The opening reception was a public round of discussion in which I related the ideas behind "grandmother's wall" and several others involved in the preparation of the show—students, photographers, archivists—stepped forward from the crowd at different times to convey the connections they formed to the Pansirna photographs. A few members of the public spoke up with their own experiences of Lithuanian-American culture or family photographs. None of the information volunteered in the public forum was about funerary photographs, but once the group broke up people began to approach me in the gallery individually and in the days that followed; many of the conversations were about the funerary photographs. They told stories related to funerary photographs in family albums at home, lying in bedroom drawers or stowed away digitally on CDs—ready to be brought out for private viewing, but unimaginable in public space.

One woman came to me with a story about a photograph known in her family as "the dead baby photo." Its name refers to a picture of her mother, aunt and uncle as children. The two girls are posed on either side of their sleeping baby brother and gravely look down at him. "It never occurred to me before that my grandmother had probably seen this type of photograph of dead children [from the exhibition] and maybe that's why she called it 'the dead baby photo.'" Whether or not this is the reason her grandmother gave the photograph its title, the historical photographs in the exhibition changed the woman's perception of that photo from one with a morbidly funny and quirky name to a new perspective on the experience of her grandmother as a person who lived in a culture with rituals now past. Her story enacts what Carr theorizes as the function of cultural institutions:

We enter and leave with what we know, but our knowing is different when we depart the institution because we have clarified, augmented,

or revised what knowledge we had. Or what we know is in the process of becoming different knowledge because we are present, working to understand things. Because what we know configures who we are, we also might say that the crafting of truth in cultural institutions is a process of becoming, renewing, or confirming ourselves.³⁵

What Will You Remember When I'm Gone? clarified, augmented and revised the woman's knowledge of funerary photographs and of her own stories of death and photography. It demonstrates how meaning can be generated in the gallery space where photographs that were originally for private viewing are made public. It activates private memories, made possible through the suggestive guidance of the curatorial invitation to hold private remembrances in the public space of the gallery. The exhibition helped funerary photographs resurface within the context of family ritual made public. While these photographs helped recall a public history of death and photography, the display also opened the possibility for individuals in the gallery to reshape their private narratives to familial death.

Notes

- 1 Purdue University Galleries, West Lafayette, Indiana, October 27–December 6, 2014. Curated by the author.
- 2 Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 3.
- 3 Edward Lapinskas, Pansirna's nephew, e-mail message to Purdue Galleries, January 14, 2006.
- 4 Sprague's studio was in the same building as the former Pansirna Studios, 1901 South Halsted Street in Chicago. Sprague took in the discarded photographs when the studio was being cleared out. Documentation in Purdue University Galleries Archive.
- 5 Rob Kroes, *Photographic Memories* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2004), 38.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 See: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981). Barthes examined subjectivity via what he calls the punctum, which awakens personal meaning and connection to individual photographs. His theorization begins with the act of memorialization as he pores over a childhood photograph of his recently deceased mother, the Winter Garten photograph.
- 8 See: Stanley B. Burns, *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America* (Altadena, CA: Twelvetrees Press, 1990).
- 9 John S. Stephenson, *Death, Grief, and Mourning: Individual and Social Realities* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 41.
- 10 Paul David Nygard and Catharine H. Reilly, "The American Family and the Processing of Death Prior to the Twentieth Century," in *Handbook of Death and Dying*, edited by Clifton D. Bryant (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), 571.
- 11 See: Stanley B. Burns, *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America* (Altadena, CA: Twelvetrees Press, 1990).

- 12 John S. Stephenson, *Death, Grief, and Mourning: Individual and Social Realities* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 26.
- 13 Nygard and Reilly, "The American Family and the Processing of Death Prior to the Twentieth Century," 571.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 572.
- 15 There is, of course, no way to scour the walls of all of America's homes in order to fact-check this statement, but suffice it to say that the display of a dead relative in a casket would be unusual in the vast majority of American households.
- 16 Nygard and Reilly, 571.
- 17 Ben Hayslip, Jr., Kenneth W. Sewell and Russel B. Riddle, "The American Funeral," in *Handbook of Death and Dying*, edited by Clifton D. Bryant, 588.
- 18 Kroes, *Photographic Memories*, 51.
- 19 Douglas Petkus, telephone conversation with author, August 8, 2015.
- 20 "The Burns Archive," *The Burns Archive*, October 4, 2015. www.burnsarchive.com. The Burns Archive of post-mortem photography attributes a raised consciousness of this photographic tradition to its own collection and dissemination. Contemporary interest in exhibiting post-mortem photography is reflected in two small museums: The Museum of Mourning Photography in Chicago (founded 2008) and Morbid Anatomy Museum in Brooklyn (founded 2014).
- 21 László Kürti, "'For the Last Time': The Hiltman-Kinsey Post-mortem Photographs, 1918–1920," *Visual Studies* 27, no. 1 (2012): 91–104.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 96.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Deborah Willis and Rodger C. Birt, *VanDerZee, Photographer, 1886–1983* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1993), 42.
- 25 James Van Der Zee and Owen Dodson, *The Harlem Book of the Dead* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1978). Regarding exhibitions, only the funerary photographs amongst the Pansirna photographs in Purdue University Galleries archive had been exhibited: *Lithuanian Sorrows*, Purdue University Beelke Gallery, West Lafayette, Indiana. August 21–September 8, 1995.
- 26 Correspondence housed at Purdue University Galleries, West Lafayette, Indiana.
- 27 Edward Lapinskas, e-mail message to Purdue Galleries, September 28, 2005.
- 28 Edward Lapinskas, e-mail message to Purdue Galleries, January 14, 2006.
- 29 Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Harvard: Harvard College, 1997), 12.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 252.
- 31 Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography, a Middle-brow Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).
- 32 Bruce Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 175–190.
- 33 Jan Baetens and Meike Bleyen, "Photo Narrative Sequential Photography Photonoels," in *Intermediality and Storytelling*, edited by Marina Grishakova, Marie-Laure Ryan (Berlin, New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2010), 168.
- 34 David Carr, *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003).
- 35 *Ibid.*, 43.

Bibliography

Baetens, Jan and Meike Bleyen. "Photo Narrative Sequential Photography Photonoels." In *Intermediality and Storytelling*, 168. Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2010.

- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Photography, a Middle-brow Art*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Burns, Stanley B. *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America*. Altadena, CA: Twelvetrees, 1990.
- Carr, David. *The Promise of Cultural Institutions*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2003.
- Ferguson, Bruce. "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense." In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, 175–190. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Hayslip, Jr. Ben, Kenneth W. Sewell and Russel B. Riddle. "The American Funeral." In *Handbook of Death and Dying*, Vol. 2, 587–597. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Kroes, Rob. *Photographic Memories: Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History*. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2004.
- Kürti, László. "'For the Last Time': The Hiltman-Kinsey Post-mortem Photographs, 1918–1920." *Visual Studies* 27, no. 1 (2012): 91–104.
- Nygaard, Paul David and Catharine H. Reilly. "The American Family and the Processing of Death Prior to the Twentieth Century." In *Handbook of Death and Dying*, edited by Clifton D. Bryant, 567–574. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003.
- Olin, Margaret Rose. *Touching Photographs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Stephenson, John S. *Death, Grief, and Mourning: Individual and Social Realities*. New York: Free Press, 1985.
- Van Der Zee, James and Owen Dodson. *The Harlem Book of the Dead*. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1978.
- Willis, Deborah and Rodger C. Birt. *VanDerZee, Photographer, 1886–1983*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1993.

12 Remediating Death at Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum

Rachel E. Perry

In her remarkable autobiographical trilogy *Auschwitz and After*, the French writer Charlotte Delbo insists that “Il faut donner à voir”: Not one must see, but rather one must “give to see” or, more precisely, seeing must be given, revealed, enabled. Her imperative foregrounds the difficulty of the task of confronting atrocity. Regarding the Holocaust, seeing is not as simple as it looks. Effort, ingenuity, and care are called for if we are not to fall victim to photographs of degrading death.

This chapter examines the ways in which death is displayed in one of the most important Holocaust museums in the world, Yad Vashem's new Holocaust History Museum (HHM) in Israel, which opened to the public in 2005. Focusing on one of the first and most important exhibits in the museum, the Klooga installation, I will explore how Yad Vashem responds to Delbo's directive “to give to see.” Within the museum, the Klooga installation is the visitor's “first encounter with the photographic inventory of atrocity.”¹ What kinds of seeing does Yad Vashem encourage? And what are the ethical and affective consequences of its museological modes of display? I will argue that the Klooga installation exemplifies Yad Vashem's approach to photographic images of death. By prompting a process of interaction and interpretation rather than passive voyeurism, it blocks a sensationalist exploitation of the dead which revictimizes the victim.

The Klooga installation demonstrates one of the ways in which photography can be deployed as “a medium of salvaging, preservation and rescue” in order to, as Ulrich Baer argues, “defend against death.”² Since their origins, both the museum and photography have, to use Susan Sontag's phrase, “kept company with death.”³ The museum has been cast as mausoleum, sepulcher, necropolis, mortuary.⁴ So, too, death haunts photography. As *memento mori*, the photograph has been compared to a crypt, cemetery, grave, or funerary monument.⁵ Moreover, as Ariella Azoulay has argued, both the museum and photography are media which authorize and aestheticize the public display of death.⁶ Like photography, museums frame objects and events, selecting and separating them from their context. As Judith Butler underlines in her book *Frames of War*, the photographic frame guides our interpretation; it comments and editorializes.⁷ The museum's framing

activities work similarly; they shape meaning. But curatorial practices can also call into question old interpretative frames and propose new ones. As John Tagg has argued, a lot hangs on the frame.⁸

Compared to earlier uses of atrocity photography in Yad Vashem's old History Museum and against the museological precedent set by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Yad Vashem's innovative display strategy encourages a different way of encountering and engaging with iconic images of Holocaust victims. Committed to rehumanizing the victim, it reclaims the Holocaust narrative from the perpetrator, offering a restitution or, in Geoffrey Hartman's words, a "view from the other side" which "restores the sympathy and humanity systematically denied by Nazi footage."⁹ Driven by an ethical imperative, it marks an evolution in the understanding of the objectifying nature of the public photographic archive and demonstrates an institutional recognition of the need to reframe or remediate the display of death in the Holocaust museum.

The Visitor's Introduction

Established by Israeli state law in 1953, Yad Vashem is Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Occupying a sprawling campus on the Mount of Remembrance on the outskirts of Jerusalem, Yad Vashem is an umbrella institution committed to four "pillars" of remembrance: commemoration, documentation, education, and research.¹⁰ In March 2005, half a century after its first building was erected, Yad Vashem unveiled a decade-long expansion of the entire museum complex. Spurred by the spectacular success of the USHMM, which opened in 1993, Yad Vashem hired a new chairman, Avner Shalev, and launched "Masterplan 2001," a renovation project committed to "updating the Holocaust."¹¹ In addition to a new Visitor's Center, an Art Museum, Visual Center, Learning Center, synagogue, and Exhibition Pavilion, Yad Vashem built an entirely new HHM, replacing the old History Museum, which dated back to 1973. Designed by Moshe Safdie, the prism-like triangular structure made entirely of reinforced concrete quadrupled the exhibition space to over 4,200 square meters, allowing Yad Vashem to restage their collections with a new museological approach necessary "to meet the challenges of the third millennium."¹²

The differences between the old and new museums are significant. The old History Museum relied almost exclusively on enlarged black and white photographs and recounted the history of the Holocaust from a "neutral," "objective" perspective, adopting an anonymous and authoritative third-person historical voice. The HHM diverges dramatically; it relies on what Amos Goldberg calls an "individuation principle," which reflects much broader trends in both Holocaust historiography and museum design.¹³ As historian Hanna Yablonka has described it, whereas the old museum spoke about "them," the six million, in the plural, the new museum tells the history of the Holocaust as a personal chronicle from the perspective of the Jewish

victim.¹⁴ This marks a radical reorientation in the ways in which the Holocaust and its victims are represented. Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate and Chief Curator of the Holocaust History Museum, explains: “at the center of the whole narrative is the individual. The personal narrative then became a key and a challenge that paved the way for presenting the entire complex story of the Holocaust.”¹⁵ More important, the HHM focuses on the Jewish victim rather than the perpetrator, seeking, in Goldberg’s words, “to redeem Jews from their status as mere objects of annihilation by constructing them as historical agents in their own right.”¹⁶

How does one rewrite the Holocaust from the perspective of the vanquished when they were systematically dispossessed? Drawing on their archives, Yad Vashem introduced over 2,500 artifacts, 100 video testimonies, and 280 works of art into the museum in order to give “a name and a face” back to the victims.¹⁷ Memorial museums such as Yad Vashem face a fundamental dilemma regarding their object base. Yehudit Inbar, the chief Curator of the History museum, underlines their challenge: “The victims were murdered, their property was plundered; what is left is mainly the German documentation, the black and white photographs that were used in the old museum. These photographs told the story of the Holocaust from the point of view of the Germans.”¹⁸ As Paul Williams has correctly noted, because the victims were left object poor, Holocaust museums are, by necessity, “held hostage” to the perpetrators’ own documentation.¹⁹ As a result, most Holocaust museums are filled, as Geoffrey Hartman notes, with photographs “drawn from the picture book of the murderers”:²⁰ images that aggrandize the Nazis and dishonor the victims. The question, then, is how to “incorporate, frame or repudiate” the photographic archive, “given that it constitutes the very stuff of public recognition.”²¹

The commitment to re-personalize the history of the Holocaust and narrate it from the victim’s perspective has dramatically affected how photographs are presented in the HHM. The old History Museum relied almost exclusively on the perpetrators’ own photographic documentation, presenting it uncritically as accurate, truthful evidence. Photographs were rarely accredited or labeled. Disturbingly decontextualized from their means of production and provenance, they functioned as generic symbols. The same criticism applies to many of Yad Vashem’s early publications, most notably the large volume entitled *The Pictorial History of the Holocaust* published in 1990. None of its over 400 photographs are attributed²² and, as Susie Linfield observes, it “promiscuously mixes photographs from Nazi, Jewish and resistance sources without indicating which is which.”²³

By contrast, the HHM identifies, when possible, the victims shown in the over 1,400 photographs embedded in the permanent exhibition. In an interview, Shalev explained that whereas in the old museum a photograph would simply be labeled “The Ghetto,” “in the new museum, wherever we can, we try to give them [the victims] back their names.”²⁴ Shalev elaborates: “in the past, when we had a picture, and had a positive identification of the person

depicted on it, we would refrain from writing his or her name, because we wanted them to represent a phenomenon and not just themselves. Today, we are taking the opposite approach. Now we are seeking the picture and photographs in which we can identify the person.”²⁵ Nina Springer-Aharoni, the Curator of Films and Photographs at Yad Vashem, writes that “identifying figures in the photos was an integral part of our museological aim to recover the names and narratives of the individual victims and consequently we have been very involved in verifying the correct identification of people, places, and scenes in the photographs.”²⁶ Two related projects illustrate



Figure 12.1 Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum interior facing Klooga Installation. © Ardon Bar-Hama, courtesy of Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum.



Figure 12.2 Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum interior facing Klooga Installation. © Michael Perry, courtesy of Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum.

this shift towards personalization: Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, as well as their online exhibition *Anonymous No More*, which invites the public to contribute information on the photographs exhibited in the museum and thereby “participate in the very important task of naming the victim, returning the identities stolen by the Nazis even before they killed them.” Constantly evolving, these web-based projects are an extension of the museum’s mandate to restore the “names and identities to unknown faces, thereby rescuing them from anonymity.”²⁷

The Klooga installation exemplifies this reorientation. Upon entering the museum, the visitor is directed to turn away from the museum, and the history of the Holocaust it recounts, and witness what was lost. Artist Michal Rovner’s *Living Landscape*—a permanent, site-specific multimedia video compilation of found footage installed on the triangular southern wall—illustrates the rich diversity of “The Jewish World As it Was.”²⁸ Leaving the noisy, animated bustle of this “living” landscape, we descend a sloping ramp and encounter the Klooga installation. Moving pictures abruptly give way to the somber stasis of still photography: life gives way to death. Mounted directly onto the angled concrete walls are two floor-to-ceiling, black and white photomurals of partially burnt and disfigured corpses piled high on a pyre. Blown up to larger-than-life proportions, these two photographs encompass our entire field of vision.

A caption, in bold, block letters, simulating the look of a telegraph transmitted on black ticker tape, is affixed directly onto the photograph, in

English—on one side of the walkway—and in Hebrew on the other. The text provides historical contextualization, specifying where and when the photograph was taken. It reads:

On September 19, 1944, a few days before the Soviet army liberated the Klooga camp in Estonia, the Germans and their Estonian collaborators murdered more than 2,000 Jews, most of them from the Vilna ghetto. The murderers attempted to cover up all traces of the murder, but did not have enough time to burn most of the bodies. Pictures, papers and other personal effects, some of them partially burned, remained in the inmates' pockets.

Superimposed on top of this gruesome photographic backdrop is a vertical plexiglas screen that displays enlarged, sepia-toned transparencies of the personal photographs, documents, and artifacts the Soviet army found in the victims' pockets. Deep pits excavated in the floor hold horizontal display cases which contain the actual material artifacts as well as detailed labels identifying the individuals shown and the location, date, and context of each photograph or artifact.

The Klooga installation occupies a completely unique space in the museum, a "slow space."²⁹ Christopher R. Marshall uses this term to refer to the use of a work of art or aesthetic strategy that refocuses visitor attention away from the cumulative overload that characterizes most history museums. Indeed, the installation's location is crucial. This is the only place in the HHM where an exhibit is installed directly on to the bare walls of the central corridor, and the only place where its triangular glass skylight is obscured. Unlike the galleries that branch off this central shaft, where all sorts of didactic visual, textual, and audio materials bombard the senses and compete for the visitor's attention, this space is sparse and uncluttered. Set off and isolated, positioned outside of the linear, forward-driving accelerated pace of the museum, unencumbered by distractions, the installation facilitates prolonged, immersive contact.

Strategically positioned under a concrete bridge that transects the building, in the darkened space beneath the overpass, with the ceiling bearing down on us, the installation occupies the first of the museum's eight trench-like "ruptures" which slice through the prism's floor, signaling important historical turning points. However, unlike the other "ruptures" which physically block passage, this "rupture" is passed *through*. Because the exhibit is installed on both sides of the reinforced concrete prism, framing the space, it becomes a gateway or portal to the museum itself. As the preface to the museum, the Klooga installation is, in essence, a theoretical statement of purpose which lays out the Museum's new approach. The museum's self-guided recording calls it "the visitor's introduction to the museum." With an economy of means, it sets the stage for its narrative, modeling for the visitor the museum's ideological reorientation.

Recognizing the importance of the opening exhibit, the question of “what visitors should see when the story of the Holocaust starts to unfold” was heatedly debated.³⁰ Dorit Harel, the museum’s designer, relates that the curatorial team initially proposed devoting this space to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany.³¹ This is how the old museum began. Early proposals consisted of blown-up photographs of election rallies in the Nuremberg stadium, with Nazi party banners suspended from the ceiling. A second option staged a reconstruction of a street in Nazi Germany with party flags and artifacts bearing the swastika filling the ruptures in the floor. Both of these options were rejected. Instead of focusing on the perpetrators, the museum begins with the victims, using the Klooga photographs emblematically as symbols of the extermination of European Jewry. And it begins with the end—a foreshadowing which breaks with the otherwise rigidly adhered to linear chronological order of the museum’s historical narrative. Moreover, rather than using reconstruction, the full weight of the museum’s opening is placed squarely on the medium of photography.³²

The photographs taken by the Soviet army in Klooga are unique for a number of reasons. First, they are relatively unknown; for most visitors, these photographs and the event they document are unfamiliar. If, as Susan Sontag claims, “Photographs shock insofar as they show something novel,”³³ Yad Vashem’s use of these photographs is intended to unsettle the visitor. These are not among the “iconic” or canonical photographs that belong to what Barbie Zelizer calls our “memory bank of atrocities”:³⁴ those over-recycled, “recirculated” photographs that make up our visual imaginary of the Holocaust. They were not shot in one of the large concentration camps, but in a remote corner of Estonia. As such, they point to—and stand for—all that we haven’t seen and still don’t know. But this choice also allows Yad Vashem to showcase the breadth of its Photography Collection. Formally established in 1983, Yad Vashem’s Photography Collection includes over 214,000 photographs, 400 albums, 9,000 collections, and an additional 130,000 photographs of victims attached to Pages of Testimony. It is, according to their website, the “largest in the world dealing with the Holocaust.”³⁵ Secondly, by selecting photographs taken by the Soviet army, Yad Vashem is pointedly pushing back against the dominant “Americentric” narrative of the Liberation of the camps.³⁶ Testifying to the important role the Soviet army played in liberating the camps and documenting Nazi atrocities, they rebalance the historical record and boldly announce, from the very outset, that this will be a different telling of the Holocaust, presented from a different perspective.

In more ways than one, the Klooga installation takes on the museological precedent set by the USHMM’s opening exhibit.³⁷ It is hard not to notice the close similarities between the two opening exhibits. The historical exhibit at the USHMM begins with an enormous floor-to-ceiling photograph taken by the US Army Corps at the liberation of the camp of Ohrdruf in April 1945. As soon as the visitor exits the dark gray metal elevator doors on the fourth floor, she confronts American soldiers, in the company of Dwight



Figure 12.3 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, U.S. forces at Ohrdruf Concentration Camp, Harold Royall. © USHMM Photo Archive.

Eisenhower, examining in stunned silence the charred remains of prisoners burned on a cremation pyre during the evacuation of the camp. Ohrdruf, a forced labor subcamp of Buchenwald, was the first Nazi camp liberated by US troops. The USHMM's photograph thus celebrates the role American soldiers played in liberating the camps. Above all, this photograph privileges the act of bearing witness: the soldiers within the picture's frame serve as surrogates for the visitor. Shot from above, the US Signal Army corps photograph bespeaks power and surveillance but also, significantly, distance (both physical and emotional) from the spectacle of death and its anonymous victims. By contrast, the two Klooga photographs eschew the elevated aerial perspective used at Ohrdruf. They are shot from below, from a perspective which positions us on the ground, as one of the victims. The Klooga photographs overwhelm, in no small measure, because of their size but also because of this eye-level perspective. This shift in viewpoint is crucial to the museum's focus on the victim.

Bifocals

Today, photographic material is used in Holocaust museums in two fundamentally different (and mutually exclusive) ways. On the one hand, documentary photographs are used for their indexicality and "evidentiary punch":³⁸ to provide objective proof and allow the visitor to bear witness. On the other, personal photographs act as empathic triggers: to elicit identification and provoke an affective, emotional reaction. Moreover, these two polarized genres traditionally occupy different spaces: documentary photos are extensively mobilized within the didactic space of

the core exhibit as evidence to illustrate, support and carry the historical narrative.³⁹ Separate commemorative spaces, like the “Hall of Faces” at the USHMM or Yad Vashem’s “Hall of Names,” are set aside for the display of personal photographs. Conceived of as the heart of the museum, the “Hall of Names” contains Pages of Testimony filled out by survivors providing the victims’ biographical details and a picture, if any survived. These are stored in thick, black boxes lining the outer walls of the circular room. A representative six hundred with photographs are displayed in the ascending cone in the center of the room, functioning as “symbolic tombstones.”⁴⁰

The Klooga installation brings these two types of photographs and their different functions into sharp, direct contact. It counterposes images of death and those of life; the evidential document and the empathic marker; the public archive and the private collection; the macro and the micro; image and object; enlarged, dematerialized reproduction and the material artifact.

By doing so, the installation asks us to re-view the past through a different lens—one that is decidedly bifocal. The concept of bifocals captures precisely what is activated in the Klooga installation. An instrument or tool



Figure 12.4 Klooga Installation. © Rachel Perry, courtesy of Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum.

that facilitates a kind of double vision which brings objects both close and far into sharp focus, bifocals are a corrective device which improves perception (both visual and conceptual in this case). The installation suggests that the Holocaust must be approached through a bifocal optic, which consists of “two strata: the personal would be integrated within the general historical stratum and maintain a constant dialogue with it,”⁴¹ at once informational and experiential. Bifocal seeing is, moreover, a strategy that effectively counteracts the “monocular seeing” of perpetrator photographs in which, as Marianne Hirsch argues, the camera is conflated with a weapon and the viewer assumes the position of the executioner, thereby effectively replicating the Nazi gaze.⁴²

The old History Museum would have merely exhibited the photo taken by the Soviet liberators, as the USHMM does. The plexiglas overlay with the personal photographs and artifacts embedded in it is a crucial supplement which represents a “central philosophy of the museum,” according to the visitor’s recorded guide. The enlarged transparencies suspended in the plexiglas filter privilege that which is unprivileged from history: the everyday. They show couples smiling, families posed in their Sunday best, beachgoers, athletes in uniform, friends joking or singing or skating or biking quietly down a country lane. The captions accompanying the salvaged mementos identify, in minute detail, the names of those shown, their places of origin, their interests, hobbies, and professions. One young couple shown is Noah Lev from Vilna on vacation in the summer of 1937, solving crossword puzzles with a friend named Lucia who survived. In each case, the museum provides information on the photograph or artifact: to whom it belonged, where, when and by whom it was taken.

All of these “family frames” are critical for generating what Marianne Hirsch calls “postmemory”:

Unlike public images or images of atrocity, however, family photos, and the familial aspects of postmemory, would tend to diminish distance, bridge separation, and facilitate identification and affiliation. When we look at photographic images from a lost past world, especially one that has been annihilated by force, we look not only for information or confirmation, but also for an intimate material and affective connection. We look to be shocked (Benjamin), touched, wounded, and pricked (Barthes’s punctum), torn apart (Didi-Huberman), and photographs thus become *screens*—spaces of projection and approximation and of protection.⁴³

By resuscitating the daily lives of the victims, the installation provokes an affiliative encounter which mobilizes identification, suturing us to the past. Faced with the spectacle of suffering vulnerability, the exhibit rallies an ethical response. The curatorial framing creates what Lauren Berlant calls a “training in compassion”⁴⁴—a training the museum hopes will prepare the

visitor not only for the rest of the museum, but for approaching the event itself. The personal photographs pierce through the documentary photograph, choreographing a response that resists the detachment such images can engender.

In the Klooga installation, the personal photographs overwrite without cancelling out the documentary photographs. Like a palimpsest, we read both photographs simultaneously, shuttling between them. The one implicates the other. The museum is not suggesting, then, that one should replace the master narratives and “grands récits” of the historical record with an Alltagsgeschichte or “history from below.” The archival record is not discounted so much as it is decentered. Grafted onto the anonymous dead, the personal photos re-individualize cultural, archival memory, revise and repair it. As in Saul Friedlander’s *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination*, which integrates the victims’ voices into the authoritative historical narrative, the installation’s personal photographs pierce (the term is Friedlander’s) the supposed objectivity and detachment of the documentary photograph. Taken together, what we have is a picture that contains other pictures of a different kind within it; the many small images nesting within the larger outer picture reframe and reinterpret it. The dialogic relationship between these images complicates, or expands, our understanding of the past.

The effect generated is that of a double—or even, I would argue, triple—exposure, an effect or technique that borrows, consciously or not, from contemporary photographic art practices which explore issues of memory and transmission, presence and absence and the relationship between the intimate and the public. It resembles Shimon Attie’s *Writing on the Wall* installation in Berlin (1992), which introduced photographic traces of the pre-war past into the visual field of the present, in haunting, ephemeral light projections. So, too, like Lorie Novak’s ghostly composite photographs, it superimposes family snapshots onto historical media imagery, creating layered texts that couple personal memory and public history. Art-inspired, the display escapes “the dead-hand of a too overt and traditionally didactic display.”⁴⁵

But the installation introduces yet another layer. The plexiglas not only serves an effective technical function of containing and displaying the embedded personal photographs. It is a transparent surface *through* which we see but also *on* which we see ourselves. Because the screen is backlit, the visitor’s own reflection materializes in front of the floating personal photographs creating, in effect, a triple exposure. In other words, we see ourselves seeing. Like Michal Ullman’s glass covered memorial *The Missing Library* in Berlin or Maya Lin’s polished black granite *Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial* in Washington, D.C., the material’s reflective properties are exploited so that we become aware of ourselves in relation to the past and as implicated and embedded in it. This is a participatory strategy which relies on reflection but then generates reflection. The installation thus lays bare the processes of



Figure 12.5 Klooga Installation. © Michael Perry, courtesy of Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum.

mediation that underlie all representation and encourages a kind of “low-tech” interactivity which makes us attend to and reflect on our relationship to the past.

In her recent book *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation*, Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich discusses the Klooga installation briefly. Reading its three layers chronologically, as a timeline, she argues that it “depicts a journey from individual life to anonymous death,” from the artifacts that testify to the normalcy of pre-Holocaust existence to the charred photos that reveal the beginning of destruction, to the death and desecration of the victims’ bodies.⁴⁶ But this is not how the installation is encountered or experienced by the visitor and not how Yad Vashem guides the visitor through the installation. The museum’s self-guided audio tour recording (#103 on the itinerary) directs the visitor through the installation, coaching her to 1) “Look at the large photographs presented here” and only then 2) “Approach the display glass and observe.” One first sees the panoramic photomural from afar, then the enlarged, semi-transparent facsimiles superimposed in front of it, and lastly, one glances down to the original artifacts themselves. Time before is encountered after: we see the victims’ normal prewar lives only after we bear witness to their brutal murder.

We need to step back, to view the panorama, to make sense of it, take it in, but then we must approach, come close, and bend down to read the

letters and see the diminutive photographs and artifacts embedded in the display cases. Shifting our scale, we are solicited by the fragility and vulnerability of the small objects. If, as Susan Sontag has argued, the medium of photography facilitates “regarding the pain of others” “at a distance,”⁴⁷ this installation works hard to draw us closer both physically and emotionally. We are moved, in both senses of the term. This process of progressive absorption and intimacy, intense focus and attention to detail, makes for an embodied viewing which is sense-based and affective.⁴⁸ It decelerates viewing, slows it down. The exhibit takes time, encourages exploration, and prolongs contact.

