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Visuality and Visual Studies

The question “What do images in the public space do?” refers to W. J. T. Mitchell’s book What do pictures want? published in 2005 and recently translated into French. This question reflects several issues related to the development of visual studies as an interdisciplinary field of study. The analysis of images, which was traditionally attached to art history, is now investigated by visual studies, which have shifted the line of questioning to reflect upon the notion of “visuality” that Norman Bryson defines as “the social construct of vision”, thus moving away from the myth “of pure form, pure perception, and culturally universal vision” (Bryson 1988: 108). Based on the assumption that “visual culture [...] extends to everyday practices of seeing and showing, especially those that we take to be immediate or unmediated” (Mitchell, 2002: 170), this journal issue goes beyond the analysis of images in the public space to examine how they contribute to the construction of “visual regimes” by which “social and cultural hierarchies are naturalized” (Mitchell 1991: 294).

The publication is a follow-up of a symposium held in Geneva in January 2017, which focussed on different types of visual inscriptions – such as graffiti, performances, sculptures, statues, monuments, panels, murals, and posters – to question the encounter between these pictures and their audience. The encounter that occurs forms a sphere of dialogue, conflict and resistance, which leads to a redefinition of both the status of images and the role of the spectator. For this issue, we have decided to define the notion of images as visual and figurative representations embodied in pictures through material support.
Theories of Performativity

Many authors have investigated the encounter between images and their audiences in terms of *agency* and, more recently, in terms of *performativity*, which has received a great deal of attention in the last two decades. A look back to the theories of performativity requires expanding on the notion of *agency* that Alfred Gell has applied to images and objects (Gell 1998). He considered them “a form of instrumental action” because they can influence thoughts and actions within the social sphere (*ibid*.: 20). Additional anthropological conceptions of images can be found in authors such Horst Bredekamp, who defines the “image act” (*Bildakt*) as the power “by which the latent capacity of the image may be stirred into impacting upon the feelings, thoughts and motivation of engaged observers” (Bredekamp 2018: 35). The event can only occur relationally because people attribute to the images the power to heal, to frighten or to work miracles (Freedberg 1989). Many studies have thus developed the notion of performativity over the last fifteen years based on pictures that stare back, challenge, or even discuss with their viewer (Ginzburg 2001, Mitchell 2003). The latter highlights the role of historical factors (race, class, and gender) in shaping our collective relationship to images that assigned them a subaltern position within Western societies (Mitchell 2005: 29). Not every picture is therefore intrinsically or universally performative; its effectiveness can only be understood within a given society and period. Based on both urban and visual studies, this journal issue aims to address the concept of performativity in terms of spatial dimensions. The impact of images does not lie only in the memory or desire we attribute to them, which can be the product of a historical balance of power. The emphasis on spatial dimensions echoes the recent development of geography of art as a field study that has developed a reflection on how art makes sense not only in, but also with space (Volvey 2007). In other words, “the spatial context in which images are set is essential to capture not only their degree of visibility but also their ability to resonate with the place in which they are located, to take on or to lose their meaning in relation to it” (Guinard 2017).

Images as the Subject of Geographical Research

Following geographers such as Gillian Rose and Antje Schlottmann, it now appears important to think about the interrelationship of visuality and spatiality to open up the line of questioning to the “constitution of space through material images” and “[the role of] images for everyday use or advertising in the structuring of external spaces” (Schlottmann 2017: 2). Social sciences investigate “visual practices of appropriating (spatial) reality” because they translate “established ways of looking at the world – by society, cultural and social groups, or disciplines” (*ibid*.: 1). Researchers have therefore focussed on the visual dimension of space, using methods from various fields of study, such as iconology, art history, history, visual studies, philosophy and sociology, as shown by two journal issues published in 2017:

• *Art in Cities – Cities in Art*, published in the same journal (n° 15) questions the dialectical relationship between art and city. Various forms of art – from sculpture to performance – now take part in the making of the urban fabric. The main argument is that art makes the city and the city produces art. The publication thus already raises the question of the reality of the effects produced by the reciprocal relationship between art and city, which we intend to study further in this issue dedicated to the performativity of images. In comparison, we
have, however, chosen to broaden the scope of our study to encompass not only artistic but also all other types of images, as long as they are in the public space.

• *Sur les murs de la ville*, published in the journal *Urbanités* (n° 9), notes a blind spot in urban studies – the pictures that cover the walls of the city. Their number, in an urban environment already saturated with signs, has paradoxically made of them the neglected objects of urban theories. However, as Gordon Fyfe and John Law have said, pictures are “the site for the construction and depiction of social difference” (Fyfe and Law 1988: 1). The publication thus focusses on graffiti as territorial markers for gangs, on propaganda posters organized and regulated by public authorities and social elites, and on street art as a new form of urban marketing. In this issue, we consider other forms of images in the public space that are part of older traditions, for instance commemorative, such as memorials or statues