Something else happens when we approach. The closer we get, the less of the photomural we see. With proximity, death loses its definition, paradoxically fading out into a non-distinct, monochromatic gray blur. When we look down at the cases, we avert our gaze altogether from the carnage. The plexiglas, which pulls us closer to examine the objects it contains, becomes a protective partition, a physical shield between the visitor and death writ large. It mediates, or intervenes, between us and the victims’ death. But even from afar, the screen screens out much of the most disturbing material. Positioned in front of the *lower* half of the photomural, it partially covers (and obscures) the burnt and decomposing bodies, blocking the voyeuristic gaze.⁴⁹

I am arguing that one of the things the screen (and the personal photographs within it) does is function as a protective shield, partially blocking the spectacle of death and thwarting an aesthetics of shock. Yad Vashem, thus, shows without showing; we look without looking. Curiously, this fraught relationship between looking and not looking is staged within the documentary photographs.⁵⁰ In the one, the Soviet soldiers huddled in the distance are completely turned away. Unlike the Ordhruf photograph at the USHMM, the liberators do not face, or even acknowledge, the camera in the frontal, “emphatically presentational” or staged way they do in Ordhruf.⁵¹ The photographer alone trains his eye on them—an abandonment made palpable by the expanse separating them. In the other, the liberators face the bodies piled high in front of them but they look away, or down at their papers, or off in the distance, in a state of distraction. No one looks directly at the victims before them: there is physical proximity but emotional distance. The victims are thus shown discarded twice over, already forgotten.

Holocaust museums deploy many strategies for buffering the visitor from graphic and abject visual content. At Yad Vashem, children under the age of 10 are not allowed to enter the History Museum. The USHMM installed barriers or “privacy walls” to limit exposure to those under a certain height, although these ironically position the visitor, Philip Gourevitch claims, in “the role of a voyeur of the prurient,” like a Peeping Tom peering at something forbidden and illicit.⁵² In 1995, Yad Vashem weathered a public outcry over the propriety of photographs of naked men and women which had been hanging on the walls of the History museum for over 20 years.

An ultra-Orthodox deputy mayor of Jerusalem threatened to cut off funds to Yad Vashem if the “immodest” photos were not taken down. Primarily demonstrating against the public display of nudity, the Haredi protestors spurred a larger public debate about the ethical implications of showing the victims in ways considered indecent or humiliating, in ways that ran the risk of revictimizing the victims. Although initially Yad Vashem rejected the demands—with Avner Shalev asserting that they would not be pressured “to cover up the terrible truth or to beautify it”—eventually the museum conceded and removed the photos.⁵³ With this controversy very much in mind, when the museum reopened in 2005, it displayed a new sensitivity to the ethical implications of displaying death. Holding “endless discussions about the representation of dead bodies in the museum,” it reintroduced the contentious photographs but recognizing “the damage to the dead,” it placed them in less central spaces.⁵⁴

Visitors to Yad Vashem arrive with a built-in expectation that the museum will present graphic photographs of atrocities: deportations, selection upon arrival in the extermination camps, starvation, torture, shootings, hangings. It is a foregone conclusion that death will be displayed. The Klooga installation, although enlarged and shocking, protects the viewer and respects the victim. In doing so, it responds to theoretical concerns regarding the photographic representation of atrocity that had been voiced in the decade prior to the HHM’s reopening.⁵⁵ Following on the heels of Claude Lanzmann’s interdiction against using archival images, a number of writers took up Susan Sontag’s early argument that “images anesthetize” and argued that overexposure to atrocity photographs induces habituation and compassion fatigue, a moral and psychic numbing which results in a “failure of empathy.”⁵⁶ Examining the photographic record of the camps’ liberation, Barbie Zelizer proposed that instead of forgetting to remember, we need to “remember to forget.”⁵⁷ In an article entitled “Choosing Not to Look,” Susan S. Crane asked, “have Holocaust atrocity photographs reached the limits of their usefulness as testimony?” She suggested that “removing them from view or ‘repatriating’ them might serve Holocaust memory better than their reduction to atrocious objects of banal attention.”⁵⁸

Rather than forgetting, repatriating, or removing documentary atrocity photographs from the Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem presents them as necessary but limited historical tools. The Klooga installation is an institutional acknowledgment that on their own documentary atrocity photographs cannot show the Holocaust’s real face. Compared with the “photography as shock therapy”⁵⁹ approach of most Holocaust museums, Yad Vashem reframes the photojournalistic document, or, more precisely, it remediates it.

The concept of remediation is critical for theorizing what is at stake in the installation.⁶⁰ Deriving from the Latin *remederi*—to heal or remedy—remediation is driven by repair. As Clementine Deliss has argued, remediation involves a formal experimentation with alternative media and modes of presentation, but one which serves a fundamentally curative function.⁶¹

Relying on the work of American anthropologist Paul Rabinow, Deliss employs the concept of remediation as a “useful metaphor for a conceptual tool kit with which one may begin to rethink the object of study.”⁶² Although she refers specifically to museal objects in contemporary ethnographic museums, I believe the concept can be extended to photographic images as they are deployed within the Holocaust museum. Paraphrasing Rabinow, remediation entails taking up the past and pulling it into a new and different “narratological milieu” that transforms it and then repairs, or remedies, it.⁶³ Ethically motivated, Yad Vashem’s remediation creates new frames through which we can re-see historical images.

Saving the Dead

In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, written shortly before he committed suicide fleeing Nazi-occupied France, Walter Benjamin put forth a call “to brush history against the grain.”⁶⁴ Recognizing that history is written from the standpoint of the victors, he despaired, “*Even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins.” His italics underscore that what is at stake is not only physical death, but also the way in which the dead are remembered. The photographs retrieved from Klooga underscore the inherent difficulty of Yad Vashem’s mission to “Adopt the point of view of the Jewish victims as a human being who is a subject of history.”⁶⁵ Charred and abraded, the small photographic remnants bear testimony to the Nazis’ attempt not only to destroy Jewish lives but to obliterate their memory. To “brush history against the grain” is to rewrite history from the perspective of the vanquished. Such an approach entails not only thinking of others but thinking otherly, telling history alternatively, or, as Edith Wyschogrod put it in her remarkable *An Ethics of Remembering*, “heterologically.” Bound by a “responsibility toward the dead,” it “assumes liability for the other, feels the pressure of an Ethics.”⁶⁶

The Klooga photographs not only *figure* death but illustrate how the Jews were transformed by the Nazis into *figuren*. As one of the key euphemisms of the Nazis’ *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, described and analyzed by Victor Klemperer, *figuren* was the term the Nazis forced the prisoners to use to refer to the victims’ corpses. As recounted by Motke Zaidl and Itzhak Dugin in Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah* (1985):

The Germans even forbade us to use the words ‘corpse’ or ‘victim.’ The dead were blocks of wood, shit, with absolutely no importance. Anyone who said ‘corpse’ or ‘victim’ was beaten. The Germans made us refer to the bodies as *Figuren*, that is, as puppets, as dolls, or as *Schmattes*, which means ‘rags.’⁶⁷

Like the wooden logs on which they were stacked, the dead are reconfigured as something less than human, as something not deserving of respect

or dignity: things, inanimate objects, ciphers with no weight or worth. What we are looking at, then, in the Klooga photographs are the victims as the Nazis themselves saw them, as dehumanized *figuren*, stripped of their humanity *even* in death. James Young remarks: “That a murdered people . . . should be recalled through the images of their death, may be the ultimate travesty.”⁶⁸ Elie Weisel referred to this as the ultimate “victory of the executioner.”⁶⁹

Saving the dead requires remediation. If we only remember, and figure, the victims as *figuren*, we allow the Nazis to, in Primo Levi’s words, “continue to dictate the history of the Lagers posthumously.”⁷⁰ Although not a perpetrator image, the Klooga photographs, like so many other photographs of the victims, force us to “recall the victims as the Germans have remembered them to us: in the collected debris of a destroyed civilization.”⁷¹ Yad Vashem’s remediation of the Klooga photographs allows us to circumvent the Nazi gaze; it offers us a way to, in Ulrich Baer’s words, “re-see images of victimhood from positions that break with the photographer’s perspective of mastery” and the Nazis’ own relentless project of dehumanization.⁷² It recognizes how indispensable the documentary photograph is but also how dangerous. Propelled by an ethical imperative, which affirms “a tentative and modest solidarity with those who fell,”⁷³ it offers a corrective, bifocal vision that supplements the iconic images of anonymous Jews victimized and objectified with a counter-image so that we cannot see one without the other, or rather we literally see their deaths (on the enlarged photomural) only through their lives (through the many personal photographs suspended in front). Remediating the photojournalistic record by introducing into our visual field other photographs that defend against death, the Klooga installation faces the effaced, figures the *figuren* and re-members the dismembered.

Notes

I would like to thank Simon Goldberg and Stephanie Shosh Rotem for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this chapter and Nina Springer-Aharoni, curator of photography at Yad Vashem, and Yifat Bachrach-Ron for their assistance with reproductions.

1 Sontag, *On Photography*, 19.

2 Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 24.

3 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 24.

4 Mausoleum is used by Theodor Adorno; Maurice Blanchot refers to “Museum Sickness”; Merleau-Ponty compared the museum to a “meditative necropolis” and Carl Einstein to “preserve jars.” Georges Bataille linked the birth of the modern museum with the development of the guillotine.

5 Sontag, *On Photography*, 70. For Barthes, death is the very *eidos* of photography, its essence, that which fundamentally differentiates it from other images. *Camera Lucida*, 15. Cadava compares the photograph to “a cemetery: a small funerary monument, the photograph is a grave for the living dead.” *Words of Light*, 10.

6 Azoulay, *Death’s Showcase*, 4.

7 Butler, *Frames of War*, 8–9.

- 8 Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*, 246.
- 9 Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, 22.
- 10 In addition to the museum and many memorials on its campus, Yad Vashem runs the academic Institute of Holocaust Research, the International School of Holocaust Studies, a publishing house for Holocaust research, a library, and archives.
- 11 Peraino, "Updating the Holocaust."
- 12 Shalev, "Introducing 'MASTERPLAN 2001'."
- 13 Goldberg, "The 'Jewish Narrative' in the Yad Vashem Global Holocaust Museum."
- 14 Yablonka, "First Person Plural," 100.
- 15 Shalev, "A Museum in Jerusalem," 9.
- 16 Goldberg, "The Victim's Voice," 224.
- 17 Yad Vashem website, "The New Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem—Facts and Figures," March 15, 2005, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/pressroom/pressreleases/pr_details.asp?cid=371.
- 18 Cit. in Gilerman, "The Holocaust in Color."
- 19 Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 73.
- 20 Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, 22.
- 21 Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 73.
- 22 Zelizer notes this in *Remembering to Forget*, 196. Instead of indicating the image's author, a copyright indicated Yad Vashem's institutional ownership.
- 23 Linfield, 75. This is still more or less the case in the HHM. Isabel Wollaston correctly observes that "Only rarely is the photographer identified . . . Only in very specific cases, notably photographs considered to be important historical artefacts in their own right (e.g. those from the *Auschwitz Album* and the three Sonderkommando photographs), are captions supplied containing detailed information about context and provenance." Wollaston, "The Absent, the Partial and the Iconic."
- 24 Shalev cit. in Erlanger, "Israel Dares to Recast a Story."
- 25 Shalev, "I Too Had a Face'."
- 26 Metzger, "The Story behind the Photograph."
- 27 http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/museum_photos/page_4.asp. Nina Springer-Aharoni explains that *Anonymous No Longer* is the result of a compromise reached between the historians, designers and the museum staff: "There are also photos in the museum without any text and identification next to them although we do have names of figures in the photos. . . . The curators and museum staff . . . had to cut down on the captions next to the photographs to avoid overload for the viewer." The website is, thus, "a valuable way of redressing the minimalistic text approach by providing another way of returning the victims' identity through the use of names and stories on the website." Springer-Aharoni cit. in Metzger, "The Story behind the Photograph."
- 28 On Rovner's piece, see my article "Holocaust Hospitality: Michal Rovner's *Living Landscape* at Yad Vashem" forthcoming in *History and Memory* (Fall 2016).
- 29 Marshall, "When Worlds Collide," 174.
- 30 Harel, *Facts and Feelings*, 64.
- 31 Ibid. Harel also reproduces diagrams of the unused options.
- 32 http://www.yadvashem.org/YV/en/about/archive/about_archive_photos_movies.asp.
- 33 Sontag, *On Photography*, 9.
- 34 Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, 210.
- 35 http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/archive/about_archive_photos_movies.asp.
- 36 On Soviet photography of the Liberation, much of it made by Jewish photojournalists, see Shneer's remarkable *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes*. Yad Vashem's chief curator, Yehudit Inbar, explains the rationale behind the Klooga

photographs: “There is no doubt that the Russians were the ones who contributed the largest contribution to liberation of Europe from the Nazis, and paid the highest price. Most of the world does not know it.” Email to author, November 25, 2014.

- 37 Many critics have argued, as Jeffrey Feldman does, that the USHMM “catalyzed a crisis of authority” at Yad Vashem. Feldman, “An Etymology of Opinion,” 122. Stephanie Shosh Rotem similarly posits that the opening of the USHMM was perceived of as “a threat to Yad Vashem’s hegemony of Holocaust commemoration.” Rotem, *Constructing Memory*, 58. Fearing for the displacement of its ideological capital, the HHM was part of a larger strategy to ensure that Yad Vashem would remain “at Memory’s Center.” Heilman, “At Memory’s Center.” Tom Segev, author of *The Seventh Million*, claims that “The new museum is a statement of two things. It tells you that nowhere in the world should there be a more magnificent Holocaust museum than in Jerusalem, not in Washington, not in Berlin. This is the reason why it was built in such a way. There’s an element of competition here . . . By building this kind of museum, Israel is trying to gain back the monopoly on the Holocaust; the Holocaust is ours and ours alone, and no humanistic or universal values should overtake what we feel about the Holocaust.” Segev qtd. in McGreal, “This is ours and ours alone.”
- 38 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 26.
- 39 Edwards and Lien, “Museums and the Work of Photographs,” 3.
- 40 Yad Vashem website: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/hall_of_names.asp. Constituting “the single largest database of information about the victims of the Holocaust,” (Shalev, “I Too Had a Face”) the Pages of Testimony project began in the 1950s. Written in over twenty languages, over 2.6 million Pages of Testimony have been collected and archived in a computerized data bank visitors can consult at the museum or online.
- 41 Shalev, “A Museum in Jerusalem,” in *Facts and Feelings*, 12.
- 42 Hirsch, “Surviving Images,” 232.
- 43 Hirsch, “Mourning and Postmemory,” 417.
- 44 Berlant, *Compassion*, 29.
- 45 Marshall, “When Worlds Collide,” 172.
- 46 Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 111–112.
- 47 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 13.
- 48 On exhibition structures that make possible the experience of intimacy, see Bonnell and Simon, “‘Difficult’ Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters.”
- 49 This is not the case at the USHMM, where the life-sized photograph is presented unmediated. At the USHMM, heated debates centered on what image should be used for the large opening photomural. The committee rejected a color photograph of female corpses in which nudity and genitalia were shown, preferring the charred human remains at Ohrdruf as “visually less human—and therefore perhaps less threatening—than the flesh-colored corpses and faces at Buchenwald.” Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 194. The USHMM’s architect James Ingo Freed voiced concerns that “huge blow ups of photographs of atrocities have a certain pornographic intensity that seems very much like a second violation of the victims.” Letter from Freed to Dr. Eli Pfefferkorn, February 26, 1987. Qtd. in Neumann, *Shoah Presence*, 103–104.
- 50 On “not looking” see Guerin, *The Image and the Witness* and *On Not Looking*.
- 51 Discussing liberation photographs, Carol Zemel makes the distinction between the artlessness of most photographic documents and the “emphatically presentational” quality of those which have become icons. Zemel, “Emblems of Atrocity,” 210.
- 52 Gourevitch, “Behold Now Behemoth.”
- 53 Shalev cit. in Haberman, “Jerusalem Journal.”

- 54 Yehudit Inbar, email to author, November 25, 2014. Inbar is the Director of the Museums Division at Yad Vashem. She notes that the museum faced a similar ethical dilemma about the display of naked women within the museum.
- 55 This argument was made early on by Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows*. This position is also taken by Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust*.
- 56 Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy*.
- 57 Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*.
- 58 Susan Crane, "Choosing Not to Look."
- 59 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 14.
- 60 See Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*; and Erll and Rigney, *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*.
- 61 Deliss, "Stored Code." Deliss is Director of the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Ibid. Deliss is referring to Rabinow, *Marking Time*, 127.
- 64 Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 255.
- 65 Shalev, "A Museum in Jerusalem," 4.
- 66 Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering*, 3.
- 67 Testimony of Motke Zaidl and Itzhak Dugin, in Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History*, 12–13.
- 68 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 133.
- 69 Weisel, "Trivializing Memory."
- 70 Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 12. Levi is quoting the last pages of Simon Wiesenthal's *The Murderers Are among Us*.
- 71 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 132.
- 72 Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 22.
- 73 Howe, *Art of the Holocaust*, 11.

Bibliography

- Arad, Yitzchak, ed. *The Pictorial History of the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990.
- Azoulay, Ariella. *Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- Baer, Ulrich. *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photograph*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, 253–264. New York: Schocken, 1968.
- Berlant, Lauren, ed. *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.
- Bonnell, Jennifer and Roger I. Simon. "'Difficult' Exhibitions and Intimate Encounters." *Museum and Society* 5, no. 2 (2007): 65–85.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* New York, NY: Verso, 2009.
- Cadava, Eduardo. *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

- Crane, Susan. "Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation and Holocaust Atrocity Photography." *History and Theory* 47, no. 3 (2008): 309–330.
- Dean, Carolyn. *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Deliss, Clementine. "Stored Code." *Global Art Museum* (April 2012). http://www.globalartmuseum.de/site/guest_author/125#fn4.
- Edwards, Elizabeth and Sigrid Lien. "Museums and the Work of Photographs." In *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs*, edited by Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien, 3–20. London: Ashgate, 2014.
- Erlanger, Steven. "Israel Dares to Recast a Story Set in Stone." *New York Times*, February 13, 2005.
- Feldman, Jeffrey D. "An Etymology of Opinion: Yad Vashem, Authority, and the Shifting Aesthetic of Holocaust Museums." In *Representations of Auschwitz: 50 Years of Photographs, Paintings and Graphics*, edited by Y. Doosry, 122–126. Oswiecim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 1995.
- Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Vol. II: The Years of Extermination*. New York: Harper Collins, 2007.
- Gilerman, Dana. "The Holocaust in Color." *Haaretz*, March 3, 2005.
- Goldberg, Amos. "The Victim's Voice and Melodramatic Aesthetics in History." *History and Theory* 48 (2009): 220–237.
- Goldberg, Amos. "The 'Jewish Narrative' in the Yad Vashem global Holocaust Museum." *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 2 (2012): 187–213.
- Gourevitch, Philip. "Behold Now Behemoth, the Holocaust Memorial Museum: One More American Theme Park." *Harper's Magazine*, July 1993.
- Guerin, Frances, ed. *On Not Looking: The Paradox of Contemporary Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Haberman, Clyde. "Jerusalem Journal: In a Museum of Hell, Qualms about Decorum." *New York Times*, March 7, 1995.
- Hansen-Glucklich, Jennifer. *Holocaust Memory Reframed*. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014.
- Harel, Dorit. *Facts and Feelings: Dilemmas in Designing the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum*. Jerusalem: Dorit Harel Designers, 2010.
- Hartman, Geoffrey. *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996.
- Heilman, Uriel. "At Memory's Center." *The Jerusalem Post*, May 2, 1997.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory." In *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, edited by Barbie Zelizer, 215–246. London: Athlone Press, 2001.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "Mourning and Postmemory." In *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, edited by Michael Rothberg and Neil Levi, 416–422. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003.
- Howe, Irving. Preface to Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton. *Art of the Holocaust*. New York: Routledge, 1981.
- Lanzmann, Claude, ed. *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*. New York: Vintage International, 1989.
- Linenthal, Edward. *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001.

- Linfield, Susie. *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Liss, Andrea. *Trespassing through Shadows: Memory, Photography, and the Holocaust*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Marshall, Christopher R. "When Worlds Collide: The Contemporary Museum as Art Gallery." In *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, edited by Suzanne Macleod, 170–184. London: Routledge, 2005.
- McGreal, Chris. "This Is Ours and Ours Alone." *The Guardian*, March 15, 2005.
- Metzger, Jackie. "The Story behind the Photograph: Excerpts from an Interview with Nina Springer-Aharoni, Curator of Films and Photos in the Yad Vashem Museum." <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/interviews/springer.asp>.
- Neuman, Eran. *Shoah Presence: Architectural Representations of the Holocaust*. London: Ashgate, 2014.
- Olin, Margaret. *Touching Photographs*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Peraïno, Kevin. "Updating the Holocaust." *Newsweek Magazine*, March 20, 2005.
- Rabinow, Paul. *Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Rotem, Stephanie Shosh. *Constructing Memory: Architectural Narratives of Holocaust Museums*. New York: Peter Lang, 2013.
- Shalev, Avner. "Introducing 'MASTERPLAN 2001'." *Yad Vashem Magazine*, April 1, 1996.
- Shalev, Avner. "'I Too Had a Face'—The Yad Vashem Museum." 2004. http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/museums/histmuseum/avner_shalev.html.
- Shalev, Avner. "A Museum in Jerusalem: Witnessing History at the Turn of the Century." In *Facts and Feelings: Dilemmas in Designing the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum*, 8–15. Jerusalem: Dorit Harel Designers, 2010.
- Shneer, David. *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011.
- Struk, Janina. *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011.
- Tagg, John. *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Weisel, Elie. "Trivializing Memory." *New York Times*, June 11, 1989.
- Williams, Paul. *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. Oxford: Berg, 2007.
- Wollaston, Isabel. "The Absent, the Partial and the Iconic in Archival Photographs of the Holocaust." In *Visualizing Jews through the Ages: Literary and Material Representations of Jewishness and Judaism*, edited by Hannah Ewence and Helen Spurling, 265–293. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Wyschogrod, Edith. *An Ethics of Remembering*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1998.
- Yablonka, Hanna. "First Person Plural." In *Facts and Feelings: Dilemmas in Designing the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum*, 94–103. Jerusalem: Dorit Harel Designers, 2010.

- Young, James. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Zelizer, Barbie. *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Zemel, Carol. "Emblems of Atrocity: Holocaust Liberation Photographs." In *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, edited by Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz, 201–219. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.

13 Photography and the Museum

Visiting the Sight of Death

Pam Meecham

With foundations in the mausoleum and reliquary, the museum and death have long kept company. However, the museum also has its etymological roots in the Greek, *mouseion* meaning “seat of the muses”: circumscribing the museum as a place of contemplation. This chapter discusses audience experiences of *Life before Death*, a traveling, temporary exhibition of photographic portraits displayed during 2008 at the Wellcome Collection, Euston Road, London. The exhibition has an afterlife both sanctioned and unsanctioned. On the Wellcome Collection website there are installation shots, photographs and interviews with journalist Beate Lakotta and the veteran photographer Walter Schels, whose collaboration generated the exhibition. Creative variations of the exhibitions that include additional soundtracks and are usually presented without the interview text panels come and go on YouTube raising issues to which I will return. The exhibition is the result of combined interviews and photographs of 24 terminally ill residents in North German hospices. The ensuing photographs and interview text panels were according to gallery information, a chance to give the participants “one more opportunity to be heard.”¹ The portraits were cross-generational: the opportunity to be heard for the youngest sitters was mediated by parents with text panels written in collaboration with Lakotta.

Memento mori: photographs too, like the museum, have deathly associations what Tagg calls “the photograph as a death-mask.”² Photographs within the “realist mode”³ can act as “a trace, directly stenciled off reality, like a footprint or a death-mask.”⁴ So it is unsurprising to find photographs of the dead and dying in the museum and in the case under discussion a gallery in a medical collection: the legacy of pharmacist and philanthropist Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853–1936). However, according to Edwards and Lien, the tension between originality and efficacy has given the photograph an uncertain status: “With their authenticity, originality and cultural capital suspect, photographs, for the most part, lie outside the systems of value that produces museum objects. They sit low in that hierarchy.”⁵ However, the complexity of the photograph’s relationship to the museum and its publics can be read out of an examination of the visceral reactions to the photographs in *Life before Death*.

The square format black and white photographs of each individual are shown as pendent portraits. On the left was a photograph with vital signs, and on the right a posthumous postscript: a before and after sequence. The almost forensic extreme close-up images are cropped close to the face, pressed to the photograph's edge and show us life and subsequent death in documentary detail as if chronicling mortality. Viewed within a medical setting, the photographs could have been interpreted as detached, clinical observations, a consequence avoided by the close proximity of the text panel. This chapter considers that despite a rejection of analogical theories that supported the notion of a direct replication of the photographed subject, to the contrary, we still often ascribe to the photograph a form of realism: because the photograph's ability to "appear iconic not only contributes an aura of authenticity, it also seems reassuringly familiar."⁶ Photography's capacity to evoke "a disturbing literalism"⁷ is borne out by visitor responses to the portraits, a point to which I will return. The portraits are not paintings and as such have provoked a range of reactions that arguably paintings would not. The relations and practices within which discourses are formed and operate are crucial here; the historic and contemporary context of the medical museum within which these photographs were displayed raises many issues, only some of which it is possible to cover in a short space.

Experiencing the Sight of Death

It is the visitor experience of the exhibition that is the focus of this chapter, understood from observations made during my visits to the exhibitions and from visitor commentaries extracted from a photocopy of the visitor books made available to me by a Wellcome Collection curator. There were 932 visitor comments in two visitor comment books used simultaneously across three months making a very large sample (written observations are not attributed for this chapter). Both visitor books were placed immediately outside the entrance /exit to the exhibition.

In 2003, Susan Sontag observed that [photographs as art] "partake of the fate of all wall-hung or floor-supported art displayed in public spaces [. . .] they are stations along—a usually accompanied stroll. . . a social situation, riddled with distractions."⁸ And audience research does support the importance and extent of the social aspect of the museum visit. Research indicates that over a third of trips to museums are motivated by social activity.⁹ Researchers differentiate audiences further maintaining that 48% of museum visits are socially motivated, while in art galleries this is 30%. Contrary to Sontag's observation that photographs of pain are better viewed in a book rather than in the museum,¹⁰ this chapter discusses visitor repurposing of the gallery as a site of lamentation and hope outside officially sanctioned curatorial discourse. Visitor behaviors at the exhibition ran counter to Sontag's exhibition as distraction theory. Her central premise is that the museum visit is inappropriate for observing "the pain of others," preferring

instead the presumed concentrated intimacy of book-based looking. The exhibition also blurred Barthes's observation that photography "produces Death while trying to produce life."¹¹ He reasoned we conflate the real with the live, a photograph of a corpse seems to attest "that the corpse is alive, as corpse: it is the living image of a dead thing."¹² However, in this exhibition the distinction between life and death is clear in the before-and-after death images, but confounded by visitors using the present tense to write to and about deceased participants. It is noteworthy that the forensic, medical term *corpse* was not used in the extensive visitor book to describe the dead in the photographs, neither was there an attempt to pathologize them, again, a point to which I will return.

Self and the Body

I am taking a historical detour to establish the context for both the display and study of medicine, photography and the body, in part because the practices of museums were and still are largely circumscribed by scientific rationalism. The eighteenth century's inappropriately named "Age of Reason," according to Roy Porter, transformed the way we (at least in much of the West) see our bodies and souls.¹³ If in an earlier period, the self had been defined by a transcendental soul, post the eighteenth century, the self became a body. It is therefore a commonplace observation that during the Enlightenment, the rise of individualism spawned an impulse to unburden the self through diaries and the autobiographic novel. With such ruminations came renewed enthusiasm for the painted self-portrait, marble likeness and death mask, as if *knowing* the body could render the presumed "real" or "inner" person visible. Knowing the self was not a unitary Enlightenment project, however. Conditioned by the Romantic imagination and Cartesian dualism looking at the body could also be dismissed as vulgar in deference to elevated abstract thinking or, conversely, bodily, sensual exploration could be a precondition of "knowing the self." If in a previous age the body was dismissed as corrupt and degenerate, subject to the sometimes-irrational demands of the soul, it has been re-conceptualized in the modern period and currently symbiotically linked to identity politics. There is no need to reiterate here the importance of the body in contemporary culture but in brief, this change could be summarized as being a body, rather than having a body. Cardinal to the Wellcome's curating seems to be an understanding that a sense of self pre-supposes recognition of the role of the body in the formation of identity, in *Life Before Death* traumatized by illness and looming demise. However, as Jordanova states,

[i]t is precisely because of its moral centrality that the body can so readily be used subversively. Showing parts previously concealed, or unfamiliar viewpoints, sexualised poses, explorations of decay and death

can all have this effect. The disturbances invariably concern sex and death, sometimes both.¹⁴

Porter maintains that our sense of self pre-supposes an understanding of our bodies. “But how do we know them? We think we know them instinctively, we speak of ‘our bodies, ourselves’,”¹⁵ but as I hope to demonstrate, knowing the self through the body is often a truncated experience with the intimate bodily experience of dying and death virtually unknown in contemporary culture beyond spectacle through the media. If the original etymological meaning of autopsy was to look into one’s self,¹⁶ then in *Life Before Death*, the photographs and captions, a combination of interview, autobiography and the observations of the journalist, are imbued with modern, differentiated subjectivities.

Picturing the Face

If anatomical drawings of the eighteenth and nineteenth century removed from sight portions of the body either by composition or the addition of swathes of cloth, reminiscent of classical drapes, the photographs at the Wellcome Collection focused exclusively on the face. The body and context are almost incidental, as if *knowing* can be achieved from studying facial details: the acute realism, idiosyncratic features, facial lines somehow eloquent. Excessive individualism motivated by Western print culture’s obsession with the way we look, perhaps, but there was also an acute sense of searching the face for revelation enacted by visitors. Many looked backwards and forwards between the portraits of participants alive and then dead, noting the subtle changes to the skin in the latter (some visitors convinced they could detect signs of the closeness of death) and the eyes firmly shut. While there are similarities with nineteenth-century pictures of the dead, there are considerable differences: the use of the closeup and the placing of the face up to the picture plane. Most typically, the photographs’ backgrounds are black, throwing the face into sharp relief. The concentration on the face and the details of visitor empathy may have thwarted a form of consumerism. Lakotta and Schels’s book that accompanies the exhibition also shows photographs of the subject in the hospice or garden with companions and pets. Unseen in the exhibition, the published photographs with the technical paraphernalia of the hospice and the jumble of friends and family offer a different perspective: less formal. The control of the image by the living subject marks out Schels’s photographs as different from say the non-consensual snapshot photograph. Schels and Lakotta visited the voluntary participants regularly, sometimes on a daily basis, building up a relationship with them. The photographs and interviews were co-produced, with participants having some agency. What is distinctive about these images is their combination with a statement about how impending death feels, the written intervention stopping an entirely aesthetic reading of the

photographs. Bodies in the museum, particularly the medical museum, are pathologized with their own particular taxonomies: corpse, human remains, cadaver, mummy and so on. In the media, photographs of the murdered or slain move quickly from person to body, to victim to morgue. The text panel forestall such pathologizing and objectifying: notable in the visitor comment books is the retention of names and the attachment of sentiment to person rather than deceased. Even though the fetishized, silent, frozen moment of the photographic image has been likened to death, the text and context at the Wellcome offer other readings. It could be argued that photography is being used here to distil the visible characteristic look of death but although there is a predisposition to clinical looking circumscribed by visiting a medical collection, audience responses to the exhibition would gainsay such an outcome. The exhibition is perhaps closer emotionally to Fay Bound Alberti's recommendations in "Bodies, Hearts, and Minds: Why Emotions Matter to Historians of Science and Medicine." She makes the case for a more complex understanding of a history of emotions through an exploration of the death of the eighteenth-century surgeon John Hunter. She argues that histories of emotions can challenge how historians of science and medicine view the relationship between bodies, minds and emotions. Alberti further maintains that "[w]e need to let go of many of our modern assumptions about the origin of emotions [. . .] in order to explore the historical meanings of emotions as products of the body as well as the mind."¹⁷

Thank You for This Public/Private Space to Contemplate Again the Ineffable

The relentlessly, post-classificatory Wellcome Collection cheerfully dispenses a *wunderkammer* mixture of scientific rationalism, mysticism, medical curiosities and enlightened boundary-spanning exhibitions, offering *Death: a Self Portrait, Pain and its Meanings, Amulet Collecting and Miracles and Charms, Forensics: The Anatomy of Crime* and *States of Mind: Tracing the Edges of Consciousness*. Within its walls, fine art and photography don't play handmaiden to medicine, but coexist to better "look at the human condition."¹⁸ The interdisciplinary SciArt curating has made the venue a dialogic, hybrid gallery and museum space that chimes with the contemporary museum's ethically transparent ambitions.¹⁹ Moreover, it uses a range of learning theories and styles of presentation that encourages visitor interactivity and collaborative participation through sensory exploration of a range of often health-related subjects. Further, as Crispin Paine remarks, there has in recent years been what amounts to a paradigm shift as the secular world valued by the historic museum with its roots in the eighteenth century is challenged by a resurgence of interest in the spiritual and religion, in part a response to globalization and the current dominance of religious discourse.²⁰ It is noteworthy that the program themes for the annual British, Museums Association conference held in November 2013 included "The

Therapeutic Museum.” It instrumentally asked: how can museums produce the evidence required to build a sustained relationship with the health and social care sector? How can museums demonstrate that they can make a real difference to the quality of a person’s life? Another theme however arguably thrust us back to pre-Enlightenment “spiritual” experiences. On “The Emotional Museum,” the coordinator David Fleming suggested we need museums to be “more like places of worship” and “explore how museums use emotion to connect with visitors. A visceral response is preferable to an intellectual one.”²¹ The Wellcome’s focus on pain, death and the subjective body can be read as the museum being an exponent of overt emotionalities: a rejection of traditional “disinterested” modes of collecting and display. One reading of the early eighteenth-century Enlightenment was that the impulse to display objects, often deracinated from their context, was a scientifically managed approach that prohibited the emotional in favor of the rational and the utilitarian. Early nineteenth century museum discourse was motivated by a perceived need to improve the broad population through curiosity and intellectual enquiry enabled through didactic teaching methods. The proselytizing, pedagogic museum allowed little space for emotional or spiritual interaction: that was a covert operation. But as this chapter hopes to demonstrate boundaries were always blurred and visitors to the gallery have their own agency and agendas.

The Participatory Museum

In recent literature, the museum is often perhaps too optimistically cited as a participatory and relational space deposing the historic, didactic and authoritative. Preference is given to a democratic approach that invites a Foucaudian-inspired reconceptualization of the power-relations between audience and institution. Certainly it would be a stretch to consider the visitors to *Life before Death* as co-curators, but the visitor book can be described clinically and managerially as generating user-knowledge. Perhaps more accurately, visitors created a narrative that detailed the emotional and intellectual complexity of visiting what became a *de facto* memorial site. One visitor to *Life before Death* wrote in the present tense, “*It’s strangely peaceful here, as the living walk among the dead.*” The photographs were more than *momento mori* coupled to the ritual stroll and Sontag’s “stations along” expressed above. The presumed passivity of many visitors was exchanged for active dialogue, through the visitor book, dialogue with the dead beyond the exhibition (*I love you Grandad*), posthumous messages to participants, to the curators, photographer and journalist and talking back in the books to each other. Moreover, rather than a social activity, one visitor wrote: *I am glad I came alone, and there is a strange respectful silence here, even from those who came with a companion* and another *perhaps an exhibition to see on your own*. To have the living perceive the gallery as enabling commerce between the quick and the dead may not have been an unintended

consequence but prompted by images of an area of human experience removed from the everyday to the medical profession, visitor responses were remarkable. Many visitors spoke of gratitude for the breaking of taboos, for being able to see death overtly rather than as an obscured human reality. But the exhibition also validated photographic protocol: some assumed that their own photographs of their dead would be misconstrued as voyeurism, transgressive, perverse. The public display of photographs of the dying and dead gave license to others faced with twenty-first-century social disapproval. Even the portrait photographer Annie Leibovitz appeared to question the ethics of photographing the dying and dead Susan Sontag, seeking moral justification: “the fact that it came out of a moment of grief gave the work dignity.” Images of the dying Sontag proved more contentious than those of the dead Sontag. “Let me be very, very clear about this . . . every single image (selected for display and publication) that one would have a possible problem with or have concern about, I had them too. This wasn’t a flippant thing.”²² What is noteworthy is that currently taking pictures of the dead (outside of police forensic photography and perhaps Andres Serrano’s morgue photographs) requires a caveat especially if the private photograph of the dead is given-up to public viewing.²³

Routinely Hidden: Dying in the Modern World

In the early seventeenth century, the metaphysical poet John Donne commissioned a portrait of himself, eyes shut, wrapped in a shroud (or winding sheet) as he believed he would look arising from death following the apocalypse. It hung on the wall for years leading up to Donne’s death in 1631 as a very close, personal, visual reminder of the fleeting, transience of life and of hope. Even if belief in a post-apocalyptic resurrection was not foregrounded with such presentiment in nineteenth century society, a sense of mortality was often evident in photographs. Wells noted “. . . an elegiac tone to much Victorian personal photography, evoked by the solemnity of middle-class portraiture and by awareness that so many died young. Death was a central part of family life, and memorial pictures of dead and dying were common.”²⁴ The ethics of what is morally conscionable to photograph in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries goes in tandem with the removal of dying and death from the private sphere into the medical realm.

There has been, in most Western, industrialized societies, an *erosion of the awareness of dying*.²⁵ paradoxically an experience more private at the same time as becoming more publicly controlled and defined.²⁶ Ariés has described the progressive impounding of dying away from living as typical of Western modernity and enlightenment rationality away from emotions.²⁷ Giddens terms it “the sequestration of sickness and death,” observing that “death is routinely hidden from view. In addition, death has become a technical matter, its assessment removed into the hands of the medical profession.”²⁸

If Giddens is correct and in the modern world death is unobtrusive, instantaneous and silent, the images at the Wellcome Collection were the first time many had seen close-up photographs of dying and dead people. Even in an image-saturated culture, photographs of death often come with a warning, are indistinct: images of impersonal, sudden and violent death somewhere else. A lack of familiarity with death was a dominant theme in the visitor book: *never been so moved, like no other experience a taboo subject*. Many expressed awe, humility, fear and an inability to look without crying: again writing in the present tense, *I am crying, I am crying as I write*. Searching the photographs to *know* about death was a frequent response, visitors returning again and again to compare the pendant portraits: to look forward and back.

Kellehear notes that “studying dying is like gazing into a reflecting pool. The waters there reflect back to us the kinds of people we have become.”²⁹ If this is the case, those compelled to write in the comment books noted *heroism, courage, rejection, resilience* and *hope* faced with what Seamus Heaney termed “the inevitability of the unknowable.”³⁰ The sight of death in this exhibition is shocking because such close-up images are unfamiliar to us as “dying as a shared social . . . interpersonal affair is becoming endangered as a publicly recognized form of conduct.”³¹ Death is managed by professionals taking the rituals away from the bereaved and towards others and away from public view and so talking about the experience has also become problematic as we retreat from insights into death. The exhibition departs from this growing tendency in allowing the last word and control of the image to the dying subject, albeit within the confines of the hospice movement and mediated by photography and journalism.

In “Museums and Mortality,” Mark O’Neill makes a clear distinction between “death salience” and “death reflection”: the latter usually provoking intrinsic, unselfish behavior, the former sometimes manifest in greed. He argues that displays in museums should be constructed to evoke creative responses from visitors, to promote open-mindedness and death reflection rather than death salience. An open-minded response to mortality and death is preferable to hostility and defensiveness that results, O’Neill concludes, in defending one’s own cultural perspective. If the above is defensible, a closer look at visitor book comments may help illuminate our experience of photographs of the dead and the dying and our relationship to the pain of others.

The Visitor Book

Although Katriel argues,

visitor books give audience responses in a highly constraining frame of a tradition of self-selected, appreciative responses given out from guests to their hosts, . . . inscribing themselves into the museum texts as an audience-contributed gesture of closure³²

An analysis of the comment books in *Life Before Death*, although on occasion appreciative, reveals responses were also philosophical, self-reflective and autobiographic. Rather than concurring with Katriel's "very few comments I have seen were critical or indifferent in their response,"³³ the often highly literate commentators shared intimacies and private moments of reflection: *Thank you for allowing me to revisit my husband's recent death through this work and these brave selfless souls who allowed it.* Of course, the signatories to the books are necessarily self-selecting, and at times, the visitor books became books of condolence with the civility that that implies. There was also however evidence of self-knowledge rather like revelation: *a profound exhibition allowing ordinary people to think and read (and talk) about death. Thank-you.*

The visitor books were illuminating with a rich vocabulary and evidence of humility, privilege, gratitude, courage, profundity, enlightenment, inspiration, joy and sadness woven through the comments. Moreover, comments were numerically as diverse as the wordage: from one (*profound*) to over 200 words. The comments were categorized into: philosophical, cathartic, gratitude, evaluation, autobiographic, professional, faith, personal self-reflection, incentive to action, social policy, redemptive, confessional, context, response to earlier entry, negative and hostile. In terms of frequency, the philosophical category was numerically higher (at 23%) than those of evaluation (22%), catharsis (18%), gratitude (18%), autobiography (11%) and personal self-reflection (12%). Solace expressed in reference to orthodox religious sentiment was rare although a secular spiritualism was evident supporting Paine's observation on the recent rise of secular spiritualism.³⁴ Many visitors, users of hospice, end of life facilities and professionals working within them, wrote of the exhibition in very positive terms, some offering practical advice to readers: *You should get in touch with The National Council for Palliative Care! They are a niche & unique organization which actively promote end of life care so vital for all of us!* A doctor and cancer specialist maintained *the exhibition has opened my eyes more, so the image of dying needs to be brought to the forefront more, so the stigma attached to it can be offloaded and everyone can have a good death.*

Frias, Philip, Watkins, Webber and Froh relate death awareness to gratitude in "Death and gratitude: Death reflection enhances gratitude."³⁵ Incentive to action was an important category in the research with many people determined to enjoy their life to the full following the exhibition. Many of the reflections by the photographed participants and the writers in the visitor books chimed with the observations of a hospice nurse. In 2012, a palliative nurse of some years recorded the top five regrets expressed by people when they were dying. These were, 1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me; 2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard; 3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings; 4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends; 5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.³⁶

Notions of “moral self-discipline” and *constraint* permeated the behavior of visitors and the language used by many signatories: behavior in the gallery was hushed and reverential and signatories’ language was often formal. Another brief detour into the eighteenth century might give more historic context. While Jeremy Bentham’s “What is Right and Proper” deontological normative ethics of obligation and adherence to rules seemed to prevail in the gallery it is worth considering visitor responses to the exhibition further. The philosopher David Hume’s sympathy-based moral sentimentalism argues that contrary to moral rationalism, we can never make moral judgments based on reason alone. Counter-intuitive as it seems to those in thrall to residual Enlightenment rationalism, Hume argues that morality is *determined* by sentiment. Sentimentalism “defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation, and vice the contrary.”³⁷ For David Hume, “[t]hinking could not divorce itself from sensation, and sensation was rooted in the body.”³⁸ Moreover,

in a celebrated paradox, Hume maintained that reason was and ought to be ‘the slave of passions’—since the emotions, like gravity, constituted motives and hence controlled what people were actually moved to do. Reason *per se* could not initiate action, for it was not of itself a motive.³⁹

Joseph Butler’s work “On Compassion” (1726) is equally enlightening, similarly to Hume and in opposition to the thrust of Thomas Hobbes’s (1588–1679) rationally based observation that human altruism was an illusion and actually self-interest. Butler argued “that appetites and affections are not the enemy of reason but its ally,”⁴⁰ part of an optimistic Enlightenment philosophy. “The private interest of the individual would not be sufficiently provided for by reasonable and cool self-love alone; therefore the appetites and passions are placed within, as a guard and further security, without which it would not be taken care of.”⁴¹ So for Hume and Butler, sympathy-based moral sentimentalism is crucial to the virtuous act and contrary to moral rationalism.

The eighteenth-century sentimentalists based morality not in reason, but in our affections and sentiments: sympathy that was not regulated and defined by laws set down by the sovereign (as Thomas Hobbes proposed) but which came from individual passions. And it is the passions, empathy and sympathy and apparent determination to overcome self-interest as well as the will to action “*to make the best of every day*” that characterize the written and performed reception of *Life before Death*. In a period skeptical about the possibility of altruism, the visitor books in particular revealed an eighteenth-century notion of compassion, often divorced from self-interest. What we now call empathy therefore transcends self-interest and can be an impulse to action. Further Jordanova has argued that *decorum* is a powerful moral category.⁴² In both visitor books, with the singular exception

of an abusively written comment swearing at the whole enterprise as *sick*, a “moral self-discipline” of restraint took place as people negotiated the photographs, text and each other. There was some marshalling of visitor commentary by other signatories if an earlier comment was perceived as disrespectful: the inclusion of a personal polaroid for instance considered *inappropriate narcissism*.

Unintended Consequences

Kellehear identifies as worrying “[t]he shrinkage of human values away from social connection and responsibility towards each other [which] is a growing, paradoxical feature of modernity,”⁴³ a tendency he sees in our conduct towards dying. However, rather than succumb to the inevitability of alienation, Kellehear reflects on the loss of what he believes to be a human characteristic: altruism faced with humans in trouble. He suggests that a loss of altruism is not inevitable. In brief, scientific evidence indicates that confronted with the dying we show a desire to help. What the exhibition demonstrated was that rituals, decorum and empathy rather than curiosity and perversion were the articulated and enacted responses to the pain of others and sight of death. The literature on “emotional affect” the term for emotional reactions that effect cognition, suggests that such affect has a high probability of producing changes in body language and physiological function and in relation to what occupies me here, visitor experience.

*I come in off the Euston Road.. to this clap of thunder of an exhibition.
The words as important as the images.*

(Visitor)

The exhibition has an afterlife in a book and on YouTube, the latter not always officially sanctioned. Although there was a request in the visitor book for the Wellcome Collection to create an accessible online version of *Life before Death*, the subsequent afterlife of the photographs is problematic. I do not wish to create a false dichotomy between the embodied and social experience of the gallery and the digital one: they are different things. However, severed from the text panels and gallery, reduced in scale and quality, the images became detached from their original function that was to commemorate specific lives. Such unsettling is reminiscent of the fate of many New Deal photographs collected under the Farm Security Administration (FSA) (1935–44), formerly the Resettlement Administration in the USA. Photographers’ work was often captioned during the American Depression, situating the context of poverty with an eye to action. Divested of captions, post-war exhibitions were read formally, often aestheticizing the conditions of the poor. Famously, Roland Barthes rallied against the classic humanism of “ahistoric” curating evident in MoMA’s photographic exhibition (1955) *Family of Man* that divested of politics and context had

“Nature at the bottom of History.”⁴⁴ For Barthes, classic humanism produces a flawed “solid rock of a universal human nature,” instead of what he defined as “progressive humanism” which “must always remember to reverse the terms of this very old imposture, constantly to scour nature, its ‘laws’ and its ‘limits’ in order to discover History there, and at last to establish Nature itself as historical.”⁴⁵

Does the lack of information push the unaccompanied photograph on YouTube into the category of formalism, or is it akin to the silence and deliberate lack of information that often accompanies religious artifacts that are shown as artworks? Hunter states, “A photograph invites the written information which alone can specify its relation to localities, time, individual identity, and the other categories of human understanding.”⁴⁶ The musical accompaniment, not used in the gallery but added to the online images, is also (copyright aside) an issue, as arguably too much information or sensory demands can function as distraction. At stake in the display of these photographs online is the relationship between information and insight.⁴⁷ As Chris Arthur argues, in the display of religious artifacts, they are balanced between information that makes works understandable and yet defies the ineffable that is usually dependent on silence. The text panels in *Life Before Death* are almost autobiographic interviews and a chance for the dying to be heard. Moreover, they are political in the sense that Barthes talks about Adamism (that is a very Western belief that all people, descendants of the biblical Adam, are the same). Rather than present a shared equalizing through common social, cultural and political experience, the texts show that the expectation and experience of death is context dependent. The experience of life and death is not universal except at the most biological level. The text panels are crucial in making distinctive reactions by participants to impending death: from anger, to resignation, to regret, to feelings of worthlessness, to arranging personal reconciliations to just wanting to escape from the hospice. The personal narratives were an essential part of the experience of the photographs as the edited extracts below demonstrate. Irmgard Schmidt, without a trace of self-pity, was willing to “‘wait and see what the final part has to offer [. . .] convinced that the spirit lives on’ finding solace in Goethe’s ‘Nothing that is can fall into nothingness! The eternal lives on in all it has created’” (Text panel). Roswitha Pacholleck said “‘It’s absurd, really, . . . its only now that I have cancer that, for the first time ever, I really want to live . . . there may still be a miracle.’ She vows that if she were to survive she would work in a hospital as a volunteer” (Text panel). Elmira Sang Bastian dies at 17 months, the text panel accompanying photographs of her daughter reads, “Fatemeh Hakami refuses to give up hope” and there is a discussion of her faith and her search for answers. “One sunny day, Almira stops breathing. ‘At least she lived’, says her mother. She takes a small white dress from the cupboard, Elmira’s shroud. Then her parents, in accordance with Muslim custom, read the Ya Sin-the 36th chapter of the Koran which describes the resurrection of the dead” (Text panel). Michael

Lauermann “doesn’t want to talk about death. He would rather talk about life: how he managed to escape the narrow confines of his native Swabia and go to Paris; studies at the Sorbonne; Baudelaire; street riots; revolution; women. ‘I really love life’ says Lauermann. ‘Now it’s over. I’m not afraid of what’s coming’. There is no one by his side and that’s his choice” (Text panel). De-politicization can take place if the context is removed. The experience of life and death, although shared by all, is uneven and should not be covered in a mantle that elides differences. I do not wish to pit the museum against the online experience with all its democratic potential nor suggest that memorializing online is a secondary experience, but visitor comments suggest the gallery visit was *fundamental* to the experience of the photographs. *I felt privileged to be given insight into how a host of different people faced their deaths. . . Wonderful too, to be in an exhibit where so many people viewing were so openly moved.* (Visitor) Moreover, it was the collective empathy and compassion of strangers motivated by the text panels and photographs that combined to create the experience.

Conclusion

During the exhibition, through perhaps an unforeseen consequence, a collective lamentation, grief, compassion and gratitude transformed the act of looking; perhaps an example of affect seeping back into contemporary ontologies. In the unremarkable, briskly efficient white cube, the visit became like autopsy: to look into oneself but was rarely narcissistic. The Wellcome Collection has successfully elided the disciplinary boundaries of medicine and art, creating hybrid cultures. In the process, the public has reintroduced a quasi-religious aspect to the visit, perhaps creating new participatory rituals through the visitor book. Some visitors wrote that they had returned in order to re-engage with the visitor book again.

It can be argued that our contemporary preoccupation with the body has led to a restrictive repertoire of research and historiography and that there has been little engagement with,

the care of the sick, weak, aged or infirm whether in institutions, the family or neighbourhood . . . We have next to no discussion of the body of the loved one-parent, child, or partner- (as opposed to the sexual body). This is all too often a historiography largely devoid of tenderness, of effect and indeed of respect.⁴⁸

Biomedical language has come to define the sick, even within the more patient-oriented culture of the present. This exhibition and its ambiguous position in the medical gallery goes some way to addressing such concerns. Foucault (1963) famously delineated the power-relations between professional and patient (the latter powerless, oppressed and pathologized) who was subject to what he termed the medical gaze. The patient (rather than the

objectified biological body) is late to enter medical discourses, and so the emphasis away from the pathology of the body to the lived experience of death still appears counter-intuitive. It remains to be seen if exhibitions by allowing people to have “one more opportunity to be heard” can undermine the body’s custodianship by historians of medicine. But the exhibition did allow, as visitors stated, a *haunting and dignified* space to create memorials and *to contemplate our own mortality*. Perhaps an unforeseen outcome was the repurposing of the museum space by an audience faced *with arguably our last taboos*.⁴⁹ In the Victorian period, death was surrounded by public rituals such as the wearing of armbands or widows in black, but contemporary Western culture lacks such rites. In part the problem of displaying death is a contemporary, secular one, “shorn of the rituals of old, death maroons us in grief.”⁵⁰ However, the museum with photograph and text became a place of ritual, memory and self-conscious reflection. It would be easy to regard the exhibition in elegiac terms or as a public requiem but it was not only a farewell. During the exhibition, many visitors, according to their commentary in the visitor book, were not just moved by a silent, disinterested contemplation of others. To the contrary the exhibition was for many a call to order and an incentive to action: *Words fail me-they’d just be trite. Surf’s up-catch the wave* (Visitor). And another: *This was a very eye-opening experience. I am a physician and have seen all too many times where a terminal condition is found out of the blue and snatches that person’s life away. The exhibit just emphasizes the need every day to live life to the fullest, exhibit kindness, and have no regrets* (Visitor). And another: *A cathartic, humbling experience even while it reaffirms Donne’s admonition to Death not be proud and tempts us to gather the roses while we still can* (Visitor). Many visitors remarked on the peacefulness of the exhibition. Last visitor word: *It’s like what a graveyard should be-if you were running a photographic church! It goes on, thanks!*

Notes

- 1 Exhibition text panel.
- 2 John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 1.
- 3 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).
- 4 Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 25.
- 5 Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien, eds., *Uncertain Images: Museum and the Work of Photographs* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 5.
- 6 Wells, *Photography*, 18.
- 7 Ludmilla Jordanova, “Happy Marriages and Dangerous Liaisons: Artists and Anatomy,” in *The Quick and the Dead: Artists and Anatomy*, edited by Susan Ferleger Brades. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1997), 101.
- 8 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2003), 108–109.

- 9 Morris, Hargreaves & McIntyre, *Audience Knowledge Digest: Why People Visit Museums and Galleries and What Can Be Done to Attract Them* (Manchester: Morris Hargreaves McIntyre and Renaissance North East, 2007).
- 10 See Sontag, *Regarding*.
- 11 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Fontana, 1981/1984).
- 12 Ibid., 78 and Wells, *Photography*, 245.
- 13 See Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).
- 14 Jordanova, "Happy Marriages," 101.
- 15 Porter, *Flesh*, 44.
- 16 Ibid., 44.
- 17 Fay Bound Alberti, "Bodies, Hearts, and Minds: Why Emotions Matter to Historians of Science and Medicine," *Isis* 100 (2009): 798.
- 18 Wellcome text panel.
- 19 See Janet Marstine, ed., *Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- 20 Crispin Paine, *Religious Objects in Museums: Private Lives and Public Duties* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 3.
- 21 Museums Association "Website for Annual Conference 2013," np.
- 22 Janny Scott, "From Annie Leibovitz Life and Death Examined," *New York Times*, Art & Design, October 6, 2006, np.
- 23 Janny Scott, "From Annie Leibovitz Life and Death Examined," *New York Times*, October 6, 2006.
- 24 Wells, 1997.
- 25 See Allan Kellehear, *A Social History of Dying* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 210.
- 26 Kellehear, *Social History*, 251.
- 27 See Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes to Death* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1974).
- 28 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 161.
- 29 Kellehear, *Social History*, 250.
- 30 See Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf* (Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2000).
- 31 Kellehear, *Social History*, 251.
- 32 Katriel quoted in Macdonald.
- 33 Ibid., 121.
- 34 See Paine, *Religious Objects*.
- 35 See Frias et al.
- 36 Bonnie Ware, "Death and Dying: Top Five Regrets of the Dying," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2012. And The Project Gutenberg edge, tion by means of adopting art practices-like approachey are viewed as powerful institutions. Nd.
- 37 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1912) [1777].
- 38 Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 90.
- 39 Ibid., 178–179.
- 40 Joseph Butler, "On Compassion," in *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1726.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Jordanova, "Happy Marriages," 101.
- 43 Kellehear, *Social History*, 255.
- 44 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 1957), 101.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Jefferson Hunter, *Image and Word: The Interactions of Twentieth-Century Photographs and Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1987), 6.

- 47 Chris Arthur, "Exhibiting the Sacred," in *Godly Things: Museums, Objects and Religion*, edited by Crispin Paine (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), 5.
- 48 Mark Jenner and Bertrand O'Taithe, "The Historiographical Body," in *Companion to Medicine in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Roger Cooter and John Pickstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 199.
- 49 Beatte Lakotta and Walter Schels, *Noch Mal Leben Vor Dem [Life before Death]* (DVA Dt Verlags-Anstalt, 2008).
- 50 Jenni Russell, "Health and Wellbeing: 'Shorn of the Ritual of Old, Death Maroons Us in Grief'," *The Guardian*, January 2, 2009, np.

Bibliography

- Alberti, Fay Bound. "Bodies, Hearts, and Minds: Why Emotions Matter to Historians of Science and Medicine." *Isis* 100 (2009): 798–810 [The History of Science Society].
- Ariés, Philippe. *Western Attitudes to Death*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1974.
- Arthur, Chris. "Exhibiting the Sacred." In *Godly Things: Museums, Objects and Religion*, edited by Crispin Paine, 1–27. London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2000.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. London: Vintage, 1957.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. London: Fontana, 1984.
- Brades, Susan Ferleger. *The Quick and the Dead: Artists and Anatomy*. London: Hayward Gallery, Southbank, 1997.
- Butler, Joseph. "Upon Compassion." In *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, 79–115. London: W. Botham, 1726.
- Cooter, Roger. "After Death/After 'Life': The Social History of Medicine in Post-Postmodernity." *Social History of Medicine* 20, no. 3 (2007): 441–464.
- Edwards, Elizabeth and Sigrid Lien, eds. *Uncertain Images: Museum and the Work of Photographs*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1973.
- Frias, Araceli, Philip C. Watkins, Amy C. Webber and Jeffrey J. Froh. "Death and Gratitude: Death Reflection Enhances Gratitude." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 6, no. 2 (2011): 154–162.
- Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.
- Heaney, Seamus. *Beowulf*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000.
- Heywood, Felicity. "Medicine Man." *Museums Journal* (July 2007): 20–23.
- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. 1912 [1777]. And the Project Gutenberg, EText.
- Hunt, Lester H. "Sentiment and Sympathy." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 339–354.
- Hunter, Jefferson. *Image and Word: The Interactions of Twentieth-Century Photographs and Texts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1987.
- Iles, Chrissie and Russell Roberts, eds. *Visible Light: Photography and Classification in Art, Science and the Everyday*. Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, Oxford University Press, 1997.

- Jenner, Mark S. and Bertrand O' Taithe. "The Historiographical Body." In *Companion to Medicine in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Roger Cooter and John Pickstone, 187–200. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Jordanova, Ludmilla. "Happy Marriages and Dangerous Liaisons: Artists and Anatomy." In *The Quick and the Dead: Artists and Anatomy*, edited by Susan Ferleger Brades, 100–113. London: Hayward Gallery, Southbank, 1997.
- Kellehear, Allan. *A Social History of Dying*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Lakotta, Beate and Walter Schels. *Noch Mal Leben Vor Dem* (Life before Death). DVA Dt Verlags-Anstalt, 2004.
- Leibovitz, Annie. *A Photographer's Life: 1990–2005*. New York: Random House, 2005.
- Macdonald, Sharon. "Accessing Audiences: Visiting Visitor Books." *Museums and Society* 3, no. 3 (2005): 119–136.
- Marstine, Janet, ed. *Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the 21st Century Museum*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Morris, Hargreaves and McIntyre. *Audience Knowledge Digest: Why People Visit Museums and Galleries and What Can Be Done to Attract Them*. Manchester: Morris Hargreaves McIntyre and Renaissance North East, 2007.
- Museums Association. "Website for 2013 Annual Conference." 2013.
- O'Neill, Mark. "Museums and Mortality." *Material Religion* 8, no. 1 (2012): 52–75.
- Paine, Crispin. *Religious Objects in Museums: Private Lives and Public Duties*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
- Porter, Roy. *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.
- Porter, Roy. *Flesh in the Age of Reason*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
- Russell, Jenni. "Health and Wellbeing: 'Shorn of the Ritual of Old, Death Maroons Us in Grief.'" *The Guardian*, January 2, 2009.
- Scott, Janny. "From Annie Leibovitz Life and Death Examined." *New York Times*, October 6, 2006.
- Shilling, Chris. *The Body and Social Theory*. London: Sage, 2003.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin, 2003.
- Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Ware, Bonnie. "Death and Dying: Top Five Regrets of the Dying." *The Guardian*, February 1, 2012.
- Wells, Liz. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997 and 2000.

Part IV

Museums as Agents of Change



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

14 Double Exposure

Absence and Evidence in Ken Gonzales-Day's *Erased Lynching*

Reilley Bishop-Stall

Ken Gonzales-Day's *The Wonder Gaze (St. James Park)* (2006-present) is a large-scale, panoramic photomural picturing a crowd gathered outdoors at night. Reflecting the analogue aesthetics of black and white flash photography, the figures in the foreground have been reduced to ghostly silhouettes, bright white shapes standing out against a black background. Men in suits and hats make up the majority of the crowd, but a few women are also present. Smoking, talking, standing around or milling about and swelling beyond the limits of the frame, the crowd appears aloof, orderly, composed. Most people have their backs turned, looking off into the distance or at one another, but some glance over their shoulders, turning to face the photographer, their expressions extinguished by the camera's blinding flash. A single tree bisects the picture plane, providing the only evidence of the outdoor setting. The costuming of the crowd and the flash's saturation of the scene imbue the image with an anachronistic and mysterious character. With few clues as to what brought all these people together, the event pictured is itself unclear and elucidated only by the title of the series in which *The Wonder Gaze* is included: *Erased Lynching*.¹

For the production of the series, Gonzales-Day digitally removed the ropes and hanged bodies from found photographs produced in the American West and circulated in the press and as postcards in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The act of erasure indicated in the series' title provides an eerie explanation for an otherwise obscure image. The seemingly innocuous assembly pictured, had, it turns out, congregated to witness—either to condemn or to celebrate, perhaps to perpetrate—acts of unthinkable brutality, violence and murder. The removal of the dead and desecrated bodies from the photographs—an attempt, according to the artist to prevent their re-victimization—refigures the macabre spectacle as the spectators themselves.²

As a large composite work, *The Wonder Gaze* is unique among the images in the *Erased Lynching* series, the rest of which are produced to mimic the style, size and scale of the postcards from which they originated. Typically framed and arranged in a loose grid on the wall, some contain crowds or figures in the foreground and others are unpeopled, with the



Figure 14.1 *The Wonder Gaze (St. James Park)*, Ken Gonzales-Day, wallpaper installation, size variable, 2006-present. © Ken Gonzales-Day, courtesy of Luis De Jesus, Los Angeles.

camera's gaze trained on a tree or a telephone pole that stands in as a surrogate signal for the missing victim. Whereas most attention to the history of lynching in America has concerned the targeted attacks against African Americans in the nation's southern states, Gonzales-Day's series addresses the lesser-known legacy of lynching in the West, which claimed the lives of hundreds of Mexican, Native American and Chinese victims, as well as some of Anglo-European descent, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³ The artist's erasure of the victims from these historical photographs thus reflects their parallel omission from America's written history and national memory.

Although well documented and analyzed by scholars and activists, the sheer excess of lynching photographs produced in the United States was exposed to a broad twenty-first-century audience by another exhibition, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, which toured the nation between 2000 and 2005, accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. Comprising over 100 lynching photographs and postcards produced between 1880 and 1960, depicting primarily African American victims, the exhibition drew tens of thousands of visitors and was both praised as a painful, but pivotal, acknowledgment of historical trauma and criticized as gratuitous and voyeuristic. Socially and politically polarizing, *Without*

Sanctuary epitomizes the controversies surrounding the ethics and aesthetics of displaying photographs of death and defilement in a museum setting. The exposition thus provides a valuable graphic contrast to the mode of representation deployed by Gonzales-Day in both the production and exhibition of *Erased Lynching*. In order to adequately address both the historical practice of photographing lynchings and the enduring impact of the existing images as well as the political or epistemological issues involved in their contemporary exhibition, this chapter will, therefore, include a discussion of the two collections/exhibitions in relation to one another.

In contrast to the direct display of death in *Without Sanctuary*, the imposed absence of the lynched bodies from Gonzales-Day's images renders palpable their prior presence. Undermining the emphasis of the original images, the artist's intervention, I argue, functions to redirect viewers' attention away from the suffering of the victims and towards what the artist describes as "the mechanisms of the spectacle": the makeshift gallows, the perpetrators and witnesses and, most significantly, the photographer and the photographic apparatus.⁴ Indeed, as Jason Hill articulated in a 2009 review of Gonzales-Day's work, the removal of the victims from the picture plane shifts the focus of the images, leaving spectators to confront "the fact of *photography itself* at the lynching tree."⁵

Exposing and interrogating photography's participation in—even production of—the lynching spectacle, Gonzales-Day's series addresses the medium's long and complex history of imaging atrocities, as well as the questionable ethics surrounding such images' exhibition and spectatorship. What is more, by employing contemporary technological means to alter historical images, he transforms the photographs and postcards into present objects, imploring spectators to consider the continued relevance and contemporary resonance of the images and the events to which they refer. Engaging with the medium's often-ambivalent ethics, *Erased Lynching* is in many ways a photographic series *about* photography. As such, the work encompasses concerns that are, in fact, central to contemporary discourse surrounding the necessary re-examination of the medium in a rapidly changing media environment.

In the following analysis, I examine the history of lynching photography in America as an early stage in the medium's contentious history of imaging atrocities. Demonstrating that the artist's alteration of the original images renders photography itself the subject of the series, I posit the work not only as an effective commemoration of often forgotten victims of violence, but also as a revelation of the medium's role in the representation and orchestration of human suffering and barbarity. The bulk of this chapter therefore examines the *Erased Lynching* series, the history to which it refers and the various erasures the work exposes and/or encompasses. Through a comparison of Gonzales-Day's work with the display of un-doctored lynching photographs and postcards in *Without Sanctuary*, I investigate the ethics and effectiveness of exhibiting images of atrocity in museums and galleries.

Erased Lynching

The Wonder Gaze (St. James Park) is a composited scan of several photographs taken at the double lynching of John Holmes and Thomas Thurmond, who—while awaiting trial for the alleged kidnapping and murder of a wealthy businessman—were seized from their cells and summarily executed by a lynch mob on November 26, 1933 in San Jose, California.⁶ Distinct from the other images in the series, *The Wonder Gaze* is printed on wallpaper, enlarged and adapted to fit the specificities of any space in which it is exhibited. Stretched across the surface of a wall or wrapping around a corner, contemplation of the image in its entirety necessitates the physical movement of the viewer, rendering spectatorship spatial and active.⁷

It's an expansive image betraying an impossible perspective and thus reflects the camera's capacity to capture or compose scenes otherwise unavailable to human vision. Gonzales-Day himself has described the dramatic effect not only of photography, but of the photographic *flash* on the spectacle of lynching. He argues that, until flashbulbs became commercially available, lynching photographs taken at night were relatively rare for logistical reasons, and photographers, as well as spectators, would, rather, revisit the site in subsequent days to take pictures before the bodies were removed.⁸ With increased access to flash photography in the early 1930s, however, the camera could be incorporated directly into the event and the photographer became almost a requisite presence and participant in the spectacle itself. Setting the evening light and providing an image that would be otherwise inaccessible even to those in attendance, the flash afforded the photographic capture of the dying or recently dead, preserved in dramatic detail for both present and subsequent spectators.

The photographic flash is a central component of *The Wonder Gaze*; both illuminating and obscuring the scene, it underscores the presence and position of the photographer. Approaching *The Wonder Gaze*, viewers are confronted with the blurred and whitewashed faces of crowd members, turning toward the camera. The installation's scale establishes a spatial relationship between the spectators in the gallery and those within the image, the viewer now occupying the place of the absent photographer, transformed into a participant in the event. The presence of photography and its role in the lynching spectacle is particularly evident in *The Wonder Gaze* but is also addressed and interrogated in other images throughout the series.

Water Street Bridge (2004), for example, appears initially to be an old and slightly damaged oval portrait of a group of boys and men crowded together to fit within the photographic frame. The source photograph from which the image derived, however, included the bound and hanged bodies of two young men, suspended from above and occupying the foreground in front of the crowd. Describing the original image, Gonzales-Day demonstrates that the majority of the people pictured are looking not



Figure 14.2 *Water Street Bridge*, Ken Gonzales-Day, lightjet print mounted on cardstock, 3.8 x 6 inches, 2004. © Ken Gonzales-Day, courtesy of Luis De Jesus, Los Angeles.

at the lynched bodies hanging before their eyes, but rather into the lens of the camera, documenting, if anything, “the presence of the photographer and the spectacle of the camera itself.”⁹ This is a fact that is made even more evident by the artist’s intervention in the image. The barefoot boys in the foreground appear as if having jostled for position to have their images immortalized on film, with one particularly proud-looking child confidently meeting the camera’s gaze and holding what appears to be a coiled rope, a single remnant of the erased event. It cannot, however, be known whether the crowd pictured in the image is, in fact, the lynch mob who dragged the two victims from the jail cells in which they were being held and hung them from the overhead beams of Santa Cruz’s Water St. Bridge.¹⁰ Taken in 1877, the original photograph was produced long before the invention of the photographic flash and, whereas the lynching occurred in the middle of the night, the photograph would not have been taken until the following day.¹¹ The people pictured in the image may or may not have been present at the event itself. Some may, rather, have been drawn to the scene by the gruesome spectacle or even at the photographer’s behest. The rope clenched in the one boy’s fist may be nothing more than a ghoulish prop he either brought to the scene himself or was furnished with by the photographer for greater effect. Regardless, all of these elements of the image—the organization of the crowd behind the once visible bodies, the onlookers’ attention to the camera itself, instead of to the atrocity ahead of them, and the possible inclusion of props—illuminates how early on photography became a significant, if not constitutive part of the lynching spectacle. It also raises significant questions about the purpose of such images’ production beyond any purported “documentary” claims. The photographs might have been intended to serve as warnings to would-be criminals or subjugated populations.¹² Or perhaps, as will be discussed further on, they performed a tautological function, retroactively affirming the guilt of the victim by mere fact of his execution, thereby consolidating communities based on a fabricated distinction between the vigilant and the villainous.

Although a very different type of image, *der Wild West Show* (2006) arguably best encapsulates the significance of photography to the lynching spectacle and its role in the transformation of atrocity into entertainment. The undated source image for Gonzales-Day’s work was, in this case, a souvenir postcard, not from an actual lynching, but the restaging of one in a Wild West Show. Captioned in German, and therefore assumedly intended for an international audience, the image reveals the popularity of romantic fantasies of vigilantism and cowboy justice in the untamed West.¹³ *der Wild West Show* is, I would argue, a key image in Gonzales-Day’s series, as it addresses both the popularity of the lynching spectacle and one of the clearest reasons that the history of lynching in the West has remained so under-acknowledged: the mythology and misrepresentation of frontier violence as justice.

Lynching in America

Published in 2006, Gonzales-Day's book, *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935*, is one of the first major studies to directly confront the history of lynching in the American West and its persistent misrepresentation as “frontier justice” or the unorthodox honor of the cowboy courts. Lynching in America is a fundamentally racialized crime and, resulting from the thousands of African Americans lynched in the Antebellum South, is most commonly (and understandably) perceived to be an issue of white violence against the black community.¹⁴ However, Gonzales-Day argues that the persistent elision of information regarding the racist targeting and lynching of other ethnicities throughout the country has functioned to perpetuate a “false binary of race” in America.¹⁵ Including detailed case studies and corrected statistics to demonstrate that the practice of lynching in the West was, in fact, also racially motivated, Gonzales-Day reveals that “guided by anti-immigration sentiments, the fear of miscegenation, a deep frustration with the judicial system, or in combination with white supremacy,” Mexican, Native American and Chinese men made up the majority of lynch victims in the West.¹⁶

In fact, similar to the narrative of America's Manifest Destiny and the settler-colonial fantasy of Indigenous peoples' natural and inevitable disappearance, the very notion of “frontier justice” as a necessary, if gruesome, stage in the taming of the West is itself fundamentally racist.¹⁷ Further, the concept of “frontier justice” conjures up images of a lawless West preceding



Figure 14.3 *der Wild West Show*, Ken Gonzales-Day, lightjet print mounted on cardstock, 3.8 x 6 inches, 2006. © Ken Gonzales-Day, courtesy of Luis De Jesus, Los Angeles.

the establishment of civil codes or judicial systems, but both Gonzales-Day and Michael J. Pfeifer, in his 2011 book, *The Roots of Rough Justice*, demonstrate that lynchings continued to occur, rivaling or supplanting such systems, even when they were firmly in place.¹⁸ Pfeifer argues that, asserting their rejection of recently established legal systems in the mid-nineteenth century, “white Americans seized upon lethal group violence unsanctioned by law—particularly hangings—to enforce mandates of racial and class hierarchy and to pull into definition tenuous and ill-defined understandings of social order and community.”¹⁹ What is more, as Gonzales-Day asserts, “[u]nlike the lynchings of African Americans in the South, these often brutal killings have been romanticized in popular and historical texts, comics, television, Westerns, and motion pictures.”²⁰ The near-mythic image of the gun-slinging cowboy claiming space and moralizing the West through sheer brute force has, in fact, become a foundational fantasy or origin story for the birth of the American nation, overwriting and glorifying the violent usurpation of Indigenous land.

Of course, some important distinctions do need to be made between the different histories of lynching in America, as there was an undeniable specificity to the ritualized torture and savagery that targeted the black (primarily male) body in the Jim Crow South. Many scholars have shown that the grotesque spectacle of lynching was enacted as an unabashed assertion of a white supremacist society’s power, privilege and authority over the black population following the end of slavery.²¹ As Amy Louise Wood asserts, anxieties about racial mixing—in particular, interracial reproduction—became integral to both the spectacle of lynching and its justification.²² Lynchings were most commonly justified as retribution for a black man’s alleged rape of a white woman, even when, in most cases, no such crime was committed or reported. Mythologized in this way, lynching came to be understood not as a crime, but as a responsibility. Or, as Wood describes it, “a patriarchal duty through which white men restored their masculine dominance.”²³ Indeed, she asserts, “the specter of violated white women lay at the center of prolynching rhetoric and instigated the most horrific lynching tortures and spectacles.”²⁴ These rhetorical justifications were diversions from the anger and anxiety of a white society confronted with the increasing social or economic success of African Americans; Shawn Michelle Smith describes lynching as “a form of racist terrorism and racialized economic warfare, a means of consolidating white supremacist nationalism, and a way of reinforcing segregation.”²⁵

While it is certainly important to distinguish the specificity of lynching in the South, Pfeifer argues that, unsurprisingly, “the victims of racially motivated lynching were as diverse as the targets of American racial prejudice,” and acknowledgment of lynching’s varied history is revelatory of the legacy and enduring effects of settler colonial racism and violence across the nation.²⁶ The spectacle of lynching became more elaborate and sensationalized over time: in the South, transformed into an ecstatic carnival

of ritualized violence directed towards the degradation and destruction of the black body, and, across the nation, exacerbated by photography's production and prolonging of the spectacle. Indeed, spectacle lynchings—sometimes advertised ahead of time and attended by thousands of people—became highly popular and commercial events from which spectators would leave with both pilfered and purchased souvenirs, including scraps of the victim's torn and bloodied clothing, bone fragments, teeth, hair and, of course, photographs.²⁷ Primarily taken by professionals—and in later years, by Kodak-carrying participants or witnesses—lynching photographs and postcards circulated throughout the nation and expanded the reach of the lynch mob to include temporally and geographically distant spectators. Smith asserts, “[l]ynching photographs documented the consolidation of a white supremacist mob as they also performed it. When they circulated, they effectively increased the size of the mob and spread its reign of terror to a wider network.”²⁸

Lynching Photography

As Gonzales-Day's *Erased Lynching* series makes evident, even in the late nineteenth century, photography had already become a significant, even constitutional, part of the lynching spectacle in both the American West and South. As photography expanded the event's audience, an added element of performance was incorporated into the sadism of the spectacle, the action often interrupted for the seizing of photo opportunities.²⁹ This pausing of the performance is evident in the images themselves, which rarely capture the chaos that would have characterized these brutal events and most often picture a calm and unemotional crowd posing with the burnt and bloodied remains of victims. While this is typically attributed to the technical limitations of the time, Wood argues that stasis was actually a strategic convention of lynching photography used to rationalize the actions of the mob and legitimate the lynching itself.³⁰ Despite a few notable exceptions, most lynching photographs depict the aftermath of the event, the perpetrators posing with their victims as if they are hunting trophies. The similar conventions in lynching and hunting photographs is, in fact, often remarked upon and Wood suggests that “[l]ynchings themselves often reenacted the hunt-and-kill ritual” and “the trophy snapshot of the hunter with his ‘prey’ memorialized the conquest.”³¹ Grounding any conflation between the two practices is again the assertion of masculinity. In a culture that celebrated hunting as “the marker and privilege of white manhood,” Wood argues that the equation between racialized lynch victims and captured prey, “also served to reaffirm the heroic masculinity of the lynchers.”³² This narrative's upholding depended upon the contradictory elimination of active violence and mayhem from the photographic record. As Wood suggests, “keeping the actual violence outside of the frame, the mob's posing for the camera . . . became instrumental in creating and perpetuating images of orderly

respectable mobs.”³³ Similarly, Tania Nicole Jabour argues that, as a result of photography’s “performative effect,” documentation of the event effectively served as its justification: “the construct of the lynching photograph—that of the documentation of the execution of a ‘criminal’—offered ‘proof’ that the hanging body in the image was indeed that of a criminal.”³⁴

Coinciding with a turn-of-century craze for picture postcards in America—the popular social medium of its time—photographs taken at lynchings were commonly produced as postcards either in photographic studios or eventually, in some cases, onsite, with the aid of portable printing equipment.³⁵ The lynching photographer therefore occupies a particularly contentious position in the history of lynching in America, not only participating in but also profiting from the spectacle. The manufacture and dissemination of lynching photographs and postcards is a foundational stage of photography’s long and ethically dubious history of documenting atrocity and human suffering. An ongoing tradition that has contributed to the ambiguous ethics applied to the medium and which is implicated in assertions of photography’s current state of crisis.

Photography and Atrocity

In *Human Rights in Camera* (2011), Sharon Sliwinski addresses the ethics of photographing atrocities by examining the role of visual images in the protection and establishment of human rights. Contrary to the assertion made by most major declarations that individual rights and freedoms are “self-evident” and “inviolable,” Sliwinski argues, following Hannah Arendt, that history has proven this not to be the case.³⁶ The horrors of institutional racism, slavery, war and genocide have revealed that rights are by no means natural, but are granted or denied by governments and other authorities and are distributed unequally among people. Further, Sliwinski argues that, rather than preceding or preventing their violation, rights are typically declared in response to evidence of a committed atrocity. She writes, “[t]he conception of rights did not emerge from the abstract articulation of an inalienable human dignity but rather from a particular visual encounter with atrocity.”³⁷ Providing a series of examples from the production of engravings used to describe the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake, to the pivotal role of photographs in garnering global awareness of crimes against humanity and the drafting of rights declarations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sliwinski centralizes the role of the spectator in the recognition and establishment of human rights, arguing, “our shared ideas about the constitution of the human subject leans on aesthetic encounters.”³⁸

Despite the profound impact of such images on the constitution of human rights, Sliwinski, also acknowledges: “[a]s the historical record plainly shows, spectators’ capacity to witness such events from a distance has had little effect on the frequency or savageness of these atrocities.”³⁹ The suggestion is that, confronted with a daily barrage of atrocious images, spectators

are either too overwhelmed to act or desensitized to the point of complacency.⁴⁰ Beyond their apparent insufficiency to inspire action, images of atrocity can also serve as trophies for the perpetrators of crime, functioning to further degrade or dehumanize a victim, as was the case with lynching photographs.

Indeed, Sliwinski argues that the contradictory capacity of photographs to aid in both the creation and condemnation of human suffering, as well as the medium's inability to ameliorate such occurrences, has led to "a deep questioning of the idea that the circulation of such images can serve a morally transformative force."⁴¹ The concern, in fact remains that photographic portrayals of violence and suffering might amount, rather, to what Lynn Hunt describes as "a pornography of pain, invoking voyeurism as much as indignation."⁴² This was certainly one of the charges leveled against the exhibition of lynching photographs, *Without Sanctuary*, that toured the U.S. between 2000 and 2005. Exhibiting one of the most infamous collections of photographs in America, the uncensored display of suffering and death serves as a valuable comparison for Gonzales-Day's altered *Erased Lynching* images.

Without Sanctuary

The first incarnation of *Without Sanctuary* opened at the Roth Horowitz Gallery in New York's Upper East Side in January 2000 as *Witness: Photographs of Lynchings from the collection of James Allen*. Occupying the gallery's small exhibition space and unaccompanied by contextual information, the show consisted of approximately sixty photographs and postcards, unframed and un-retouched, laid out on display tables and mounted in clusters on the wall.⁴³ The small commercial gallery was unsuited and unequipped to accommodate the overwhelming crowds and mixed reactions with which the show was met and almost immediately after closing, the exhibition was re-named and re-mounted at the New York Historical Society as *Without Sanctuary*.⁴⁴

Attending the exhibition, spectators were confronted with a litany of horrors enacted upon the bodies of, primarily (although not exclusively) African Americans: burnt, bound and mutilated bodies, their contorted forms hanging from trees or shackled to pyres. Many of the images include onlookers: small gatherings or larger crowds, sometimes pointing, sometimes laughing and posing proudly with the victims; men, women and children facing the camera, smiling self-righteously and making no attempt to hide their identity. In some cases, comments, scribbled across the backs and fronts of postcards, were visible: racist epithets and vulgar jokes, admission of involvement in the event or regret for having missed it. Perhaps most contentious was the exhibition's accompanying catalogue—a coffee table book of full-page lynching images and case studies told in gruesome detail, available for purchase in museum gift shops.⁴⁵ While the catalogue was framed

as decidedly pedagogical, including critical and historical essays designed to contextualize the images on display, there is an easy and uncomfortable connection to be drawn between the museums selling the books in their gift shops and the photographers hawking postcards of their lynching images.

The skepticism surrounding the exhibition's educational or societal merit is hardly surprising, given the controversial nature of the images, as well as the oft-denied persistence of racial inequality and intolerance in American society. However, addressing concerns that the exhibition might "risk reproducing the prurient interest and humiliating effect of racist violence," Dora Apel argues, "[America], as a nation, cannot afford to be innocent of these photos. The loss to historical understanding incurred by refusing to see them would only serve to whitewash the crimes of white supremacy."⁴⁶ The exhibition certainly did succeed in opening important conversations about America's history of violence and racism, even if it failed to address the national and interracial scope of that history.

Each exhibition of *Without Sanctuary* was decidedly different in scale and content, with image selection and organization the purview of the host institution. In every case, following *Witness's* appearance at Roth Horowitz Gallery, the lynching photographs were accompanied by historical and contextual information in an attempt to ground the exhibition epistemologically and justify the disturbing display. Sociologist Roger I. Simon takes *Without Sanctuary* as emblematic of the controversies and concerns surrounding the curating of "difficult knowledge"—artifacts or practices related to themes of historical violence, conflict, loss or death—in a museum setting.⁴⁷ As Simon argues, "when public history is practiced through such forms of visual pedagogy, it is crucial to consider not only what a photograph means, but also what the public presentation of a photograph may do."⁴⁸ He points to a number of political and epistemological challenges encompassed in the exhibition of historical violence, including disagreements over historical accuracy, inevitable exclusions and conflicting ethics over the treatment and display of "ideologically charged or morally taboo" images and artifacts.⁴⁹ But, above all, he refers to the potential for anxiety or secondary trauma experienced by spectators who might identify with the figures in the photographs before them: "the victims of violence, the perpetrators of such violence or those identified as bystanders passively acquiescent in regard to scenes of brutalization."⁵⁰

Simon describes the different choices made at a number of different venues, such as the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh (2001) and the Chicago Historical Society (2002): the first opting for upwards of 90 images all hung in black frames under muted lighting and paired with broad historical information, the second displaying just over half as many images and concentrating rather on specific and detailed stories of particular lynchings.⁵¹ In both cases, an emphasis was also placed on anti-lynching activism and civil rights, a focus that was evident in almost all *Without Sanctuary* exhibitions to varying degrees. Additionally, some institutions included contemporary

artworks, moving images or music, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, GA, where Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" played softly in the entranceway.⁵²

Simon argues that, despite their variation, it was the assumption of each institution involved that, "properly sited and presented, the rendition of these deeply troubling images enacts a valuable form of public pedagogy."⁵³ And there does tend to be a general consensus among scholars and spectators regarding the value of exhibiting and confronting the photographs. As Lee rightly puts it, "The alternative is *not* to look—to avert, avoid, deny, and repress."⁵⁴ Still, as artifacts of "difficult knowledge," the controversies are inevitable. At each installation of *Without Sanctuary*, it has been observed that crowds of gallery goers appeared to replicate the crowds pictured in the lynching photographs on display. Lee describes discomfiting parallels between the crowds of gallery goers and the original lynch mobs, "both groups of onlookers brought to the scene because of the spectacle of the lynched body."⁵⁵ And he suggests this would have been nowhere more evident than at the Roth Horowitz Gallery, where viewers were crammed into the small space, forced to crowd together to see the spectacles in the small-scale images. Similarly, reviewing the show at the New York Historical Society (2000), Louise P. Maxwell, seized on the curatorial decision to mount the images just above eye level, "forcing viewers to strain their necks slightly to see the images," putting the viewers in "the discomforting position of becoming spectators themselves, peering upward to gaze at the brutal photographs of lynching victims and their assailants."⁵⁶

While such implications could be generative of reflection or affective engagement, the exhibition also risked perpetuating the notion of human suffering as spectacle or entertainment. Indeed, Grace Elizabeth Hale asserts that, despite the value of exposing America's legacy of lynching, *Without Sanctuary*, in all its incarnations, failed to shift the focus from racialized (primarily black) victimization to white violence and perpetration, producing little more than "an updated version of that old segregating story."⁵⁷ Why, she asks do we learn the names and alleged crimes of the lynched victims and not those of the perpetrators, photographers and complicit witnesses? Without this counter-information or informative accountability, she argues, "viewers are left with an exhibit that is too close to the spectacle created by the lynchers themselves."⁵⁸

Absence and Evidence

A comparison between *Without Sanctuary* and exhibitions of Gonzales-Day's *Erased Lynching* series is fruitful for an analysis of the efficacy and appropriateness of displaying death in a museum or gallery setting. Unlike *Without Sanctuary*, Gonzales-Day's work is firmly situated in a fine arts context but similarly deals with the presentation of difficult knowledge and engages with both the history and enduring legacy of racialized violence in

America. Exhibitions of *Erased Lynching* are as varied as *Without Sanctuary* was in each of its installations, the images sometimes exhibited in consort with the artist's companion series, *Hang Trees*, or other works.⁵⁹ As previously mentioned, the majority of the *Erased Lynching* images are postcard-sized, typically framed and arranged in a grid on the wall, necessitating spectators' intimate engagement.⁶⁰ In contrast to these other images, *The Wonder Gaze* varies in size, shape and resolution, depending on the site of the exhibit, printed on wallpaper and taking up substantial, often unconventional, space. The image might span the expanse of a wall, rendering the crowd life-sized, or turn a corner, encouraging the movement of spectators to follow. This unstandardized element of the exhibition introduces a more active and spatial quality to the viewing experience, eliciting the mobile participation of gallery goers.

Of course, the greatest contrast between *Erased Lynching* and *Without Sanctuary* is the absence of the lynching victims in Gonzales-Day's works. Un-nuanced, the artist's intervention in the images could be interpreted as a form of repression itself: the removal of evidence from the image; the denial of historical atrocity. However, this act of photographic alteration also functions to shift the focus away from the victim, turning instead toward the (still unnamed) perpetrators, participants and passive bystanders pictured in the image. In the absence of the original spectacle, viewers are not necessarily aligned with the crowds, as was often observed in *Without Sanctuary*, as they don't share the same object of focus. Rather, the crowds themselves become the spectacle, captured in the camera's crosshairs, focused on by the imagined photographer in whose place the viewer now stands. As I have argued, *Erased Lynching* is fundamentally a series about photography—about the contentious role of the medium and its more unscrupulous users imaging and aestheticizing violence and atrocity. Indeed, as the artist suggests, his mediation of politically or emotionally charged historical images redirects attention away from the already exploited suffering of the victims, and forces the viewer to become acutely aware of “the mechanisms of lynching and lynching photography.”⁶¹

While this is easily apparent in the photographs that include crowds of spectators, I would argue, it is also evident in the more cryptic images, devoid of any peopled presence. As a final and concluding example, *Franklin Avenue (1920)* (2005), might best encapsulate the argument, depicting nothing more than a rather unremarkable oak tree standing alone in a darkened cemetery in Santa Rosa, California, its location evidenced by a single tombstone faintly visible in the background. The source image for *Franklin Avenue*, a postcard dated 1920, was produced a number of years before the commercial availability of flashbulbs and Gonzales-Day contends that the light in the image must have come from either the use of magnesium flash powder or the glow of car headlights used to aid the actions of the lynch mob.⁶²



Figure 14.4 *Franklin Avenue (1920)*, Ken Gonzales Day 3.7 x 6 inches, 2005. © Ken Gonzales-Day, courtesy of Luis De Jesus, Los Angeles.

The original image, included in Gonzales-Day's 2006 book, is startling in both its photographic clarity and its ghastly depiction of three hanged men suspended from an intricate architecture of rope assembled around the tree's branches. Bodies both twisted and strangely serene, each bound differently and in various stages of undress are rendered as clearly as if the image was taken in the middle of the afternoon. However, as the artist describes, "unlike a daylight image, it also produces a highly detailed record of the moss and lichen that clung to the trees [sic] branches."⁶³ The contrast between the gruesome spectacle in the original image and the banal portrait of the tree in *Franklin Avenue* is uncanny, but Gonzales-Day reveals a series of erasures preceding his own intervention: the omission of the crowd, rumored to have included law enforcement officers; the likely pre-meditation of the event that would have allowed the photographer time to arrive and set up equipment at what was officially recorded as a fast and frenzied event; and the historical obscurity of California's history of lynching that implies the enactment of "frontier justice" in a lawless West, despite the event's occurrence at a time when state judicial systems were firmly in place.⁶⁴

Without the victims' inclusion in Gonzales-Day's work, all that really remains for contemporary viewers is the camera's framing of the space. Similar to descriptions of the *Without Sanctuary* exhibitions, there is, I argue, a sense in which viewers of *Erased Lynching* are also implicated in the images with which they are confronted, but are specifically enlisted to embody the camera's gaze and occupy the position of the photographer. As a result, viewers are made acutely aware of photography's presence at the scene and its role in the production and perpetuation of the spectacle. *Franklin Avenue* (1920) is, at its core, an image of light and darkness and an old oak tree that became the unwitting witness to an all-but-forgotten history of violence and brutality. Photography itself is thus transformed into the subject of the work, exposed as atrocity's accomplice. Using digital technologies to alter historical photographs, the *Erased Lynching* images collapse time in a conceptually commemorative gesture. The series interrogates the very structures of racism that allowed the original crimes to be committed, compelling viewers to consider how they still resonate in contemporary society. Occupying the position of the photographer and made complicit in the spectacle, viewers are thus entreated to contemplate the political employment and ethical ambiguity of the medium, both historically and in the current moment. Whereas photographic manipulation typically indicates a form of deception having taken place, it is often remarked that in Gonzales-Day's work, the removal of "evidence" from the photographs actually reveals an often-overlooked truth about the role of photography in the spectacle of death.⁶⁵

Notes

- 1 This chapter builds on a short piece, previously published in *Photography & Culture*, in which I examined a single image in the *Erased Lynching* series. See: "Transforming Trauma: Absence as Presence in Ken Gonzales-Day's 'East First

- Street (St. James Park),” *Photography & Culture*, special issue: Conflict[ed] Reporting, eds., Christine Ross, Tamar Tembeck and Theodora Tsentas (July 2015). The writing of this chapter was largely facilitated by the financial support of Media@McGill and the McCord Museum in Montreal.
- 2 Ken Gonzales-Day, “Conversation: Ken Gonzales-Day, Grant Kester, Elize Mazadiego, and Jenn Moreno,” *Pros** 1 (Spring 2011), 10.
 - 3 In addition to *The Wonder Gaze*, the original series contained fifteen postcard-sized images produced between 2000 and 2006. Gonzales-Day has recently begun adding to the series, making larger images drawn from other regions in the country and including source photographs from the lynchings of African Americans in the South as a response to high-profile twenty-first-century instances of racialized violence in the United States. Gonzales-Day, “Artist Statement,” accessed February 14, 2015, <http://www.kengonzalesday.com/projects/erasedlynching/index.htm>.
 - 4 Gonzales-Day, “Artist Statement.”
 - 5 Jason Hill, “The Camera and the ‘Physiognomic Auto-da-fe’: Photography, History, and Race in Two Recent Works by Ken Gonzales-Day,” *X-TRA Contemporary Art Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (Spring 2009), accessed February 10, 2015, <http://x-traonline.org/article/the-camera-and-the-physiognomic-auto-da-fe-photography-history-and-race-in-two-recent-works-by-ken-gonzales-day/> (Emphasis in the original).
 - 6 Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 106–108.
 - 7 Gonzales-Day, “Conversation,” 14–15.
 - 8 Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West*, 57.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, 97.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, 93–95. The lynching of individuals already being held in jail cells and either awaiting trial or sentencing was a common occurrence that, Michael J. Pfeifer claims, demonstrates a rejection of, or mistrust in, the recently implanted judicial system (see: *The Roots of Rough Justice*, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 1–2. Gonzales-Day argues that the position of the lynch victims as accused criminals is one of the reasons that the history of lynching in the West is understood most often as vigilantism instead of lynching, even though similar situations occurred in the South. (*Lynching in the West*, 96–97).
 - 11 Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West*, 94.
 - 12 Shawn Michelle Smith argues that lynching and lynching images often served precisely this purpose in the South where lynched bodies were, at times, left in black neighborhoods as warnings and photographs were sent to economically or politically prominent African Americans as a way of telling them to “stay in their place.” “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), 23.
 - 13 Touring variety shows such as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show were immensely popular throughout the nineteenth century, encompassing skits and theatrical re-enactments of battles between Cowboys and Indians, with the former always winning. The shows were thus both a form of entertainment and an attempt to re-assure settler society of their safety and justification in occupying Indigenous land. For more information see: Rayna Green, “The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe,” *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1998): 30–55 and Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America: William Cody and the Wild West Shows* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2005).
 - 14 According to the Tuskegee Institute, at least 3,445 African Americans were lynched in the United States between 1882 and 1968. For more information see, “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” 15 and *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms, 2000).
 - 15 Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West*, 13.

- 16 Ibid., 3. Gonzales-Day describes in detail the slippages of the term “Mexican” being, like “Spaniard,” employed to refer to almost anyone of Spanish-speaking decent and equally invoked in reference to race, ethnicity or class, 31–34.
- 17 Indeed, the notion that America had a divinely ordained “manifest destiny” to expand across the continent, claiming, taming and industrializing the land served as the ultimate, if illogical, justification for the attempted eradication of Indigenous peoples and the acquisition of their land and resources.
- 18 Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West*, 38–39; Pfeifer, *The Roots of Rough Justice*, 46.
- 19 Pfeifer, *The Roots of Rough Justice*, 1.
- 20 Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West*, 39.
- 21 See, for example, Dora Apel, “Lynching Photographs and the Politics of Public Shaming,” in *Lynching Photographs*, edited by Dora Apel and Michelle Smith Shaw (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 43; and Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 13; Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1912* (New York: Pantheon, 1998).
- 22 Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 13.
- 23 Ibid., 7.
- 24 Ibid. For more information on the centrality of gender and sexuality to America’s history of lynching, see Dora Apel, “Lynching Photographs” and *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs”; Hale, *Making Whiteness*.
- 25 Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” 15.
- 26 Pfeifer, *The Roots of Rough Justice*, 2.
- 27 For more information, see: *Without Sanctuary*, 14; Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” 25; Apel, *Imagery of Lynching*, 20–25; Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West*; Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*.
- 28 Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching Photographs,” 24.
- 29 Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 85.
- 30 Ibid., 86.
- 31 Ibid., 97. Evoking the conceptual and linguistic parallels between the camera and the gun, Wood notes the origin of “snapshot” as a British hunting term.
- 32 Ibid., 98.
- 33 Ibid., 86. Wood argues that the Victorian perception of photographs extended beyond faith in the images’ objectivity or indexicality, encompassing a moralistic belief that photographs could disclose deeper truths lurking beneath images’ surface. She writes, “In this context, images of confident, restrained white men beside bodies of debased black men could validate the racist convictions of the white southerners who gazed on them not only because viewers assumed the visual accuracy of the surface images but because they believed that photographs made manifest interior truths about the essence of racial character,” 85.
- 34 Tania Nicole Jabour, “The Absence Becomes the Presence: Contextualizing the ‘Compton Cookout’,” in *Histories of Racial Violence, Pros* 1* (Spring 2011), 28.
- 35 Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 107: 103.
- 36 Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011). See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951).
- 37 Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera*, 58.
- 38 Ibid., 5.

- 39 Ibid., 29.
- 40 Ibid., 13.
- 41 Ibid., 9.
- 42 Lynn Hunt, "Forward," *Human Rights in Camera*, 11.
- 43 See Anthony W. Lee, "Introduction," *Lynching Photographs*, 1.
- 44 Ibid., 2. The exhibition's images came from the personal collection of antiques dealer James Allen and his partner John Littlefield who had amassed over 130 lynching photographs over a period of fifteen years. After the two exhibitions in New York, *Without Sanctuary* was mounted in different configurations at five other American institutions: the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh (2001); the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Site in Atlanta (2002); Jackson State University in Mississippi (2004); the Charles H. Wright Museum in Detroit (2004); and the Chicago Historical Society (2005).
- 45 See James Allen, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms, 2000).
- 46 Apel, *Imagery of Lynching*, 2.
- 47 Ibid., 432.
- 48 Ibid., 443.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Simon, Roger, "A Shock to Thought: Curatorial Judgment and the Public Exhibition of 'Difficult Knowledge'," *Memory Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 437–439.
- 52 See Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America," *The Journal of American History* (December 2002), 990–991.
- 53 Simon, "A Shock to Thought," 435.
- 54 Lee, "Introduction," 8.
- 55 Lee, "Introduction," 4.
- 56 Louise P. Maxwell, "Review: Without Sanctuary," *The Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 1 (February 2002): 218.
- 57 Hale, "Without Sanctuary," 993.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Intended as a companion to *Erased Lynching*, Gonzales-Day's series *Searching for California's Hang Trees* consists of large-scale color photographs of historic lynching sites throughout California that the artist located and visited during his research on the history of lynching in the American West.
- 60 In some cases, Gonzales-Day has also exhibited some of the *Erased Lynching* images as outdoor billboard installations, thus occupying public space and confronting spectators in radically different ways than would be the case when displayed in a gallery setting.
- 61 Gonzales-Day, "Artist Statement."
- 62 Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West*, 100–101.
- 63 Ibid., 101.
- 64 Ibid., 100–105. The victims, George Boyd, Terrance Fits and Charles Valento, were, like the previous cases discussed, already being held in jail, accused of shooting and killing three police officers, when apprehended by the lynch mob.
- 65 See, for example, Hill, "The Camera and the 'Physiognomic Auto-da-fe'" and Elize Mazadiego, "Conversation," *Pros**, 15.

Bibliography

Allen, James. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Santa Fe: Twin Palms, 2000.

- Apel, Dora. *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- Apel, Dora. "Lynching Photographs and the Politics of Public Shaming." In *Lynching Photographs*, 42–78. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951.
- Gonzales-Day, Ken. *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Gonzales-Day, Ken. "Conversation: Ken Gonzales-Day, Grant Kester, Elize Mazadiego, and Jenn Moreno." *Silent Witness: Violence and Representation: Pros** 1 (Spring 2011): 24–77.
- Green, Rayna. "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe." *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1998): 30–55.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1912*. New York: Pantheon, 1998.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. "Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America." *The Journal of American History* (December 2002): 990–991.
- Hill, Jason. "The Camera and the 'Physiognomic Auto-da-fe': Photography, History, and Race in Two Recent Works by Ken Gonzales-Day." *X-TRA Contemporary Art Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (Spring 2009). <http://x-traonline.org/article/the-camera-and-the-physiognomic-auto-da-fe-photography-history-and-race-in-two-recent-works-by-ken-gonzales-day/>.
- Hunt, Lynn. "Forward." In *Human Rights in Camera*, ix–xii. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Maxwell, Louise P. "Review: Without Sanctuary." *The Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 1 (February 2002): 216–218.
- Nicole Jabour, Tania. "The Absence Becomes the Presence: Contextualizing the 'Compton Cookout' in 'Histories of Racial Violence,'" *Silent Witness: Violence and Representation. Special Issue of pros** (Spring 2011), 25–32.
- Pheifer, Michael J. *The Roots of Rough Justice*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- Prosser, Jay. "Introduction." In *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, edited by Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, 7–13. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.
- Simon, Roger. "A Shock to Thought: Curatorial Judgment and the Public Exhibition of 'Difficult Knowledge.'" *Memory Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 432–449.
- Sliwinski, Sharon. *Human Rights in Camera*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Smith, Shawn Michelle. "The Evidence of Lynching Photographs." In *Lynching Photographs*, edited by Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, 10–42. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Warren, Louis S. *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Shows*. New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2005.
- Wood, Amy Louise. *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

15 On *May 1, 2011* (Alfredo Jaar, 2011)—Expanding the Frame of the Original Photograph

Mafalda Dâmaso

I first saw the installation *May 1, 2011* by the Chilean artist, architect and filmmaker Alfredo Jaar when I visited the 2012 edition of the Paris Triennial. Having found the installation (which appropriates an official photograph of Barack Obama and his team as they watch the capture of Osama bin Laden) equally mesmerizing and perplexing, I decided to analyze it. This chapter is the result of this process.¹ I begin by discussing the official White House photograph that the installation appropriates, which is followed by an analysis of the installation. Finally, I conclude with a reflection of the status of contemporary art in a context of international violence. My broad goal is to understand the specific ways in which this art installation allows for an alternative viewing of an image that was widely circulated in the media.

It will become clear throughout the next pages that my analysis is strongly aligned with Judith Butler's work on viewership. In fact, my analysis of Jaar's installation sees it as providing a partial answer to the questions asked by Butler in "Torture and the Ethics of Photography":²

How do the norms that govern which lives will be regarded as human lives and which will not, enter into the *frames* through which discourse and visual representation proceed, and how do these in term delimit and orchestrate or foreclose ethical responsiveness to suffering [. . .]?³

This said, and crucially, Butler argues that

the photographs do not necessarily determine a particular response. They are shown again and again, and this history of their differing framing and reception structures, without determining, the kinds of public interpretations of torture that we have.⁴

The author expanded this argument in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*,⁵ where she argues that frames of interpretation manage collective responses to life in a context of continuous war, which then (as she describes in detail in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*)⁶



Figure 15.1 *May 1st, 2011*, Alfredo Jaar, two LCD monitors and two framed prints, original White House photograph by Pete Souza, dimensions variable, 2011. © Frazer Spowart, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York, Kamel Mennour, Paris, Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin and the artist, New York.

produces distinctions between those individuals whose lives appear in danger and those whose lives aren't recognized as such. Butler is here referring to the frameworks—affective, visual and discursive—that mediate our experience of distant others. That is, as the philosopher writes,

We do not have to be supplied with a caption or a narrative in order to understand that a political background is being explicitly formulated and renewed through and by the frame [. . .]. The question for war photography thus concerns [. . .] how it shows what it shows.⁷

My specific aims with this chapter are, firstly, to consider how the “operation of a norm [. . .] through the action of the frame”⁸ that affects what is recognized as life is foregrounded by the original photograph (which came to represent Bin Laden's death outside international courts). Secondly, I aim to discuss the extent to which that operation is made visible by Jaar's installation. Broadly, this reflection could also be located in a wider set of analyses of the political power of photography developed by Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, W. J. T Mitchell and Ariella Azoulay and examined by artists such as Martha Rosler, Trevor Paglen, and Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin.

One: May 1, 2011—The Original Photograph

The installation *May 1, 2011* appropriates an original photograph that was taken by the official White House photographer, Pete Souza, in May 1, 2011. The photograph shows the American president, tense and focused, in the Situation Room of the White House in Washington. He is surrounded by, among others, on the left side of the image, Vice President Joe Biden and, on the right side, Hillary Clinton, who was then the Secretary of State. They are accompanied by several members of the national security and military team, both sitting and standing. The group, we are told by the description of the photograph, stares at a screen that lies outside the frame of the image, which allows the photographed individuals to watch live footage of Operation Neptune Spear, aimed at the capture of Bin Laden. Over the table lie several open laptops, coffee cups hinting at a long day of work and, finally, a series of documents over Hilary Clinton's laptop, which have been pixelated for security reasons.

If we are to begin to understand the reasons why this image has become so iconic, it is crucial to consider the wider context of its public reception. Bin Laden was discovered, not in a remote tribal area, where he was imagined to be, but in a compound in Abbottabad, a city that hosts a Pakistani military base and an academy of the Pakistani Army. Pakistan, as it is now well known, has recently gone from being one of the strongest allies of the United States to resorting to terrorism in local geopolitical strategic moves that do not always support the interests of the North American potency.⁹

Additionally, although the operation was officially described by Obama as a manhunt (Bin Laden's death having supposedly resulted from a fire exchange), the information that has circulated unofficially opposes this explanation of the incident. In fact, in the book *No Easy Day: The First-hand Account of the Mission they Killed Osama Bin Laden*,¹⁰ Mark Owen (the pseudonym of one of the Navy SEALs who participated in operation Neptune Sear) argues that one of his colleagues shot Bin Laden as soon as the latter poked his head out of his bedroom door. Owen also states that he was told explicitly, when recruited for the mission, that its aim was to kill the terrorist.

After his death, Bin Laden was buried at sea (respecting Muslim tradition, which requires burial in the day after death) in order to prevent the creation of a shrine in support of the Saudi Arabian. The decision to publish the official photograph replaced the traditional public display of captured war opponents because, as Obama stated in his speech communicating Bin Laden's capture, doing so could reinforce the support for the terrorist. At the same time, no photographic evidence of the operation was leaked. As a result of this, the photograph has come to represent this crucial moment in the recent history of the United States of America and is, thus, one of the most recent visual symbols of the *war on terror*.

After president Obama's public speech in the East Room of the White House describing what had happened to the Al-Qaeda leader, "crowds gathered outside the White House, in Times Square and at the Ground Zero site, waving American flags, cheering, shouting, laughing and chanting, 'U.S.A., U.S.A.!' "¹¹ This response wasn't merely anecdotal. A content analysis study of the American media headlines in the day that followed Bin Laden's capture noted that the operation was celebrated as a success by conservatives and liberals alike. In fact,

newspapers in conservative-leaning regions presented the story as a patriotic 'killing' (an emphasis on authority and loyalty), whereas newspapers from liberal-leaning regions were more likely to present it in terms of justice restoration (an emphasis on fairness and reciprocity).¹²

To return to the photograph, its iconic status in recent Western political history is also evidenced by the fact that the moment which it represents features in several mass media television series, such as *Homeland* (2012), whose second season includes a direct reference to this image. The writer Richard Seymour has made an important argument in regard to this series, to *Zero Dark Thirty* (a 2012 film that narrates the missions that led to the capture of Bin Laden) and to *24* (an action series from 2001–2010 that follows a counterterrorist agent as he attempts to prevent terrorist attacks in American soil). Seymour affirms that these productions present contemporary acts of terrorism as apolitical (i.e., as explained exclusively by the evil of their perpetrators) and as justifying the disrespect for international law (such as the disregard of the sovereignty of other nation states by American forces) in order to protect Western civilization. These ideas are summarized in Seymour's statement that "[t]hese shows are political thrillers but the fundamental political questions are already settled by the big picture: a war to defend civilization against the barbarians. The enemy is always evil. There is never choice but to torture or to kill."¹³

The critical reception of *Zero Dark Thirty* (which was nominated in five categories at the 2013 Oscar awards) among left-wing critics was comparable. Naomi Klein argued, in a similar way to Seymour, that "in falsely justifying, in scene after scene, the torture of detainees in 'the global war on terror', *Zero Dark Thirty* is a gorgeously-shot, two-hour ad for keeping intelligence agents who committed crimes against Guantánamo prisoners out of jail."¹⁴ Moreover, Klein criticizes the supposed support to the film given by Obama's team, both in terms of access to previously classified information and to aircraft used in some of its action scenes. Other scholars have discussed *Zero Dark Thirty* as "a vehicle for American exceptionalism that allows audiences to ignore what other international communities have said about the legality of the raid on Abbottabad."¹⁵ I should reiterate, however, that my aim isn't to ascertain whether this film was indeed used for political purposes or not. Nor am I interested in proposing a psychoanalytic

explanation of the resonance of such stories with their audiences. Rather, my goal with this overview is to foreground the significance in the public sphere of the photograph appropriated by Jaar.

Let us now consider the photograph in detail, beginning with its use by Obama's communication team as an instrument of political rhetoric. It is hard not to notice the display of emotion that is particularly evident in the faces of Obama and Hilary Clinton, who clasps her hand to her mouth. Their expressions mirror the tension of the situation: the capture followed by the assassination of a man that, especially since the 9/11 attacks, has become the central figure toward whom the fear and hatred of the American citizens are directed. The expressions of these three individuals demonstrate their discomfort watching what one can imagine to be brutal images. But independently from how they feel about it, the photograph reveals that it is their duty to watch these images. That is because, as stated by classical theories of international relations, power and supremacy is a zero-sum game, i.e., there is a mandatory choice to make between, on the one hand, Bin Laden and those who he represents or, on the other hand, the western world. As Carl Schmitt claimed, "the specific political distinction [. . .] is that between friend and enemy."¹⁶ In fact, a year after the Neptune Spear operation, Obama spoke to one of the anchors of the American news channel NBC. Asked about the photograph, he responded to Brian Williams that it "was taken right as the helicopter was having some problems [. . .]. There's silence at this point inside the room." Clinton, who was also interviewed, affirmed that "it was an extraordinary experience and a great privilege to be part of."¹⁷

At this moment in the analysis, it is particularly important to consider Hillary Clinton's role regarding Bin Laden's capture. As Secretary of State, she had access to intelligence compiled by the CIA justifying the operation. However, after the photograph was published, rather than stressing her part in it, she repeatedly praised President Obama's risky decision. At the same time, Obama's public speech announcing Bin Laden's death was notoriously made in the first person. In her many interviews and public speeches following the event, Clinton also described what seemed to be a display of emotion in the photograph as, in fact, being an attempt to control a cough,¹⁸ although she later modified her account. Clinton's narrative change occurred after Obama's successful reelection campaign in 2012. In the book memoir *Hard Choices*,¹⁹ Clinton describes herself as having given unlimited support for the operation and as having been decisive to its success. Clinton's reversal of the argument about the raid is backed by comments by several journalists who also place her at the center of deliberations, having convinced President Obama into supporting the operation after he had canceled three of its earlier plans.²⁰ This suggests that Clinton's previous underplaying of her own importance was a form of indirect support toward Obama's election campaign.

This said, the demonstration of tension in Obama's face is also particularly interesting in itself. Let us consider the essay that the art historian W. J. T. Mitchell wrote following Obama's election against John McCain in 2008.²¹ Mitchell writes that when analyzing

Obama as a 'cultural icon' [. . .], it is important to recognize the extent to which his image is [. . .] a highly ambiguous blank slate on which popular fantasy could be projected. Obama noted this himself [. . .], insisting that his meteoric rise was 'not about me, but about you'.²²

Specifically, Mitchell notes that Obama

made himself a mirror for an international community of frustrated desire for peace, hope and change [. . .]. At the level of the visual image [. . .], he is a figure of both intimacy and monumentality [. . .], clearly capable of modulating his temperature to fit the moment.²³

Barack Obama's foundational political ambiguity—still evident when, for example, he identifies climate change action as crucial yet approves drilling in the Arctic²⁴ before finally reversing this decision²⁵—may have been a strength that led to his election in 2008 and reelection in 2012, but so was his ability to adapt his image according to the situation. In this view, even if one assumes that Obama's demonstration of affect in this image isn't calculated, the publicness of the photograph emerges as the result of a political choice rather than as a neutral dissemination of information regarding the inner workings of the White House.

Additionally, the public revelation of this image is directly related with the simultaneous act of preventive iconoclasm—i.e., the decision not to reveal any photographs of Bin Laden's capture in order to avoid his transformation into a martyr, which I discuss in the third part of this chapter. There were no images of the terrorist's corpse, but there was a photograph of the president and his close team in tension as they regard such images. As a result of this, and despite such iconoclasm, I believe that the viewers of the photograph do see Bin Laden's death—although that viewing is mediated by the politicians' gaze. Our viewing position is framed, and so is, consequently, our position in relation to the narrative of war and violence that it conveys. This analysis resonates both with the critical reception of *Zero Dark Thirty* that I mentioned earlier and with Judith Butler's argument regarding the importance of images of war and violence in shaping the viewers' inability to recognize the lives of specific groups of people.

This idea also joins the argument developed by the geographer David Campbell in the paper "Geopolitics and visibility: Sighting the Darfur conflict"²⁶ regarding visual culture as performative of geopolitics. His conclusion results from a study of the employment of documentary photography and photojournalism covering war in Darfur, Sudan, in late 2003 and early

2004, in international newspapers such as *The Guardian*. Campbell analyzes the ways in which photographs of children and women portrayed as passive and pitiable were chosen to communicate the Darfur conflict, decontextualizing its particularities, rather than images of combatants or casualties, which would “support a story of ethnic cleansing or genocidal violence specific to Darfur.”²⁷ He writes: “When we are dealing with photographs we are concerned with the visual performance of the social field, whereby pictures bring the objects they purport to simply reflect into being.”²⁸ Crucially, Campbell argues that “this visual enactment is itself geopolitical [. . .], that is, it both manifests and enables power relations through which spatial distances between self/other, civilized/barbaric, North/South, developed/underdeveloped are produced and maintained.”²⁹

I believe that we can extend Campbell’s argument and view this photograph as performative of not only geopolitics (in that it sustains the unequal power relations between the United States, Pakistan and Al-Qaeda) but also of political legitimacy. In this context, the role of the viewer remains as that of trusting the decisions of elected politicians rather than supervising their behavior. And, in fact, a New York Times/CBS News poll reiterates my analysis. Its results demonstrated that support for President Obama rose sharply after the death of Bin Laden among Democrats, Republicans and independents—specifically, 57% percent of the interviewees approved the president’s overall performance, rising from 46% a month earlier.³⁰ Unfortunately, however, the image of Muslim Americans worsened significantly at the same time, as demonstrated by a 2011 study. Its authors concluded that

American public opinion about Muslim Americans significantly worsened in the wake of Bin Laden’s killing and the media coverage that followed [. . .]. The net result was that Americans were more tolerant of restricting Muslim American civil liberties such as using religious profiling, the registration of Muslim American whereabouts, greater surveillance of mosques by law enforcement, and banning mosque construction.³¹

More recent audience reactions towards Muslim communities, such as the story of a Muslim teenager accused of taking a bomb to his school, when in fact, the device was a homemade digital clock,³² demonstrate that prejudice against Muslims is a recurrent social and political issue.

Two: May 1, 2011—The Installation

Having broadly analyzed the context of the reception of the original photograph, I will now turn my intention to the installation. In what ways does the viewing experience of this photograph change when it is mediated by the mixed media installation *May 1, 2011* (2011) by Alfredo Jaar? My concern here lies in the potential of the emergence of a critical engagement with this

photograph as a result of its artistic appropriation combined with its relocation to a museum setting. More specifically, in what ways does this installation interrupt what Butler refers to as the operating frames that make impossible the recognition of specific lives in a context of war—including those of terrorists?

Before analyzing the installation in detail, it is important to note that Jaar's work often engages with the relation between visibility, historical memory and conflict. *May 1, 2011* follows, for example, *Lament of the Images*, an installation by Jaar from 2002, in which a reflection on absent images is also present. The latter artwork, through which Jaar reflects upon the control of images by political and commercial organizations, is composed of three illuminated texts followed by a light wall. The texts mounted on plexiglas refer to Nelson Mandela's blindness as a consequence of his work in a limestone excavation site, to Bill Gates's purchase and burial of the world's largest collection of historical photographs and, finally, to the purchase by the United States Department of Defense of satellite photos of Afghanistan and of the regions surrounding the country during its invasion.

But although missing images are a regular interest of Jaar, the installation *May 1, 2011* focuses on a rare moment in which this absence was politically acknowledged. The installation is composed of four frames: on the right side, an LCD monitor shows the photograph of Barack Obama and his political and military team in the White House as they watched the broadcast of Osama bin Laden's compound raid and execution, all named in a framed schematic label on this monitor's right. This follows the traditional method used to identify individuals in an image: black lines define their silhouettes, and a system of numbers provides a key to the figures in the press image. On the left side, the installation comprises another LCD monitor, this time with a non-image shown in white, which is accompanied by a framed empty label on this monitor's left. This non-image represents the absent images of Bin Laden's capture and death.

I would now like to discuss to what extent Jaar's installation provides the conditions for the disruption of the viewer's original experience of the photograph. The different temporalities of the viewing experience in a context of media consumption or during a visit to a museum are of central importance in this context. This is alluded to from within the installation: the photograph and the white screen aren't printed on canvas but, instead, showcased on loop in two LCD screens—as a pause in an ongoing flow of images that allows the viewer to take a closer look. The position of the LCDs, slightly angled towards each other and hence creating a viewing platform, reinforces this interpretation in that it hints at the temporality of the media: usually fast and continuous but, in this case, slowed down for inspection by the viewer. This opposition is further reinforced by the addition of the framed labels, which resemble gallery wall texts and, therefore, stress the specific context that has made this alternative viewing possible. The blank screen might hence come to symbolize not only the moment of

Bin Laden's capture but also the public's inability to witness it, which interrogates the documentary dimension of the original photograph.

Jaar's decision to combine the official photograph with an absent image, thus interrupting the habitual viewing experience of the media consumer, also reminds the latter that she is a witness, both in the case of the original photograph and of the installation. Considering ongoing discussions in media witnessing (an emerging field which theorizes the relationship between contemporary media and practices of witnessing, focusing on the ongoing reporting of the experiences and realities of distant others to mass audiences) will allow me to explain this idea. As the communication scholars Menahem Blondheim and Tamar Liebes stress in "Archaic Witnessing and Contemporary News Media,"³³ the experience of media witnessing is modulated after the experience of the court. In this model, "the 'telling presence' of the witness [. . .] confers responsibilities on the audience to judge and ultimately implement that judgement."³⁴

Following this analysis, the inclusion of an LCD representing the absent images emerges as adding a conflicting testimony that opposes the narration provided by the original photograph. Side by side, the absent image and the photograph of Obama and his political and military team illustrate a struggle between different narratives competing for the attention and the agreement of the viewer regarding the legitimacy of the capture and assassination of Bin Laden outside international courts. And this is indeed the conclusion that Tamar Ashuri and Amit Pinchevski achieve when applying Bourdieu's methodology to the field of witnessing in "Witnessing as a Field," which leads to its interpretation as a site "subject to contest and struggle, and hence as a genuine political arena."³⁵

It is helpful at this moment to return to *Frames of War*, a philosophical response to the processes of image production and dissemination in a context of perpetual war. Butler's intention, as I mentioned earlier, is to identify the possibilities for recognizing the lives of others as precarious. In light of this analysis, what lies at the center of Jaar's installation is precisely the suspension of the prevailing view that terrorists (Bin Laden being arguably the utmost example thereof) shouldn't be treated according to the principles of international law. Particularly, in "Torture and the Ethics of Photography: Thinking with Sontag,"³⁶ which I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Butler discusses the problem of embedded reporting (a practice initiated in the 2003 invasion of Iraq), in which journalists agreed to report from positions previously validated by military and governmental authorities. Unsurprisingly, this form of journalism has been criticized for constraining journalists to only reflect the viewpoint of the soldiers with whom they travel. Butler then discusses the Abu Ghraib images, which disturb this circulation of officially validated imagery, in a close engagement with Susan Sontag's response to the former. Replying to Sontag's frustration as a viewer of images that, she thought, could shock but not explain what they revealed, Butler argues that the photograph "is not merely a visual

image awaiting its interpretation; it is itself interpreting, actively, even forcibly.”³⁷ It could be argued that this is always the case: images can shock, but they can rarely explain. However, what Butler is stressing here is the role of images in sustaining particular (ethical and legal) understandings of the world. It is precisely this framing, present within the original photograph (and, particularly, the identification of the gaze of the viewer with that of Obama and his team) that the installation foregrounds and opposes. As such, the position of the viewer of the installation echoes the experience of Susan Sontag as described by Butler:

What is most interesting to me about the increasing outrage and exasperation she expressed [. . .] is that it continues to be directed against the photograph not only for making her feel outrage, but for failing to show her how to transform that affect into effective political action. [. . .] It is a museum piece by Jeff Wall that allows her to formulate this problem of responding to the pain of others, and so [. . .] a certain consolidation of the museum world as the one within she is most likely to find room for reflection and deliberation.³⁸

Although my focus in this chapter hasn't been on the transformation of affect into political action, my analysis of Jaar's work is nonetheless analogous to Butler's analysis of Sontag's response to Wall. This reading of *May 1, 2011* stresses the potential for contemporary artworks to nurture a change away from either a passive or frustrated mode of engagement with a photograph and toward a more constructive position: the denaturalization and subsequent politicization of an image. To reiterate my general argument, the installation can thus be seen as potentially expanding the narrative regarding the result of operation Neptune Spear—which appears to the viewer as both ethically and legally questionable.

In a similar manner, the viewer is also potentially led to question the use of a vocabulary of exception by the Obama administration (i.e., as a crisis that required unusual political decisions) to justify Bin Laden's capture. In fact, I believe that it would be a mistake to interpret this official discourse as evidence of the existence of a state of exception, defined by Giorgio Agamben's terminology as “a suspension of the whole juridical order itself.”³⁹ Instead, I would like to align my analysis with the international relations scholar Kyle Grayson, who argues in “Six Theses on Targeted Killing”⁴⁰ that “the emergence of targeted killing is productive of broader power relations.”⁴¹ In this view, Obama's iconoclastic act doesn't point to an unquestionable need for the suspension of the juridical. Rather, Bin Laden's targeted assassination (a premeditated assassination employed by a state outside the battlefield to eliminate individuals beyond its custody) was a “form of lawfare”: a form of warfare involving the abuse of existing laws rather than an action taking place outside of the legal framework.

This analysis opposes the Agambian interpretation that sees the state of exception as taking place outside the law. This is because targeted killing is “sustained through legal interpretations that harness the inherent ambiguities regarding principles like imminence, proportionality [. . .] and last resort in the contemporary security environment.”⁴² Moreover, and in what brings us back to the idea that images are performative, the installation also makes evident another of Grayson’s thesis, according to which targeted killing is a visual practice. But while Grayson, influenced by the work of the media studies scholar Allen Feldman, focuses on the visual techniques through which targets are identified, surveilled and controlled by the combined work of remotely piloted air systems and their human operators, I would like to propose a different understanding of the idea of targeted killing as a visual practice. That is, Jaar’s installation potentially reveals the ways in which even traditional mediums such as photography contribute to promoting official narratives regarding war—due to the absence of either non-embedded journalists or of alternative images (such as leaked ones), as is the case. Despite a difference in the technologies that Feldman and I discuss, my conclusion is nonetheless compatible with his definition of a scopic regime, i.e., a set of modalities “that proscribe or render untenable other modes and objects of perception.”⁴³ This said, future research is needed to evaluate to what extent this conclusion also applies to other contemporary artworks that appropriate political imagery.

Three: Art in a Time of War

The raid of Bin Laden’s compound and his subsequent death were widely criticized by international law experts and human rights groups worldwide. But never had the Obama administration been as condemned as after the disclosures regarding Obama’s intensification of Bush’s surveillance programs, which resulted from the whistleblowing of Edward Snowden, a former CIA specialist, in June 2013. In what is analogous to Bin Laden’s capture, the legality of use of drones in a systematic program of targeted killings and of citizens’ surveillance worldwide are guaranteed by secret courts and closed-doors congressional boards that the American citizens cannot see, access or control. What is the position of the contemporary viewer, then, regarding such simultaneous but opposing narratives: Obama’s forms of political rhetoric and Edward Snowden’s testimony, to name a few?

Jaar’s installation reiterates that our condition isn’t one of either complicity or potential opposition but, rather, of the entanglement of both. We are subjects—complicit with the choices of our political representatives, with whose gaze we are often led to identify and to whose surveillance programs we contribute freely with information regarding our online behavior. But we are also citizens—aware of the existence of frames through which our engagement with war is mediated, even if not always conscious of their impact on our ways of understanding the world.

This is precisely the reason why it is crucial, as Butler suggests, to guarantee that there are occasions in which we might “expand our existing frameworks or allow them to be interrupted by new vocabularies.”⁴⁴ And that is exactly what I believe that Jaar’s installation achieves: an interruption of the mode of viewership that is demanded by the original photograph and, through it, an expansion of the original frame of the photograph. The combination of the official photograph with the absent images of Bin Laden’s death creates the conditions for a spectatorship that is aware of its ongoing conflation with the gaze of the American president, which opens the possibility of a questioning of the moral and legal bases of the targeted killing of the Al-Qaeda leader.

I would like to conclude by discussing the nature of appropriation in *May 1, 2011*, and the ways in which it is generative of such an alternative viewing position. The reading of the work of Jacques Rancière on the political, developed in “Drift: Politics and the Simulation of Real Life”⁴⁵ by the media studies scholar Thomas Keenan, may help us to understand this. Drawing on Rancière, who affirms that “in order to enter into political exchange, it becomes necessary to invent the scene upon which spoken words may be audible, in which objects may be visible, and individuals themselves may be recognized,”⁴⁶ Keenan affirms that “there could be no politics without irony, without copying, without enigma, and without drift.”⁴⁷

Following this idea, it becomes evident that the installation is only able to potentially contribute to the emergence of a new form of viewing because said artwork is produced and displayed in societies in which copying and drift, to use Keenan’s terms, are institutionally celebrated.⁴⁸ In this view, the political dimension of the installation resides precisely on Jaar’s disturbance of the conflation of the gaze of the photograph’s viewer with that of Obama. Showing Bin Laden not only as a terrorist but also, and despite his heinous, incomprehensible, indefensible crimes, as a human being that has the right to be judged by an international court opens up the possibility of disagreement regarding the ethical and legal bases of his capture. Contemporary art and art institutions, in this view, are equally important as the media to observe and evaluate official political discourses, hence guaranteeing their accountability.

This idea is especially important in light of the argument made by Boris Groys in “Art at War,” a chapter of *Art/Power*.⁴⁹ The art historian writes that both traditional warriors (whom I equate here to the contemporary sovereign leader responding militarily to acts of terrorism) and terrorists use images as part of their war strategies to an extent that makes them iconophiles. This claim is prescient of the recent destruction by ISIL of ancient artifacts in Syria, which the militants filmed for the world to see, but it also resonates with the dissemination of the *May 1, 2011* photograph. It is worth quoting Groys at length in this regard in order to understand why he locates the relationship toward images as something that

often connects the traditional warrior and the contemporary terrorist. The former, he says,

was interested in the images that would be able to glorify him, to present him in a favorable, positive, attractive way. [. . .] But the pictorial strategy of the contemporary warrior is a strategy of shock and awe [. . .]. Contemporary politics represents itself as sublime again—that is, as ugly, repelling, unbearable, terrifying. And even more: all the political forces of the contemporary world are involved in the increasing production of the political sublime—by competing for the strongest, most terrifying image.⁵⁰

In this context, what is the role of the contemporary artist? A form of criticism of this politics of representation, Groys argues—one, however, that should be distinguished from moral assessments. Jaar's installation achieves this balance: as I argued earlier, it suspends the association of the viewer's gaze with that of Obama, and hence questions the seeming naturalness of Obama's decision. However, the installation does so without offering a conclusive analysis of its own. Rather, it asks a question: was there an alternative? By stressing the unstable nature of the political (rather than, say, by directly confronting the moral and legal bases of the operation), Jaar's installation is able to fulfil the two conditions that Groys later identifies as fundamental if contemporary art is to play a role in a time of war.

The goal of contemporary criticism of representation should be a two-fold one. First, [artistic] criticism should be directed against all kinds of censorship and suppression of images that would prevent us from being confronted with the reality of war and terror. [. . .] But at the same time we are in need of criticism that analyzes the use of [. . .] images of violence as the new icons of the political sublime.⁵¹

Crucially, this stance leads us to view both contemporary artists and art institutions as having the responsibility to contribute to expanding ongoing conversations regarding the values that organize our societies. As I hope to have demonstrated, this is precisely what is accomplished by Jaar's equally counter-iconoclastic and counter-iconophile installation.

Notes

- 1 I presented a first version of this chapter at the 2013 International Visual Sociology Association Annual Conference. I am grateful to the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology for financial support for the work on my doctoral thesis and, indirectly, on this chapter.
- 2 Judith Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007): 951–966, later transformed into one of the chapters of Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London; New York: Verso, 2009).
- 3 *Ibid.*, 956 (original emphasis).

- 4 Ibid., 956 (original emphasis).
- 5 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2009).
- 6 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004).
- 7 Ibid., *Frames of War*, 71.
- 8 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography," 959.
- 9 Peter Baker, Helene Cooper and Mark Mazzetti, "Bin Laden Is Dead, Obama Says," *New York Times*, May 1, 2011.
- 10 Mark Owen, *No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission They Killed Osama Bin Laden* (London: Penguin, 2012).
- 11 Baker, Cooper and Mazzetti, "Bin Laden Is Dead."
- 12 Nicholas Bowmana, Robert Joel Lewis and Ron Tamborini, "The Morality of May 2, 2011: A Content Analysis of U.S. Headlines Regarding the Death of Osama Bin Laden," *Mass Communication and Society* 17, no. 5 (2014): 639–664.
- 13 Richard Seymour, "Review of 24, Zero Dark Thirty and Homeland," *Youtube* video, January 22, 2015.
- 14 Naomi Klein, "A Letter to Kathryn Bigelow on Zero Dark Thirty's Apology for Torture," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2013.
- 15 Marouf Hasian, "Military Orientalism at the Cineplex: A Postcolonial Reading of Zero Dark Thirty," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31, no. 5 (2014): 464.
- 16 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, translated by George Schwab (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 17 *NBC News*, "President Obama Describes Obama in Laden Raid One Year Later," April 29, 2012.
- 18 Joe Coscarelli, "Hillary Clinton Flip-Flopping on Bin Laden Raid 'Cough'," *NY Magazine*, June 20, 2014.
- 19 Hillary Clinton, *Hard Choices* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014).
- 20 Andy Soltis, "Hil Swayed O to Kill Osama," August 21, 2012.
- 21 W.J.T. Mitchell, "Obama as Icon," *Journal of Visual Culture* 8, no. 2 (2009): 125–129.
- 22 Ibid., 126.
- 23 Ibid., 127.
- 24 Natasha Geiling, "Obama Explains Why He Approved Arctic Drilling in the Face of Climate Concerns," *Think Progress*, May 28, 2015.
- 25 Suzanne Goldenberg, "Obama Administration Blocks New Oil Drilling in the Arctic," *The Guardian*, October 16, 2015.
- 26 David Campbell, "Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict," *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): 357–382.
- 27 Ibid., 372.
- 28 Ibid., 379–380.
- 29 Ibid., 380.
- 30 James Dao and Dalia Sussman, "For Obama, Big Rise in Poll Numbers after Bin Laden Raid," *NY Times*, May 4, 2011.
- 31 Erik Nisbet, Michelle Ortiz, Yasmin Miller and Andrew Smith, "The 'Bin Laden' Effect: How American Public Opinion about Muslim Americans Shifted in the Wake of Bin Laden's Death," July 20, 2011: 24.
- 32 Ashley Fantz, Steve Almasy and AnneClaire Stapleton, "Muslim Teen Ahmed Mohamed Creates Clock, Shows Teachers, Gets Arrested," *CNN*, September 16, 2015.
- 33 Menahem Blondheim and Tamar Liebes, "Archaic Witnessing and Contemporary News Media," in *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass*

- Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 112–132.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 113.
- 35 Tamar Ashuri and Amit Pinchevski, “Witnessing as a Field,” in *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 135.
- 36 Butler, “Torture and the Ethics of Photography.”
- 37 *Ibid.*, 952.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 965–966.
- 39 Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler, “Eichmann, Law and Justice 1/7,” *YouTube* video. September 9, 2009.
- 40 Kyle Grayson, “Six Theses on Targeted Killing,” *Politics* 32, no. 2 (2012): 120–128.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 43 Allen Feldman, “Violence and Vision: The Prosthetics and Aesthetics of Terror,” *Public Culture* 10, no. 1 (1997): 30 quoted in *Ibid.*, 123.
- 44 Butler, *Frames of War*, 162.
- 45 Thomas Keenan, “Drift: Politics and the Simulation of Real Life,” *Grey Room* 21 (2005): 94–111.
- 46 Jacques Rancière and Davide Panagia, “Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière,” *Diacritics* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 116 quoted in *Ibid.*, 107.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 107–108.
- 48 I discuss Keenan’s argument in more detail in “Gerhard Richter’s *September* (2005)—the Politics of Ambivalence,” in *Terror in Global Narrative: The Aesthetics and Representation of 9/11 in the Age of Late-Late Capitalism*, edited by George Fragopoulos and Liliana M. Naydan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
- 49 Boris Groys, “Art at War,” in *Art/Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 121–130.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 122–123.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 125.

Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Agamben, Giorgio and Judith Butler. “Eichmann, Law and Justice 1/7.” *YouTube* video. September 9, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySu0HYfx2VY>.
- Ashuri, Tamar and Amit Pinchevski. “Witnessing as a Field.” In *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, 133–157. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Baker, Peter, Helene Cooper and Mark Mazzetti. “Bin Laden is Dead, Obama Says.” *New York Times*, May 1, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
- Blondheim, Menahem and Tamar Liebes. “Archaic Witnessing and Contemporary News Media.” In *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, 112–132. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Bowmana, Nicholas, Robert Joel Lewis and Ron Tamborini. “The Morality of May 2, 2011: A Content Analysis of U.S. Headlines Regarding the Death of Osama Bin Laden.” *Mass Communication and Society* 17, no. 5 (2014): 639–664. doi: 10.1080/15205436.2013.822518.

- Butler, Judith. "Torture and the Ethics of Photography." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007): 951–966. doi: 10.1068/d2506jb.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London and New York: Verso, 2009.
- Campbell, David. "Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict." *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): 357–382. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.11.005.
- Clinton, Hillary. *Hard Choices*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- Coscarelli, Joe. "Hillary Clinton Flip-Flopping on Bin Laden Raid 'Cough'." *NY Magazine*, June 20, 2014. <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/06/hillary-clinton-bin-laden-raid-cough-or-gasp.html>.
- Dao, James and Dalia Sussman. "For Obama, Big Rise in Poll Numbers after Bin Laden Raid." *NY Times*, May 4, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/us/politics/05poll.html>.
- Fantz, Ashley, Steve Almasy and Anne Claire Stapleton. "Muslim Teen Ahmed Mohamed Creates Clock, Shows Teachers, Gets Arrested." *CNN*, September 16, 2015. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/16/us/texas-student-ahmed-muslim-clock-bomb/>.
- Geiling, Natasha. "Obama Explains Why He Approved Arctic Drilling in the Face of Climate Concerns." *Think Progress*, May 28, 2015. <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2015/05/28/3663715/obama-twitter-chat-arctic-drilling/>.
- Goldenberg, Suzanne. "Obama Administration Blocks New Oil Drilling in the Arctic." *The Guardian*, October 16, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/16/obama-blocks-new-arctic-oil-drilling-cancels-leases>.
- Grayson, Kyle. "Six Theses on Targeted Killing." *Politics* 32, no. 2 (2012): 120–128. doi: 10.1111/j.1467–9256.2012.01434.x.
- Groys, Boris. "Art at War." In *Art/Power*, 121–130. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.
- Hasian, Marouf. "Military Orientalism at the Cineplex: A Postcolonial Reading of Zero Dark Thirty." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31, no. 5 (2014): 464–478. doi: 10.1080/15295036.2014.906745.
- Keenan, Thomas. "Drift: Politics and the Simulation of Real Life." *Grey Room* 21 (2005): 94–111.
- Klein, Naomi. "A Letter to Kathryn Bigelow on Zero Dark Thirty's Apology for Torture." *The Guardian*, January 4, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/04/letter-kathryn-bigelow-zero-dark-thirty>.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. "Obama as Icon." *Journal of Visual Culture* 8, no. 2 (2009): 125–129. doi:10.1177/14704129090080020201.
- NBC News. "President Obama Describes Obama in Laden Raid One Year Later." April 29, 2012. http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2012/04/29/obama-clinton_talk_about_picture_in_situation_room_during_bin_laden_raid.html.
- Nisbet, Erik, Michelle Ortiz, Yasamin Miller and Andrew Smith. "The 'Bin Laden' Effect: How American Public Opinion about Muslim Americans Shifted in the Wake of Bin Laden's Death." Ohio State University. *Report*. July 20, 2011. http://cola.unh.edu/sites/cola.unh.edu/files/research_publications/binladen_report.pdf.
- Owen, Mark. *No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission They Killed Osama bin Laden*. London: Penguin, 2012.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Seymour, Richard. "Review of 24, Zero Dark Thirty and Homeland." *Youtube* video. January 22, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6U1jBxzYnBg>.
- Soltis, Andy. "Hil Swayed O to Kill Osama." August 21, 2012. <http://nypost.com/2012/08/21/hill-swayed-o-to-kill-osama/>.

16 Photography as a Form of Taxidermy

Zoe Leonard's *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*, Musée Orfila

Chelsea Nichols

In an obscure archive of the Musée d'Anatomie Delmas-Orfila-Rouvière (henceforth Musée Orfila) at Paris Descartes University, the taxidermied bust of a bearded woman sits in a bell jar. Her femininity is signaled by the earrings and lace collar she wears, which contrasts the masculinity of her features and the thick beard that covers her chin. Her skin is weathered and pale, but has been well preserved by an unknown method of mummification.

The bearded woman's display, however, has been designed to de-emphasize the presentation of a corpse. Her eyelids are positioned open, fitted with glassy artificial eyeballs that give her an eerie animate expression. Beneath the lace collar, her shoulders are modestly covered in a dark fabric, suggesting that the viewer is looking at a clothed woman and not a naked body. These humanizing gestures seem at odds with her display within the anatomical museum, where specimens are normally meant to remain impersonal and objective. In this setting, the curiosity of the bearded woman is located not only in her physical anomaly, but also in the compelling discordance of her display.

In 1991, the bearded woman in the bell jar caught the eye of artist Zoe Leonard, who created a striking series of photographs entitled *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfila)*. These five black and white portraits depict the woman from different angles, giving her a dignified yet haunting presence. All printed in different sizes, the photographs could almost be proofs for an official portrait, were it not for the conspicuous presence of glass that separates the bearded woman from the viewer.

Broadly speaking, Leonard's work fits into a larger movement of contemporary artists engaged with the politics of representation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, *Preserved Head* sits alongside the work of artists like Christine Borland, Joel-Peter Witkin, the Quay Brothers and Rosamond Purcell, who have all drawn inspiration from historical practices of collecting and displaying body parts in medical museums. In recent years, curators like James Putnam and Kynaston McShine have discussed these artists' work as part of their investigations into the relationship between museum politics and contemporary art.¹ Meanwhile, medical historians

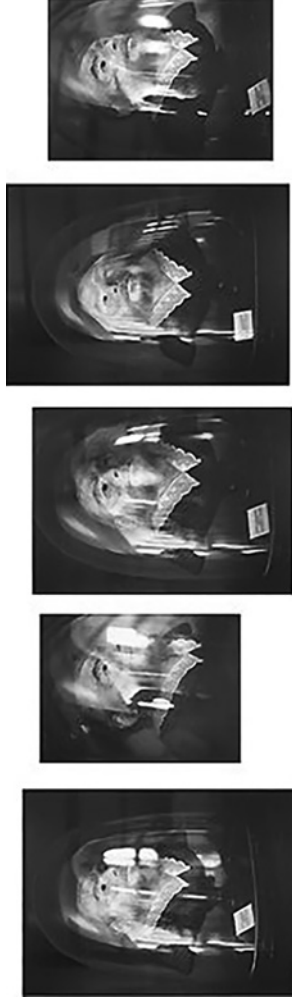


Figure 16.1 *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfla)*, set of five gelatin silver prints, 1991. © Zoe Leonard.

like Samuel J.M.M. Alberti have analyzed the role of so-called “morbid curiosities” in 19th-century medical museums, discussing the dehumanizing processes that anatomical specimens undergo within these collections.² However, these distinct lines of inquiry have seldom crossed over to address how the context of art transforms the meaning of the curious bodies found in these medical spaces. Can contemporary artists truly disrupt the museological display of bodies in a meaningful way, or do they merely extend these practices to a new museum context?

To address this gap, this chapter addresses how Leonard’s *Preserved Head* series activates a new mode of collecting which challenges the medical museum’s authority over the bearded woman’s body. By shifting focus from the dead body to the bell jar, I argue that Leonard’s photographs operate as a bizarre form of taxidermy, re-stuffing the scene with new meaning. As Leonard’s work is incorporated into important art collections like the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, I consider how the transformation of the bearded woman’s body from specimen to artwork engages with themes of death, preservation and memory that run through Leonard’s broader practice.

Looking at the Bell Jar: The Museum Transformed into Curiosity

When Leonard encountered the bearded woman in the bell jar in the early 1990s, she was shocked and horrified. She was not repulsed by the sight of corporeal deformity or a dead body, however—it was the morbid display practices which disgusted Leonard. She was astonished by a system that authorized this unusual corpse to be beheaded, stuffed and costumed for a supposedly scientific display. As Leonard described:

I was shocked when I came across the bearded woman’s head . . . stuffed and mounted, in a jar . . . Her head was placed in the jar to be looked at. But it’s not just her head that I see. I see the bell jar, the specimen identification card, the carved wooden pedestal. I see a set of implied circumstances. Who was in charge? Who put this woman’s head in a jar and called it science?³

Leonard’s photographs attempt to redress this bizarre display. Her camera points at the processes which frame a dead body as a medical curiosity, not just at the bearded woman herself.

Leonard’s objection was compounded by the scant information available about the bearded woman. Publicly available records for the university anatomy department refer to it only as “*Buste momifié, grandeur nature de ‘Germaine D . . .’ femme à barbe*” (“Life-sized mummified bust of ‘Germaine D . . .’ bearded woman”).⁴ Leonard also discovered that the bearded woman worked in a circus and died around the turn of the century, but

there was no record about who she really was, or if she had consented to having her head preserved in a museum.⁵ The label in her bell jar provides only the museum accession number “00297” and the name of her collector, Professor A. Delmas.⁶ Within the anatomy museum, the identity of the bearded woman is extirpated by the exclusive interest in her value as a dead body. Her personal history is severed with her head, her humanity reduced to a museum accession number and her own name replaced by that of her collector.

When Leonard photographed the preserved head in the early 1990s, it formed part of the artist’s exploration into presentations of femininity in highly contrived spaces of display, such as museums, fashion shows or the beauty industry. As Leonard has described of this period of her work:

[T]he objects I chose to . . . photograph were objects that had to do with the representation of women, the presentation of beauty, the control of sexuality. Pictures like the chastity belt, the wax anatomical model, the fashion show work, the beauty calibrator . . . I’m interested in the objects we make and the things we display . . . it’s more embedded in an examination of power dynamics.⁷

Leonard’s images of 18th-century wax anatomical models, for example, reveal the submissive poses of female figures with curious additions like coiffed wigs and pearl necklaces; artistic touches which serve no medical purpose except to mark the figure as feminine. Using black and white photography, Leonard reframes these objects for the viewer, highlighting the contradiction of absurdity and beauty in their presentation.

Leonard’s work of this period can also be considered amongst the emergence of third-wave feminist art practices of the 1980s to early 1990s, which used non-traditional artistic mediums to expose the political, social and economic structures that oppress both genders. Such tendencies corresponded with the feminist discourse of art historians like Linda Nochlin, whose writings sought not only to add female artists to the existing canon, but also to reveal the underlying structures of the art world which marginalize certain practices while centralizing others.⁸ Nochlin’s treatise on the fragmented body as metaphor for modernity resonates particularly strongly with Leonard’s images of the severed, bearded head. As Nochlin observed, the body in pieces assumes a transgressive form within the context of postmodern feminist art, subverting the modernist rationality of a “unified, unambiguously gendered subject.”⁹

Rather than recycle one-dimensional critiques of the male gaze, Leonard’s photographs work to shift the emphasis from women being *looked at* to women *looking*, particularly within traditionally male-dominated spaces like medical museums. As Alberti has noted, 19th-century anatomy museums were usually restricted to female visitors, yet their displays strongly impacted prevailing medical attitudes toward female health by pathologizing

women's bodies within male-defined spectrums of deviance and normality.¹⁰ For instance, the emergence of such museums—with their deformed fetuses in jars and wax models of wombs—went hand-in-hand with the medicalization of pregnancy that shifted women out of traditional midwifery roles. Leonard's work reintroduces a female gaze into spaces like these. By challenging the historical constructs that frame women's bodies, Leonard's work can be placed alongside artists like Fiona Foley and Mary Duffy, whose work Helen McDonald has described as “shifting from danger to pleasure”—moving from investigations of patriarchal gazes to focus on the ways women themselves negotiate images of the female form.¹¹

In 1998, for instance, Leonard described her experience of photographing wax models in a museum where photography was forbidden.¹² Waiting until the security guard was distracted, Leonard furtively climbed onto his chair in order to photograph the model from above, thus activating a transgressive modality of looking which defies both the institutional rules and the omnipresent male gaze in the museum space. Parallels can be drawn here between Leonard's work and Christine Borland's *This Being You Must Create (Spy in the Anatomy Museum)* (1997), in which Borland snapped forbidden photographs in the Montpellier Anatomical Museum using a tiny spy camera. Although the museum was once open to the public, access to the space became strictly restricted to medical personnel in the mid-1990s. Borland's initial request to view the collection was denied. After making persistent appeals to the Dean of the Anatomy School, she was finally granted access with the proviso that she was only allowed to draw in the space.¹³ Borland's covertly taken photographs are blurry and grainy, presented in a rapid slideshow alongside her drawings. The frenzied presentation technique physically disrupts the viewer's gaze, making the viewer hyper-aware of the regulated forms of seeing privileged within museum spaces. Like Leonard's photographs, Borland's technique of reframing of the anatomical collection is not merely concerned with curious objects, but with transgressing authorized or official forms of looking.

In *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfila)*, Leonard uses a number of visual techniques to challenge the medical gaze that frames the bearded woman as an anatomical specimen rather than a real person. For example, the rich tones in Leonard's photographs highlight the reflections on the surface of the bell jar, emphasizing the glass that separates the bearded woman and viewer. The pictures, however, are cropped closely around the woman's head, blurring the boundaries between the bell jar and the background so its shape is almost hidden. Leonard simultaneously calls attention to the surface of the glass while attempting to visually emancipate the bearded woman from the confines of her glass tomb. Taking the photographs from five different angles, Leonard also gives us the impression of different expressions on the bearded woman's face. This helps to humanize the bearded woman, hinting at a multi-faceted identity beyond the pathology that defines her in the anatomy museum.



Figure 16.2 Detail of *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman* (*Musée Orfila*), from a set of 5 gelatin silver prints, 1991. © Zoe Leonard.

In this way, Leonard's photographs activate what Susan Sontag describes as "photographic seeing"—guiding the viewer to see what an individual artist observes of the world.¹⁴ As Sontag argues, photographs are never just a faithful record but an evaluation which reflects the photographer's particular viewpoint. Leonard introduces her own manner of "photographic seeing" by guiding the viewer to look *at* the bell jar instead of through it, highlighting the display conventions which present the preserved head as a medical curiosity. To emphasize this personal mode of looking, Leonard leaves traces of the image-making process visible, including small scratches

and imperfections on the negative created during the hand-developing process.¹⁵ These details are intended to reaffirm the artist's role in creating the image, intrinsically embedded with her particular biases and viewpoints.

Leonard's personal manner of "photographic seeing" challenges a supposedly objective gaze which reduces the humanity of the bearded woman to a set of medical "facts" about her condition. In doing so, Leonard also undermines the scientific authority of the museum display by questioning the very authenticity of the curious specimen:

[T]here is no proof of gender in the bell jar. That could be a man with earrings and a lace collar on. I was told that it is the head of a bearded woman, but there is no proof of gender in the head . . . If there's no proof of gender, there's nothing to study, no scientific purpose. Why is she in the bell jar?¹⁶

Despite the implied authenticity of the specimen in the anatomy museum, there is no accessible medical evidence of the object's veracity as a "genuine" bearded woman. The display instead relies upon the expected legitimacy of the institution combined with cultural signifiers of femininity, such as the earrings and lace collar—all things unrelated to the anatomical determination of gender. So why, as Leonard points out, preserve her body at all? What purpose does her corpse serve beyond curious titillation?

Leonard's photographs reveal that the contrived display of the bearded woman is driven—at least in part—by curious amusement or spectacle, rather than performing any real scientific function. In doing so, she challenges the very *raison d'être* of the medical museum and undermines its implied superiority over popular displays of curious bodies. Around the same time the head was preserved for the anatomy museum, bearded women were a staple act in freak shows across Europe and the United States. As Robert Bogdan describes in his history of the freak show, questions around the authenticity of bearded women were central to their publicity and display.¹⁷ In other words, part of the thrill of looking at bearded women was the attempt to determine whether or not they were "real," inviting viewers to analyze their body in relation to binary models of sex and gender. However, in freak shows and other live displays of bearded women, bearded women were complicit in the performance, relied upon to speak for the authenticity of their own condition. In the anatomy museum, the dead body is spoken for exclusively by experts, its authenticity implied by its inclusion in a scientific institution. In fact, 19th-century freak show organizers capitalized on this implied legitimacy by soliciting endorsements from anatomists, scientists and other medical professionals who would testify to the "genuineness" of their freaks. In *Preserved Head*, Leonard asks us to question our reliance on this expertise, pointing to the fact that this specimen points more toward curious titillation than legitimate scientific knowledge or education.

However, it is important to note that the bearded woman in the bell jar was hidden away from public view when Leonard encountered it in the Musée Orfila archives in 1991. It was already a relic of an old way of thinking in the museum, a troubling throwback to a time when it was acceptable to behead and stuff the remains of an unusual woman in the name of science. As such, the subject of Leonard's photographs was not a contemporary museological strategy, but a "dead" museum practice.

Musée Orfila's collection originated in the late 18th century, first established as the anatomical cabinet of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris (now part of Paris Descartes University—Sorbonne Paris Cité). It was expanded in the 1840s by the dean of the faculty, Mathieu J.B. Orfila, who re-established the collection as a museum of comparative anatomy in 1844.¹⁸ By the 20th century it had fallen into disrepair, until Professor André Delmas began its restoration and expansion, combining it with the lymphatic collections of the Musée Rouvière in the 1940s.¹⁹ The newly minted Musée d'Anatomie Delmas-Orfila-Rouvière eventually became the largest anatomy museum in France, containing about 5,800 human and animal anatomical specimens, including the preserved head of the bearded woman.

The primary purpose of the Musée Orfila collection was to support medical research and the education of surgical students in the university.²⁰ However, in recent years, changing pedagogical models and new technologies have made collections like these less relevant to contemporary medical education. As museum practices and the underlying rationale for medical collections have fundamentally shifted, many of the most gruesome objects have been hidden away, given over to a new era of public engagement.²¹ Although some notable collections have indeed been successfully re-adapted into public museums,²² the Musée Orfila became a casualty of these broader changes, closing for good in 2005.

The morbid curiosity in Leonard's photographs, I argue, is not really the preserved head of the bearded woman at all. Rather, Leonard presents the outdated museum practices as the bizarre, dead thing. She shifts the object of curiosity, urging the viewer to look *at* the bell jar, not just through it. Just as the anatomy museum once preserved dead specimens, Leonard too uses her camera to preserve the dead museum practices. Yet, by transforming the bearded woman from specimen to artwork, does she truly disrupt the practices of collecting morbid curiosities, or merely transplant it into a new museological context? Is Leonard anything more than a curious collector herself?

Death and the Dilemma of the Taxidermied Object

Jean Baudrillard describes collecting as "an everyday myth capable of absorbing all anxieties about time and death" which can symbolically transcend the limitations of our own mortality:

The man who collects things may already be dead, yet he managed literally to outlive himself through his collection which, originating within

this life, recapitulates him indefinitely beyond the point of death by absorbing death itself into the series and the cycle.²³

Collecting, in this view, is a means of establishing dominion over time, an act of metaphorically mourning for our own deaths. What, then, does it mean to collect dead things, be it a preserved human head or a photograph of a “dead” museum practice? Leonard’s photographs grapple with this complex question, relating it to key themes of death, preservation and memory that run throughout her artistic practice.

Leonard describes her interest in collections as a “fascination with the human urge to hold onto things past their time, as a way of avoiding our universal fear of death.”²⁴ In particular, she seems drawn to the preservation techniques that museums employ to defy loss, such as taxidermy, embalming, freeze-drying or pickling.²⁵ This captivation can be observed in her extensive photographic explorations of natural history museum displays. *Carnivores* (1992), for instance, depicts a display case with two preserved bear pelts hanging above a photograph of a living bear, drawing attention to the strange slippage between living creature and dead object in the museum. Her *Trophies* series (1989–1990) similarly depicts grotesque arrangements of hunting trophies, in which animal pelts and stuffed heads have been fashioned to retain a lifelike appearance—highlighting the peculiar contradiction of man’s attempt to preserve the very thing he has destroyed.

Following these explorations of preserved animals, Leonard took a more personal approach to her interest in taxidermy and death in the installation *Strange Fruit (For David)* (1992–1997). In 1992, Leonard lost her close friend and fellow artist David Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS-related complications. A meditation on loss and a tribute to his memory, *Strange Fruit* consists of orange, banana, grapefruit, lemon and avocado peels painstakingly repaired with crude stitching, zippers and buttons, into grotesque caricatures of their former selves. Leonard’s act of reconstituting the fruit skins into empty, distorted semblances of their original form can be seen as a crude form of taxidermy, creating a poignant relationship to Leonard’s interest in preserved specimens like the bearded woman. Both take the skin of something formerly living, empties it of internal matter and reconfigures its outer shell to make a peculiar semblance of the living thing.

Taxidermy’s success is gauged by how well it can evoke the living essence of the original form—it is qualitatively evaluated by its ability to erase the process of its making, to disguise the transition between life and death. Leonard plays with the absurdity of this process, the bizarre expectation that the remains of something dead can be used to suitably represent its life. The crudeness of Leonard’s stitching emphasizes these seams instead of disguising them. She draws attention to the ultimate failure of the taxidermied object to stand in for the living thing. However, despite its inadequacies, her relationship to taxidermy does not seem to be completely critical; rather, the tenderness Leonard employs in mending the fruit peels connects to an earnest human desire to preserve the memory of something beloved.



Figure 16.3 *Strange Fruit (for David)*, Zoe Leonard, installation made from orange, banana, grapefruit, lemon and avocado peels with thread, zippers, buttons, sinew, needles, plastic, wire, stickers, fabric and trim wax, 1992–1997. Philadelphia Museum of Art. © Zoe Leonard.

As a memorial for a deceased loved one, the material decomposition of *Strange Fruit* adds an additional layer of complexity to the artwork and its relationship to the limitations of taxidermy. Leonard actively decided against heroic measures of preservation designed by art conservators, which—perhaps surprisingly—did not deter the Philadelphia Museum of art from acquiring the work in 1998.²⁶ In regards to her decision not to pursue conservation measures, Leonard stated:

Strange Fruit deals with the conflict between hanging on and letting go. Which in a way is what mourning is . . . [E]very scrap is saved, painstakingly mended, but since the peels themselves are not preserved, they continue to decay. Over time, they shrivel, fade. . . slowly disintegrating.²⁷

Although her technique of reconstituting fruit peels recalls the processes of taxidermy, Leonard resists extreme measures of conservation as a way to reflect upon the perverse relationship between preservation and mourning. In this way, the use of taxidermied fruit peels in *Strange Fruit* reflects the

desire to physically halt the processes of loss, but hints at the impossibility of truly restoring its living essence.

These meditations on death and preservation can also be observed in *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman* (*Musée Orfila*), where Leonard's photographs of a taxidermied body form a complex relationship to its status as a museum object. With few exceptions, museums collect objects rather than living things; here, death can be seen as a divisive process which transforms the subject (the living person) into an object (the dead body/corpse). Within the *Musée Orfila*, the bearded woman is presented without a name or information about her life, affirming her status as a dead object. Yet details such as her open eyes and clothing are intended to evoke the living subject. Taxidermy has a strange relationship to the morbid transformation between subject and object—skillful taxidermy is intended to conjure up an idea of the animated living body, but does so through the reconstitution of the inanimate corpse. As a form of preservation, taxidermy collapses and confuses the division between live person and dead body, subject and object.

The unsettling categorical collapse initiated by taxidermy is mirrored within Leonard's approach to photography. Like taxidermy, photography freezes something in a moment in time, but the representation never quite manages to replace the original. Leonard seems to take a similar philosophical approach to the representational power of photographs, which are approached as conceptually interchangeable with the museum object. In the case of *Strange Fruit*, for instance, Leonard eventually allowed the Philadelphia Museum of Art to preserve twenty-five sample fruits from the series. These were intended to operate as remnants of the larger work rather than constituting the piece itself, to "serve almost as photographs of the piece."²⁸ In Leonard's view, the preserved object and the photograph both fundamentally operate as talismans to conjure ideas and memories but cannot wholly replace the original thing or person.

Treating photography like a bizarre form of taxidermy, Leonard turns her camera toward the museum in order to freeze a moment in time, empty it of its pre-existing assumptions, and re-stuff it full of new meaning. Like taxidermy, the photograph is used to prevent loss or decay of the object, but simultaneously initiates the loss of humanity through the transformation of living subject to dead object. Moreover, Leonard's photographs work to preserve the *act* of preserving the head of the bearded woman, just as the anatomy museum preserved her body in the first place. By doing so, Leonard challenges the objectification of the bearded woman within the anatomy museum, attempting to restore a sense of the woman's lived humanity.

In *Preserved Head*, the success of Leonard's gesture is, however, ultimately thwarted by the photograph's failure to revivify the original thing. Just as taxidermy is only able to achieve a bizarre approximation of the living thing, so too is photography limited in its ability to restore its subject. It can only, at best, be a tool to preserve a memory and mourn the dead. One is reminded of Roland Barthes's deeply personal relationship with the photograph in *Camera Lucida*, in which his application of semiotics is

blatantly framed by his grief over his mother's death—an approach that has proven maddeningly subjective to subsequent academics. Yet perhaps the wide influence of Barthes' text speaks intuitively to the intimate nature of all photographs, with their thwarted conjoining of death and life. The use of photography in Leonard's *Preserved Head* or the taxidermied fruit peels in *Strange Fruit* operate in a similar way, by emphasizing the unresolved tension between “hanging on and letting go.”²⁹ As symbols of mourning, such objects are always limited by the subjective narrative of their possessor, vulnerable to perpetual obliteration and reinvention as the narrative is amended, forgotten or reinterpreted.

In the case of Leonard's series, the photographs of the preserved head are also photographs of an outdated museum practice, a dead way of thinking. As taxidermy froze the bearded woman's body in time, so too does Leonard's camera freeze a moment in the history of collecting medical curiosities, framing the collection itself as an anachronistic curiosity. By preserving the scene, she demonstrates a reluctant fealty with the museum practices of collecting and preservation. Although critical of the power relationships represented in the medical museum, Leonard's images wrestle with larger questions about the human fascination with halting the processes of death, revealing the curious slippages between subject and object that taxidermy and photography share. Leonard's photographs can never truly reanimate the bearded woman; at best, they can disable the frameworks which interred her in that bell jar and rewrite the narrative that surrounds her body. Yet, by doing so, Leonard enters the same cycle of destruction and preservation initiated by the taxidermist in the first place. She, too, becomes a curious collector.

Transforming the Bearded Woman from Anatomical Specimen to Artistic Subject

In 2008, Leonard's *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfila)* series was purchased by the Musée National d'Art Moderne in the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the largest collection of modern and contemporary art in Europe. Relocated into such a prestigious collection, the image of the bearded woman becomes ineluctably framed by the aesthetic and political frameworks of a prominent art museum. This new museological context tacitly legitimizes Leonard's approach as a valid artistic strategy for disrupting the outmoded gazes that framed the bearded woman in the anatomy museum. Here, Leonard's photographs work to transform the head of the bearded woman from an anatomical specimen to artistic subject. This final section briefly addresses the implications and limits of this transformation, and the role the artist plays in these processes of curious collecting.

During the 2009–2010 exhibition season at the Centre Pompidou, Leonard's photographs were displayed in an exhibition that focused on the work of female artists in the collection. In this context in particular, the bearded woman becomes strongly emblematic of the feminist politics and

institutional critique with which Leonard engages throughout her practice. The wall label accompanying *Preserved Head* included this quote from Leonard:

I can't speak for the 'Bearded Woman' or to her. But in the darkroom that first time I knew that I was another person, along with the taxidermist and directors of the Musée Orfila, that had control of her image.³⁰

Here, Leonard openly acknowledges the dilemma posed by her own authority over the display of the bearded woman. Leonard's technique of "photographic seeing" helps reveal the subjective viewpoint of her photographs. However, the effectiveness of her strategy is contingent upon a type of close examination that only further affirms her photographs' position as art objects.

In the art museum, Leonard's role as artist supersedes the identity of the bearded woman, just as the name "Professor A. Delmas" displaced the bearded woman's identity on the bell jar label. The artist, too, ultimately takes control of the bearded woman's image. Justified within the framework of artistic criticality, the artist projects a new set of meanings and associations onto her curious body. In Leonard's photographs, the image of the bearded woman is understood as a product of the curious collecting practices that transformed her body into a medical curiosity. Her work can be understood as displaying the *display* of the curious specimen, or reframing the frame. Here, the meaning of the dead body is contingent upon our knowledge and interpretation of the artist's wider practice and intentions, and the assumption that these images operate under the critical structures of contemporary art.

But, much like the medical museum, the art context too is a regulated mode of display which frames the bearded woman's curious body within a particular set of conventions and values. Our reading of the preserved head in Leonard's photographs is still ultimately reliant on the vision and political position of the artist. The museum type may be different, but the bearded woman's head is still on display—the significance of her curious body is still determined by the agenda of a maker, framed by an institutional context with a particular set of values and expectations. In Leonard's case, a postmodernist feminist narrative marks the bearded woman as a symbol for the display practices which present a gendered, pathological view of the body in the medical museum. However, the context of the art institution itself also adds a wider framework that foregrounds her unusual body in aesthetic and/or art historical concerns—that is, the bearded woman is now seen *as* art.

Theorists like Arthur Danto and George Dickie have gone so far as to predicate the very definition of art within an institutional framework, arguing that an object fundamentally requires a presentation within an "art world" context in order to be considered a work of art.³¹ While

these definitions have been widely criticized for excluding art created outside the art world mainstream, it nonetheless highlights the strong role the institution plays in delineating the art object in the eyes of the modern viewer. Certainly since Marcel Duchamp's iconic *Fountain* tested the ontological limits of the art world in 1917, the legacy of the ready-made has shown that the integration of objects into an artistic framework creates fundamentally new ways of thinking about them. Extending this notion beyond an art context, Svetlana Alpers famously described the museum as "a way of seeing," illustrating how it transforms an object into art by isolating it from the world and offering it up for attentive looking.³² An object in an art museum can become a work of art simply by being present there.

By transposing the bearded woman from medical museum to art museum, Leonard takes on the role of curious collector by initiating this transformation from curious specimen to artistic symbol. The consequences of this for the bearded woman is that, once again, her unusual body is placed on display with or without her permission. Moreover, the significance of her body is determined by another agent, a collector who did not know her but has an agenda to place upon her severed head. Of course, Leonard's photographs of the bearded woman did not suddenly become art by being incorporated into the Pompidou collection; Leonard's status as artist moved these images beyond mere documentation long before they were formally incorporated into a display space. Yet, their presence in an art museum does set up a specific type of encounter which enacts a tacit legitimization of the images *as* artworks. In particular, the function of the photograph is framed by the creative role of the artist: here, it is most importantly an artwork *by* Zoe Leonard, and only secondarily a picture *of* a bearded woman. Leonard's photographs address the latent power imbalances present in the anatomy museum, but she can't avoid re-inscribing these same imbalances within the context of the art world. Here, the bearded woman's head is still being used as a way of illustrating a particular narrative under the direction of an omnipotent collector.

However, this observation is not necessarily intended as an outright dismissal of artistic representations of morbid curiosities. Rather, such images help to gain a better critical understanding of the politics of display at play in both contemporary and historical museum collections, and how these forces shape our perception of death and the body. Just as Alberti described the "dehumanizing" processes that transformed dead humans into scientific specimens in 19th-century medical museums³³ a complementary argument could be made that the critical self-consciousness of postmodern art performs a reverse "humanizing" gesture—however, such a claim warrants its own investigation, beyond the scope of this chapter. But just the fact that art is assumed to be an appropriate and effective stage for challenging historical museological practices tells us a great deal about the socio-political position of art in contemporary society. Andrew McClellan, for instance,

offers a broad overview of how art museums have engaged with their public from the Age of Enlightenment to the present day, charting the rise and fall of various ideologies like education and public engagement, interpretation and social activism. Despite this constantly shifting landscape of museological practice, he argues that museums in Western societies have continuously harbored utopian expectations of art—a widespread, underlying assumption that art and its institutions are an important source of moral and social good.³⁴ This can be tied closely to concepts like Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital," the expectation that access to these intangible forces of good add abstractly to social, material and political success.³⁵ As such, Leonard does not transport the bearded onto neutral ground through her photographs—there is theoretical power at stake here, and a tacit assumption that this new artistic context will favorably emancipate the bearded woman.

I would argue that this is precisely what gives Leonard's *Preserved Head* photographs their resonance and edge—they may not be fully resolved from an ethical or political point of view, but this serves to further highlight the complex, slippery relationship we have with the collection and display of so-called morbid curiosities. Moreover, this series builds upon Leonard's broader artistic interest in how institutions as diverse as medical museums and art galleries actively participate in constructions of femininity, bodily integrity or authenticity. Placed in the context of art, Leonard's photographs activate a type of critical gaze that places emphasis on the curious artifice of these historical and institutional processes. As she turns her camera toward the medical museum, she attempts to shift the curious gaze from the body of the bearded woman to the absurdity of the outdated museum practices which entombed her in the bell jar—Leonard directs the viewer to look *at* the bell jar, rather than just at the dead thing within in. Yet, by doing so, Leonard paradoxically engages in the very type of curious collecting that she critiques.

Since the closure of the Musée Orfila in 2005, the fate of the preserved head of the bearded woman remains unknown. She most likely sits in a storage room somewhere, her whiskers gathering dust as she waits for eventual destruction or for the next curious observer to take an interest in preserving her. However, no matter her fate, visitors to Paris can always see her likeness in the Pompidou art museum, in Leonard's *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman (Musée Orfila)* series. Here, the bearded woman won't be seen merely as another medical specimen displayed for her anatomical peculiarity. Leonard's work and the context of the art museum transforms her unusual body into an artwork, reframing it as a symbol for the disturbing practices which authorized her to be beheaded, stuffed and placed on display in the name of science. Within a postmodern, feminist art framework, Leonard's photographs of the bearded woman expose the power structures extant in the medical museum, which have used the morbid display of a dead woman's head in the construction of a gendered, normative body.

However, as I have argued, this re-contextualization does not truly emancipate the bearded woman. To be true to the spirit of Leonard's series, it is imperative for the viewer to question the place of the bearded woman in the art museum as well. There is a tacit assumption that art provides an appropriate and effective platform to challenge the implied legitimacy of the anatomy museum. But art, too, provides a particular framework for looking at her curious body. Both Leonard's photographs and the museum itself set up certain ways of looking at the preserved head, in which the artist's political and artistic agenda supersedes the lived humanity of the bearded woman. The preserved head of the bearded woman is once again placed on display, this time with a new set of meanings determined by a different collector.

Rather than rely on the presumably redemptive qualities of art, I argue that Leonard's work treats photography more like a form of taxidermy. She points her camera toward the outdated collecting practices of the anatomy museum, framing these as the real morbid curiosity—a weird, dead thing much stranger than the preserved head of the bearded woman itself. Just as the anatomist preserved the bearded woman, Leonard uses photography to freeze a historical museum practice, but empties it and re-stuffs it full of new meaning. It becomes a distorted, reconfigured version of the original, which preserves its memory but fails to truly reconstitute the real thing. Taking on the role of curious collector, Leonard's work activates a new mode of collecting that highlights the tension between hanging on and letting go, preservation and destruction, memory and loss, life and death.

Leonard's *Preserved Head* series demonstrates how both photography and the museum have the potential to endlessly contain and reframe one another in a perpetual life cycle grounded in the death of the object: the art museum can collect photographs of dead things, but so too can photographs collect the dead museum. If, as Baudrillard claimed, collecting is indeed a sense of mourning one's own death, then this endless loop of collecting and re-collecting demonstrates the obsessive but ultimately futile urge to halt this inevitable loss. In the context of contemporary art—and particularly within a postmodern feminist framework—both photography and the museum can become self-conscious receptacles which work to expose the underlying power structures of the other. Caught in the crosshairs of this complex theoretical exchange is the preserved head of the bearded woman. Leonard's photographs mourn this loss of her humanity but do not really help put her to rest. As with taxidermy, the original becomes ever more deformed and abstracted each time its seams are ripped open and stuffed with a new set of meanings.

Notes

- 1 Kynaston McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999); James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).
- 2 Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, *Morbid Curiosities: Medical Museums in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

- 3 Zoe Leonard, as quoted in Laura Cottingham, "Zoe Leonard," *Journal of Contemporary Art* 6 (1993), accessed October 6, 2010, <http://www.jca-online.com/leonard.html>.
- 4 "Buste momifié, grandeur nature de Germaine D, femme à barbe," *Musée Anatomique Delmas-Orfila-Rouvière*, accessed May 18, 2005, <http://www.bio.medicale.univ-paris5.fr/anat/IMG/pdf/barbe.pdf>.
- 5 Leonard, in Cottingham, "Zoe Leonard."
- 6 This suggests that the bearded woman was added to the collection during Professor André Delmas' tenure as curator from 1947, when he began to restore the museum. This is further supported by the absence of the preserved head from the museum catalogue compiled by Charles-Nicolas Houel in 1881. See: Charles-Nicolas Houel, *Catalogue du Musée Orfila* (Paris: Paul Dupont-Masson, 1881).
- 7 Zoe Leonard, interviewed by Lynne Cooke, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (December 3, 2008), accessed October 6, 2012, <http://blip.tv/museo-reina-sofia/encuentro-con-zoe-leonard-1577901>.
- 8 See, in particular: Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989 [1971]), 145–178.
- 9 Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 54–55.
- 10 See: Alberti, *Morbid Curiosities*, 134–136, 195.
- 11 Helen McDonald, *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 38–52.
- 12 Leonard, in Cottingham, "Zoe Leonard."
- 13 Anne Morgan Barclay, "Memorial for Anonymous: An Interview with Christine Borland," *Sculpture Magazine* 18 (October 1999), accessed November 1, 2012, <http://sculpture.org/documents/scmag99/oct99/borland/borland.shtml>.
- 14 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 2008 [1977]), 88–89.
- 15 Cottingham, "Zoe Leonard."
- 16 Leonard, in Cottingham, "Zoe Leonard."
- 17 Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 226–229. See also: Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 27–29.
- 18 José Ramón Bertomeu-Sánchez and Agustí Nieto-Galan, "Introduction," in *Chemistry, Medicine, and Crime: Mateu J.B. Orfila (1787–1853) and His Times*, edited by José Ramón Bertomeu-Sánchez et al. (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2006), 13.
- 19 André Delmas, "Le Musée Orfila et le Musée Rouvière," in *La Médecine à Paris du XIII^e siècle*, edited by André Pecker (Paris: Editions Hervas, 1984), 289–294.
- 20 For a broad overview of the role played by anatomical collections in medical training of the 19th and 20th centuries, see: Alberti, "Chapter 6: Viewing Pathology: Medical Museums and Their Visitors," *Morbid Curiosities*.
- 21 Alberti, *Morbid Curiosities*, 195.
- 22 In the UK, for instance, notable examples include the Wellcome Collection and Hunterian Museums in London. For a more in-depth examination of the contemporary legacies of historical medical collections, see: Ken Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2006).
- 23 Jean Baudrillard, "The Systems of Collecting," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal and translated by Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994 [1968]), 17.
- 24 Leonard, in Cottingham, "Zoe Leonard."

- 25 For an overview of the preservation techniques employed in 19th century medical collections, see: Alberti, "Chapter 4: Preserving Pathology: Craft and Technique in the Medical Museum," *Morbid Curiosities*.
- 26 Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 143–147.
- 27 Leonard, in Beth Dungan, "An Interview with Zoe Leonard," *Discourse* 24 (Spring 2002): 83.
- 28 Leonard, as quoted in Buskirk, *Contingent Object*, 145.
- 29 Leonard, as quoted in Dungan, "Interview with Zoe Leonard," 83.
- 30 Leonard, as quoted on the interpretation panel accompanying this work in the exhibition *elles@centrepompidou*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (27 May 2009–21 February 2011). Original source listed as: Zoe Leonard, interview by Anna Blume in *Zoe Leonard*, cat. Expo. Vienne, Wiener Secession, 1997.
- 31 See: Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); George Dickie, *The Art Circle* (New York: Haven, 1984).
- 32 Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 25–32.
- 33 Alberti, *Morbid Curiosities*.
- 34 Andrew McClellan, "A Brief History of the Art Museum Public," in *Art and its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. Andrew McClellan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 1–50.
- 35 See: Pierre Bourdieu, "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception" [1968], in *The Sociology of Art: A Reader*, ed. Jeremy Tanner (London: Routledge, 2003), 164–177.

Bibliography

- Adams, Rachel. *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Alberti, Samuel J.M.M. *Morbid Curiosities: Medical Museums in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Alpers, Svetlana. "The Museum as a Way of Seeing." In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, 25–32. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Arnold, Ken. *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2006.
- Barclay, Anne Morgan. "Memorial for Anonymous: An Interview with Christine Borland." *Sculpture Magazine*, no. 18, October 1999. Accessed November 1, 2012. <http://sculpture.org/documents/scmag99/oct99/borland/borland.shtml>.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage Books, 2000 [1980].
- Baudrillard, Jean. "The Systems of Collecting." In *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, translated by Roger Cardinal, 7–24. London: Reaktion Books, 1994 [1968].
- Bertomeu-Sánchez, José Ramón and Agustí Nieto-Galan. "Introduction." In *Chemistry, Medicine, and Crime: Mateu J.B. Orfila (1787–1853) and His Times*, edited by José Ramón Bertomeu-Sánchez and Agustí Nieto-Galan, ix–xxv. Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History, 2006.

- Bogdan, Robert. *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception." In *The Sociology of Art: A Reader*, edited by Jeremy Tanner, 164–177. London: Routledge, 2003 [1968].
- Buskirk, Martha. *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.
- Cottingham, Laura. "Zoe Leonard." *Journal of Contemporary Art* 6 (1993). Accessed October 6, 2010. <http://www.jca-online.com/leonard.html>.
- Danto, Arthur. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Delmas, André. "Le Musée Orfila et le Musée Rouvière." In *La Médecine à Paris du XIII^e siècle*, edited by André Pecker, 289–294. Paris: Editions Hervas, 1984.
- Dickie, George. *The Art Circle*. New York: Haven, 1984.
- Dungan, Beth. "An Interview with Zoe Leonard." *Discourse* 24 (Spring 2002): 83.
- Houel, Charles-Nicolas. *Catalogue du Musée Orfila*. Paris: Paul Dupont-Masson, 1881.
- Leonard, Zoe. "Interview by Lynn Cooke." *Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia*, December 3, 2008. Accessed October 6, 2012. <http://blip.tv/museo-reina-sofia/encuentro-con-zoe-leonard-1577901>.
- McClellan, Andrew. "A Brief History of the Art Museum Public." In *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, edited by Andrew McClellan, 1–50. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003.
- McDonald, Helen. *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- McShine, Kynsaton. *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999.
- Musée Anatomique Delmas-Orfila-Rouvière. "Buste momifié, grandeur nature de Germaine D, femme à barbe." Accessed May 18, 2005. <http://www.biomedicale.univ-paris5.fr/anat/IMG/pdf/barbe.pdf>.
- Nochlin, Linda. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" In *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, 145–178. London: Thames and Hudson, 1989 [1971].
- Nochlin, Linda. *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994.
- Putnam, James. *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. London: Penguin Books, 2008 [1977].
- Stevens, Elizabeth. *Anatomy as Spectacle: Public Exhibitions of the Body from 1700 to Present*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Index

- absence 1, 11, 14, 51, 98, 287; emptiness 12, 102, 103, 284, 301; of contextual information 10, 93, 159, 166, 167, 249, 295; iconic image 121; of images of dead 2, 4, 13, 62, 76, 133, 134, of victims 62–3, 66, 72, 94; 116, 259, 270–1; political acknowledgement of 284; through repetition 191; see also aerial bombings
- Abu Ghraib 88, 181, 188, 189, 193, 285
- aerial bombing(s) 24, 62–6, 78n46, 79n51; accompanying text of 62; Allied bombing 67–9, 73; Blitz on Britain 71, 74–6, 79n51, 80n67; reporting in mass media 64; viewers' responses to 63–64; see also civilian deaths; British museums; German museums; images of death: absence/presence of
- Afxentiou, Gregoris 89–93; as terrorist 92; religious display of 91; see also Imperial War Museum; "Imprisoned Graves"; museum at Machairas Monastery
- Allen, James 130, 141–2; see also *Witness* (exhibition)
- anatomy museums 13; authenticity of 299; dehumanizing process 295; medical museums 293, 295, 296, 306, 307; politics of representation 293, 303; power imbalance in 306; see also *Life after Death* (exhibition); Musée Orfila; *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman* (Musée Orfila)
- anti-lynching exhibitions 133–34; absence of photographs 134; emphasis on individual artists 134
- Ataturk, Mustafa Kemal 85, 86, 97, 101, 102, 104; see also Cyprus museums
- Atget, Eugène 171, 174n16, 174–5n17; see also forensic photography
- atrocities 103, 121; and religion 87–88; as spectacle 7, 12, 269; confronting 217; ethics 259, 266; fetishization of 105; iconic photographs of 84, 87, 88, 101–102; in art spaces 186; Jay Prosser 121; paintings of 118; photography 118, 266–7; power of images 101; protecting viewer from 229; sacred 89; W. T. M. Mitchell 88; see also Abu Ghraib; iconography; sacrifice *War/Photography* (exhibition): absence of images of atrocity; Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum
- audience, cultural background of 194; Western audiences 195; see also *Life before Death* (exhibition); responses, viewers
- authority: archive owner's 169; artistic 305; challenging 233n37, 295, 297, 299; of photography 3, 14; of museum 3, 13, 15n2; racist 264; state 36, 37, 280; see also *Erased Lynching* (series); *May 1, 2011* (installation); *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*
- Azoulay, Ariella 64, 115, 116, 171, 172, 216, 278; *Death's Showcase* 14n2
- Babasaki-mon, photograph of 32–37
- Baldwin, James 130, 140
- Barthes, Roland 2, 102, 127n37, 231n5; *Family of Man* exhibition

- 113, 248; *stadium and punctum* 51, 213n7
- Bataille, George 86; *see also* human sacrifice
- Battle of Britain 71, 79n51
- Benjamin, Walter 6, 171, 174n17; *see also* forensic photography
- Benveniste, Henriette-Rika 52, 53; cosmopolitanism of the past 55
- Blackman, Robin 165, 166; *see also LAPD Archives* (exhibition)
- body 240; *see also* anatomy museums; framing; *Life after Death* (exhibition); *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*
- Bourdieu, Pierre 125n13, 210, 285, 307
- Brady's Gallery, New York 171; *see also* war photography
- Bratton, William J. 166; *see also LAPD Archive* (exhibition)
- Bril, Martin 168; *see also Plaats Delict: Amsterdam* (exhibition)
- British museums: absence of images of dead British civilians 62–3, 66; celebration of the Blitz 74–6; images of dead German civilians 66; Imperial War Museum, London 4, 62, 63, 66, 73, 75, 76; *see also* Afxentiou, Gregoris; Imperial War Museum Archives 72; National War Museum, Scotland 4, 62; *see also* displaying images of death
- Brooklyn Museum of Fine Art: *see also War/Photography* (exhibition)
- Butler, Judith 125n15, 140, 187, 194, 247; *Frames of War* 216, 277, 285; on Abu Ghraib 181, 188, 193; *see also* contextualization
- Buurman, Ruud 168; *see also Plaats Delict: Amsterdam* (exhibition)
- Campbell, David: *Horrific Blindness* 30–31; *see also* displaying death: metonymic imagery
- celebratory announcement of death 9
- censorship 8, 66, 189; self-censorship 3, 63
- civilian deaths 4, 62–5, 68, 186; in Vietnam War 65; Robert Capa and Spanish Civil War 64; viewers' response 65; *see also* British museums; displaying death; German museums
- collective: curiosity 13; history 208; identity 182, 186, 194; memory 3
- Commando Museum, Cyprus: *see* Museum of Commando Fighters, Cyprus
- commemorative purpose of museums 29
- concentration camps 3, 27, 40, 41, 59n73, 65, 66, 67, 94, 222
- contextual information 6, 8; absence of 10, 93, 159, 166, 167, 249, 295; labels 10, 11, 47, 54, 140, 210–11, 221, 284, 296; wall text 44, 47, 48, 50, 53, 54, 140, 202, 284; *see also Life after Death* (exhibition); *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*
- contextualization 2, 3, 209; absence of 189; effect on viewer 10; original context; 179, 181; photographs of death and 5; recontextualization 208, 308; removing context 250; transforming meaning 295; *see also* Abu Ghraib; decontextualization of images of death; framing; meaning; Ramadan, Khaled D.; *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*
- Coulter-Smith, Graham 189; *see also* Ramadan, Khaled D.
- crime scene photography 8, 164; for reinforcement of police prestige 168; in books 168; *see also* evidence *LAPD Archives* (exhibition); meaning: shifts in; *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam*
- criminology: *see* Lombroso's collection
- critical reflection: *see* viewing
- criticism: institutional critique 8; *Family of Man* exhibition 208; Jewish Museum in Thessaloniki 4; *Without Sanctuary* 136–40; *Witness* (exhibition) 130–1
- curation 3, 123, 124n1, 130, 134, 146n36, 166, 168–9, 173, 193, 201, 206–11; *archon* 169, 170; choice of photographs 222–3; police as curators 168–9; *see also* police archives; *What Will You Remember When I'm Gone?* (exhibition); *see also* framing
- Cypriot museums 84; guerrilla hideouts as museums 89; liberation struggle 87; national monuments 87; National Struggle Museums; portraits of

- martyrs and heroes 88; religion and national identity 87, 89, 105; saints 84; *see also* atrocity; displaying death: Machairas Monastery; Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church; "Imprisoned Graves"; museum-cenotaph; Museum of the Martyrs of Tochni; nationalism; sacrifice; death: iconography of; viewer(s): emotions
- dead bandits: *see Lombroso collection*
- dead museum practice 13, 300, 301, 304, 308; *see also Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*
- death 121, 171, 172; aestheticizing 2, 5–6, 9, 50, 172, 216; and preservation 302–3; as subject 116; displaying photographs of 1; exhibiting: *see* displaying death; fetishizing 2, 5; implied 3; indirect depiction of 21, 37, 117; in Western societies 124; of children 204; pornography of 6, 8, 172; professional management of 11, 245; war and 7; *see also* atrocity; displaying death; funerary photography; iconic photographs; iconography; Leonard, Zoe: taxidermied object; photographs: of death
- Death* (exhibition) 9, 179, 194; criticism of 180–1, 186–7; documentary approach 191
- decontextualization of images of death 8, 164, 173 208, 268
- Derrida, Jacques 169; *archon* 169, 170; *see also* curation
- disaster photography 21, 25
- displaying death 13, 15n3, 21, 62–3, 64, 98, 116, 171–2, 179, 191, 216; approaches to 1–10; at Machairas Monastery 89–90; bifocal seeing 223–225, 231; Buddhist tradition 29; educational purpose 13, 29–30, 159, 268; ethics of 1, 7, 62, 66, 94, 101, 181, 186–7, 244; in old church 103–5; in public spaces 171, 179, 216; in Western society 63, 244, 251; martyrs 84; metonymic imagery 30–31, 121; reliquaries 97; sacred displays 84, 88; violence 84, 103; *see also* atrocity; censorship: self-censorship; curation; framing; heroes; Holocaust; Lombroso collection; martyrs; victim(s); viewer(s); Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum: Klooga Installation
- disaster photography; Martyrs' Museum; viewers; *War/Photography* (exhibition)
- documentary photography 2–3, 9, 12, 164; danger of 231; detachment 226; for communication 283; function as evidence 91, 147n63, 168, 222–3; political legitimacy of 282; *see also May 1, 2011* (installation)
- Du Bois, W. E. B., *Crisis* magazine 133–4; Reginald Marsh, *This Is Her First Lynching* (drawing)
- Eliach, Yaffa 208; *see also* U.S. Holocaust Memory Museum: *Tower of Faces* (installation)
- Ellroy, James 166; *see also* LAPD *Archives* (exhibition)
- Erased Lynching* (series) 12, 144n2, 257; absence 259, 270–1; as response to *Without Sanctuary* 12, 259; creation of series 257–9; *der Wild West Show* 262–3; framing 272; *Franklin Avenue* 271–2; lynching in the West 258, 263–5; photographic flash 257, 260, 262; photography as subject 259, 260, 271–2; shifting focus 270; *The Wonder Gaze* 257, 260; viewers of 260; *see also* absence; victim(s)
- evidence 2, 3, 5, 8, 15n2, 22, 153, 157, 218, 279; absence of and 269–70, 272; forensic 165, 166; impartiality of 9; of crime scenes 9, 135–6, 143, 145n28; *see also* documentary photography
- family photographs/portraiture 210
- Family of Man* exhibition 7, 124n2, 125n11, 208; ahistoricity of 248; *see also* decontextualization; *War/Photography* (exhibition)
- First World War 64; memorials 117
- Foam Gallery, Amsterdam 8; *see also Plaats Delict: Amsterdam*
- forensic photography and aesthetics 171: *see also* crime scene photography

- Fototeka Gallery, Los Angeles: *see* *LAPD Archives* (exhibition)
- frame 13, 16n30, 63, 100, 173, 186, 187, 188, 191, 194–5; awareness of 287; expanding the frame 12, 277, 286, 288; exposing the frame 188–99, 195; “family frames” of personal photographs 225–6; managing responses 277; *see also* viewer(s)
- framing: images of martyrs 179, 185–91, 193–5; and perception 194; in art context 305; in public spaces 179, 182; museological 216–17; reframing 9, 10, 11, 12–13, 15, 16n30, 37, 181, 186–7, 297, 308–9; *see Erased Lynching* (series); Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 186; *see also* *Death* (exhibition)
- funerary photography 1, 10, 11, 171, 200, 201; forgotten genre 205; Hiltman-Kinsey photographs 205; James Van Der Zee photographs 205–6; removing death from private to public 204; *see also* Pansirna’s photographs; *What Will You Remember When I’m Gone?* (exhibition)
- gallery; as public space 201; for private reflection 211, 212: *see also* funerary photography
- German museums: absence of images of dead civilians 71; Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin 4, 62, 69–74; Deutsches Technikmuseum, Berlin 4, 62, 67–9; German responses to civilian deaths 67–69; images of dead German civilians 67, 69; treatment of British and Polish bombing victims 70
- Gonzales-Day, Ken *see Erased Lynching* “grandmother’s wall” 208–11; allowing for viewers’ individual meaning 210; curation of 208–10, 211; false family history 209; reinstatement of funerary photographs as family portraiture 210; wall labels 210–11
- Great Kanto Earthquake 22–23, 24; visual narrative of 24, 37
- Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum 3, 21, 28, 30, 37;
- educational function 29; establishment of 24; *Lynching in the West: 1850–1935* (book) 263; one photograph directly representing the dead 25, 26–7; selection of photograph 28–9; *see also* photograph of Babasaki-mon
- Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church 86, 89; Islam as counterweight 97; *see also* Afxentiou, Gregoris
- hero 97; *see also* martyrs: Turkish Cypriots; Museum of Commando Fighters, Cyprus
- Hirsch, Marianne 6, 208, 225; *Family Frames* 207
- historical consciousness: *see* memory
- historicity of images 21, 34
- history museums 2, 3
- Holocaust 3, 4, 48, 50–51, 63, 91; displaying images of 216–23; Holocaust museums 48–49, 51, 94, 208–9, 222, 228–9; purpose of photographs of 223–4; religious “aura” of 91–2; reorientation of 217–18; sanctifying the 94; Shoah 48, 55, 56, 208, 220; *Shoah* (film) 230; *see also* Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki; Thessaloniki; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum
- Houston Museum of Fine Arts 115
- iconic photographs 5, 115, 123, 124n3, 231, 279–80; altered 100; combining official with absent 13; for Turkish Cypriots 98–100; implying sanctified portrayal 90, of Holocaust victims 217; of martyrs 187; preventative iconoclasm 282; repeating for illustration 63, 222; *see also* atrocities; displaying death: bifocal seeing; *May 1, 2011* (installation)
- iconography 4, 5, 50, 84, 88; 97; Christian iconography 88; Greek Cypriot iconography of death 88–97; Turkish Cypriot iconography of death 97–105; *see also* Abu Ghraib ideology, religious and national 88; *see also* Cyprus museums; nationalism
- İlhan, Dr Nihat: *see* Museum of Barbarism

- images of death: absence/presence of 62, 65, 257; appropriation of 191, 193; associated with religion 88; as spectacle 2, 5, 10, 173; icons of death 84; in books 239; on mass scale 28; on postcards 25, 32n17; in museums 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 31, 98, 101, 116, 135, 238, 269; national identity 88–9; religious identity 88–9; sanctified 90, 92, 94, 100; taboo 159; *see also* British museums; civilian death; crime scene photography; Cypriot museums; *Erased Lynching* (series); forensic photography; framing; funerary photography; German museums; Great Kanto Earthquake Museum; iconic photograph; responses; Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum: Klooga Installation
- images of war: *see* aerial bombing(s); war photography
- immigrants, photographs of 203, 204–5, 209
- Imperial War Museum, London 4, 62, 63, 66, 72, 75, 76; Gregoris Afxentiou 92
- “Imprisoned Graves” 89, 92–4; *see also* memorials
- Inhabitants of Images* (lecture-performances) 190, 194
- International Council of Museums code of ethics 38
- Iowa Jima: *see* Rosenthal, Joe; Iwo Jima
- Jaar, Alfredo: reflecting on the absent 284; *see May 1, 2011* (installation)
- Jeu de Paume, Paris 10, 179, 180, 189; *see also* *Death* (exhibition)
- Jewish Cemetery: *see* Jewish Necropolis
- Jewish museums 48, 52
- Jewish Museum in Thessaloniki 4, 10, 40, 42, 50; Andrea Sefiha Gallery 55; as narrative museum 47, 53–4; display of photographs in 43–7; establishment of 41; Fawcett photographs 53, 54, 55; fountain 45; Greek-Jewish history 52, 55; Hugh Fawcett 44, 45–6, 54; Moldovan album 50–1; *see also* Jewish Necropolis; narrative: official; Stavroulakis, Nicholas
- Jewish Necropolis 40, 43; destruction of 49, 50, 51; Necropolis gallery 48
- Khoury, Elias 191; *see also* *Three Posters* (theatrical performance)
- Klooga installation: *see* *Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum*
- Kroes, Bob 204, 205; *see also* immigrants, photos of
- Kürti, Lázló 205; *see also* funerary photographs; Hiltman-Kinsey photographs; immigrant, photographs of
- label: *see* contextual information
- LAPD Archives* (exhibition) 164–7, 175n26; absence of captions 166; Foteka Gallery 164, 165, 166; *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive* (book) 164, 166; world of police work 167
- Lebanese civil war 182, 183, 184, 194, 195: *see* martyrs; martyrdom
- Leonard, Zoe; taxidermied object 300–02; *Strange Fruit* (For David) 201; *see also* *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*
- Life after Death* (exhibition) 10–11, 238; accompanying book 241, 248; audience experiences 238–9, 241, 242, 246–8; boundaries between medicine and art 240, 250; distinction between life and death 240; focus on face 241; text panels 241, 242, 249; visitor book 239, 242, 243, 245–8, 250; visitor participation 243; Wellcome Collection 11; YouTube video 238, 248–9; *see also* viewer(s): motivated to action
- Linfield, Susie 3, 127n37, on pornography and photography 126n26
- Lithuanian-American community 200, 202, 206, 210, 212; *see also* Pansirna's photographs
- Lombroso, Cesare 150, 161n8; *see also* Lombroso collection
- Lombroso collection 8, 150; Ciccone band 153; Guerra gang 153; Michelina di Cesar 153–6; photographs of dead bandits (“briganti”) 7–8, 150, 152–3, 161n9

- Lombroso Museum 8, 150; current (today) 151, 159; discredited scientific method 157, 158; Italian Risorgimento (Unification) 151–2; nineteenth century scientific mentality 151, 159, 160; *see also* Lombroso collection; victim(s): transformation into artwork
- lynching photography 7, 12, 130, 265–6; absent from anti-lynching exhibitions 132, 13, 268–9; *An Art Commentary on Lynching* 133; as art 132; audience for 142; Beitler, Lawrence 132, 135, 145n25; comparison with Michael Brown in Ferguson 147n63; history of lynching 263–65; purpose of 262; postcards 131, 144n7; professional photographers 131; trouble with 134–5; *see also* anti-lynching exhibitions; atrocity; consumer culture; *Erased Lynching* (series); evidence; Madison, James H.; mass media; *Witness* (exhibition)
- Madison, James H., *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* 134–5
- martyrs 10, 88, 180, 194–5; creating nationalistic feeling 84, 88; Cypriot 84, 88, 89; design of martyr posters 182; images in art galleries 102, 179, 186–7, 189, 193, 194; images in public 179, 181–3, 186, 190; Lebanese 182–4, 190, 194–5; Martyrs' Museum 101–2; monuments for 86–7; Palestinian 179–80, 182–3; political uses of images 182–3, 188, 194; posters 186, 187, 190, 194; private commemoration of 187–8; repetition of images 184–5, 191; religious promotion of 89, 180; secular saints 105; suicide bombers 180–1, 196n5, 197n38; Turkish Cypriots 97–8; video testimony of 9, 183–4, 186, 191, 194; *see also* civilian deaths; collective identity; *Death* (exhibition); displaying death: ethical dilemma in; framing; heroes; *May 1, 2011* (installation); Mroué, Rabih; Museum of Barbarism; photography: manipulation of; Ramadan, Khaled D.; sacrifice; victim(s)
- martyrdom 100, 180, 187, 193; collective identity of 182, 185–6; culture of 179, 181, 183; “ethnic memory” 103; in Islam 97–8; “operations” 180; sanctification of 5, 94, 100; *see also* Museum of Barbarism
- mass graves 95–7, 98, 101; *see also* displaying death: reliquaries
- mass media 30–31; and wartime photography 65; newspapers 131, press 99, 134
- May 1, 2011* (installation) 12, 277; absence of Osama bin Laden 282, 284, 285; appropriation and relocation of original image 284; alternative viewing 277, 282, 283, 284–5, 287–8; iconic status of photography 280; political legitimacy 283; political power of photography 278; *see also* frame: expanding the meaning 2, 3, 201; private 10; production 173, 174; shifts in 164, 170, 172; *see also* contextualization: transforming meaning
- media and politics 193; *see also* mass media
- memorial 117; historical consciousness 105; historical memory 94; museums 218; photographs 204; sites, Cyprus 5; *see also* First World War memorials; funerary photographs; “Imprisoned Graves”; rituals: Vietnam Memorial; Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum
- memorial sites, Cyprus 4; *see also* rituals
- memory: historical 5, 94, 284; imagined 103; *see also* *May 1, 2011* (installation)
- Metropolitan Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum *see* Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum
- Middle East: image culture 195; *see also* Lebanese civil war; martyrs; martyrdom; Palestine
- Moldovan, Alfred 44; *see also* Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki: Moldovan album
- Morton, Merrick 165, 166; *see also* *LAPD Archives* (exhibition)

- Mroué, Rabin 10, 184, 190–4, 195; *see also* images of death: appropriation of; *Inhabitants of Images* (lecture-performance); *Three Posters* (theatrical performance)
- Mundy, Owen 202, 203; *see also* *What Will You Remember When I'm Gone* (exhibition)
- Musée Orfilia 13, 300; *see also* *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*
- Museo di Antropologia Criminale Cesare Lombroso: *see* Lombroso Museum
- museum(s): aims (intents) 12, 159; as agent of change 2, 11; as place of worship 116; church turned into 105; ethics and responsibility of 8, 21, 105; normalizing white perspectives and culture 142; participatory 243–4; relationship with photography 14, 16n30; self-reflective practice 16n30; practice 13, 240, 242–3, 307; visit as performance 16n34; *see also* body; commemorative purpose; dead museum practice; nationalism; *Life after Death* (exhibition)
- museum at Machairas Monastery 89; use of photography in 90–2, 100
- museum-cenotaph 104, 105; *see also* Museum of Tashkent Martyrdom
- Museum of Barbarism, Cyprus 98–9, 100; ethical questions of 101; photograph 99–100
- Museum of Commando Fighters, Cyprus 97
- Museum of Tashkent Martyrdom 103–5; *see also* victim(s)
- Museum of the History of Polish Jews 49
- Museum of the Martyrs of Tochni, Cyprus 95
- narrative 1, 5, 9, 50, 53, 203; act of adoption 207; construction of national consciousness; “narrative act of adoption” 207; counter-narrative 191; ethno-national 5; function of dead bodies 121; invention 201, 203; nationalistic 84, 92; reinforcement of 5; for national identity 62; official 13, 29, 52, 287; personal 249; predetermined 2, 13; private 201; public 201; scientific 158, 160; *see also* Cypriot museums; Great Kanto Earthquake; Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki; Lombroso collection; meaning; Mroué, Rabin; *War/Photography* (exhibition); *What Will You Remember When I'm Gone?* (exhibition)
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) 133; anti-lynching exhibition 133–4; *see also* Du Bois, W.E.B.
- national consciousness 89, 97
- nationalism 5, 87, 88, 91; Greek Cypriot nationalism 84, 91; national identity 62; national ideology 88; religious 84–6, 87, 97, 105; sanctifying of 105; Turkish Cypriot nationalism 85, 97; *see also* Cypriot museums; Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church; victim(s)
- New York Historical Society (NYHS): *see* *Without Sanctuary* (exhibition)
- Obama, Barak and Osama bin Laden's capture: *see* *May 1, 2011* (installation)
- obituary 9
- omission 14; *see also* absence
- O'Neill, Mary 29–30
- Pansirna, Charles 200; Pansirna Studios 202; *see also* Pansirna's photographs; *What Will You Remember When I'm Gone?* (exhibition)
- Pansirna's photographs 10, 200, 210; anonymity of 204; curating 206–11; other funerary photographers 205–6; Purdue's archive 202, 206, 207, 214n25; *see also* narrative
- Palestine: *see* martyrs; martyrdom
- Park, Min Kim 202, 203; *see also* immigrants, photos of; *What Will You Remember When I'm Gone?* (exhibition)
- perpetrators. *see* victim(s)
- photographs: accuracy of 170; aestheticizing of 170; and memory 230–1; authenticity of 64, 169, 299; edited 66; format and purpose 21, 25, 257; frames of reference 63; iconic 87, 88, 179; *memento mori* 9, 123, 171, 172, 216, 238; of dead 98,

- 216; performative effect 266, 282, 287; power of photographs 3, 123, 127n38, 152, 194; understanding the world 287; *see also* civilian deaths, documentary photography; evidence; frame/framing; images of death in museums; martyrs; martyrdom; *May 1, 2011* (installation)
- photography 16; and violence 126n26; as evidential 134; as form of taxidermy 13, 293; as material object 8, 14, 15; as socio-cultural construction 1; fetishization 159; function or purpose of 113, 134; in nineteenth century 160; in spectacle of death 272; manipulation of 3, 5, 100, 134, 179, 191, 257, 270; “objectivity” 117; popular 132; sentimental 133; truthfulness of 5; *see also* body; crime scene photography; documentary photography; *Erased Lynching* (series); evidence; forensic photography; funerary photography; lynching photography; meaning; *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*; police archives; sentimental exhibition; war photography
- photojournalism: *see* war photography
- Photoshop: *see* photography: manipulation of
- Plaats Delict: Amsterdam* (exhibition) 8, 164, 167–8, 175n26; absence of information 167; book 164, 167; Foam Gallery 164, 167; press release 170
- police archives 1, 8, 164, 168, 169, 172; role of curators 168–9; role of police 169; *see also* *LAPD Archives* (exhibition); meaning; *Plaats Delict: Amsterdam*; shifts in; viewing; voyeurism
- post-mortem portraits: photography 214n20; *see* funerary photography
- Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman* 13, 293; absence of information 295; artist as curious collector 300, 304; challenging authority 295, 297, 299; gender issues of 296–97, 307; humanizing the bearded woman 297; “photographic seeing” 305; taxidermied object 300–01; transformation to artwork 295, 304–7
- public space 201; monuments in 87; *see also* display of death; funerary photography
- Purdue University Galleries *see* Pansirna’s photographs
- Ramadan, Khaled D. 194; *Someone Else’s Everyday Reality* (video installation) 189
- Reekie, John: *Collecting Remains of the Dead at Cold Harbor Va., for internment after war* 121; *see also* *War/Photography* (exhibition)
- reframing: *see* framing
- remediation of 14, 16n16, 229–30, 231
- responses: active 8, 11, 141; and context 25, 160, 239; and viewers’ previous knowledge 127n36, 138; behaviour 127n35, 239; collective 277; critical reflection 6, 11–12, 14; desensitized 6, 51, 63, 122; emotional/sentimental 6, 7, 11, 14, 72, 136, 139, 141, 242; ethical 225, 229, 245, 295; moral self-discipline 247–8; museum directed 11, 51, 125n11, 130, 135, 136, 245; nationalistic 5, 88; shared 137; to anonymous victims 27, 65, 103, 122, 157, 160; to images of dying 244, 245; to images of war 116–20, 159; to shocking images 8, 222, 228, 229; *see also* *Life before Death* (exhibition); *War/Photography* (exhibition); viewer(s)
- rituals 10, 47, 48, 51, 94, 116, 118; spaces of death 204, 205, 206, 207; *see also* funerary photography
- Rosenthal, Joe: *Old Glory Goes Up on Mount Suibachi, Iwo Jima* 115, 123
- sacrifice: heroic 86, 92, 93, 183
monuments 86, 89, 94; warrior saints 86, 88; *see also* Afxentiou, Gregoris; atrocity; heroes; “Imprisoned Graves”; martyrs; martyrdom; rituals
- Salcedo, Doris 11, 16n30
- Salonika *see* Thessaloniki
- Sant Cassia, Paul 98, 103
- Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive: see* *LAPD Archives* (exhibition)
- Second World War 41, 48, 62, 70, 71; exhibition at Imperial War Museum

- 73; museums 4; *see also* aerial bombing(s)
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky 140–1, 143
- sentimental exhibition 136; *see also* sentimentality
- sentimentality 140–1; *see also* Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky
- Shibli, Ahlam 9, 179, 180, 181, 186, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195n3; focus on martyr images 187, 188; insight into martyrdom 189; *see also* *Death* exhibition; martyr; martyrdom
- Sontag, Susan 6, 15n17, 63, 64, 65, 72, 87, 88, 118, 172, 173, 186–7, 216, 222, 228, 229, 239, 244, 279, 285, 286; “Holocaust fatigue” 51; “loss of power of photography to move people” 125n15; *On Photography* 186; “photographic seeing” 13, 29, 298, 305; *Regarding Pain of Others* 141, 186; *see also* atrocity: in art spaces; *Preserved Head of a Bearded Woman*; viewing: voyeurism
- spectator and human rights 266–7; *see also* viewer
- Sprague, Stephen 202, 213n4; *see* Pansirna’s photographs
- Stavroulakis, Nicholas 41, 42, 49, 50, 53, 56; “narrative of life” museum 51, 53; *Salonika: Jews and Dervishes*(books) 44, 53
- text information: *see* contextual information
- Thessaloniki 40; Aristotle University 43; Jewish community 40–42, 43, 47, 51, 53, 55; *Thessaloniki: The Metropolis of Sephardism* exhibition 41; *see also* Stavroulakis, Nicholas
- Three Posters* (theatrical performance) 191–3, 194–5; criticism 193; pseudo-documentary approach 191
- To Protect and Serve: LAPD Archives* (exhibition): *see* *LAPD Archives* (exhibition)
- transformation: into art objects 8, 157, 159, 295, 303, 304–7; from private to public 168, 173; into martyrs 182, 282; of sites of atrocity into museum-cenotaph 104; *see also* victim(s); transformation into artwork; *What Will You Remember When I’m Gone?* (exhibition)
- transparency of photography 2–3; and multiplicity 16n32
- Tucker, Anne 115, 117
- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) 49, 52, 217, 223; 233n37; 233n49; purpose of photographs at 224; *Tower of Faces* (installation) 208
- Van Der Zee, James 205–6; *see also* funerary photography
- victim(s) 2, 5, 65, 66, 117, 131, 167, 186, 189; absence from photographs 257, 270; ethics of 7, displaying 84; Germans as 67, 74, 76; Holocaust 217–18; identity 173; dehumanization of 12, 28, 63; objectification of 8, 157; ordinary people 100; perspective 10, 218; perpetrators 10, 93, 167, 270; escaping anonymity of 1, 2, 4, 9–11, 14, 204; re-victimizing 10, 14, 216, 229; state victimhood 105; transformation into artwork 157; Turkish Cypriot 99, 102, 103; *see also* *Erased Lynching* (series); martyrs; mass graves; Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum
- Vietnam Memorial 117
- Vietnam War 65
- viewer(s): active engagement of 10, 11, 242, 269; comments 118–20; desire for narrative 211; desensitization of 6, 15n17; directing of 12, 13, 25, 122, 208 269; disruption of experience 142; 283–5, 288, 297; distance (remoteness) 172, 173, 228–9; emotions 84, 88, 100; empathetic viewing 9, 250; German responses to civilian deaths 64; in relationship to museums and photography 16; motivated to action 6, 251, 286; social aspect 239; spectatorship 14, 140–41; visitor’s imagination 93 *see also* audience; contextualization: effect on; *Life and Death* (exhibition); narration; responses; sentimental exhibition
- viewing: empathetic 9; voyeurism 4, 6, 10, 123, 172, 216, 233n49; 243; *see also* responses: critical reflection

- visitor: *see* *Life after Death* (exhibition); viewer(s)
- voyeurism: *see* viewing
- wall labels: *see* contextual information
- wall text: *see* contextual information
- War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath* (exhibition) 7, 113–18, 123; absence of images of atrocity 121; Brooklyn Museum 115, 116–7; *Family of Man* (exhibition) 120–1
- war photography 1, 113; Civil War 121, 122, 171; Crimean War 122; First World War 64, illustrating industrial process 120–2; Spanish Civil War 64; *see also* displaying death
- warrior-saints: *see* sacrifice: warrior saints
- Weisenfeld, Gennifer 29, 34
- Wellcome Collection, London: *see* *Life after Death* (exhibition)
- What Will You Remember When I'm Gone?* (exhibition) 200, 205, 206, 213; anonymity of portraits 204; connecting contemporary with historical 202; connecting personal with private 202; creating the exhibition 202, 207; display of home photography 202; establishing narrative 201, 208–9, 211; funerary photographs in gallery's public/private space 200, 212–13; shared personal and cultural history 202; transformation into real people 207; viewing historic photographs 200, 212; *see also* curation; *Family of Man* (exhibition); funerary photography; “grandmother’s wall”; narrative; viewers
- Williams, Paul 30, 31, 91, 101, 218
- Without Sanctuary* 7, 130, 134, 142, 144n2, 146n36, 146n46; criticism of 267–9; Congressman John Lewis 134; manipulation of photographs 134; NYHS 130, 131, 137, 138, 139, 140, 146n39; Warhol Museum 133–34; *see also* *Erased Lynching* (series); lynching photography
- Witness* (exhibition) 130–1; responses to 130–1; *see also* criticism
- Witness: Photographs of Lynchings from the Collection of James Allen*: *see* *Witness* (exhibition)
- World War II, *see* Second World War
- World War
- Wride, Tim 165, 166, 169; *see also* *LAPD Archives* (exhibition)
- Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum 10, 48, 52; choice of photographs 222–3, 232n36; effect of display 225–9; Klooga installation 10, 216, 219, 220–3, 224, 227, 229, 231; new interpretation 216–17, 226; purpose of photographs at 224–5; victim perspective 217–20, 222, 226, 231
- Zelizer, Barbie 28, 123, 222; “death-in-process” 3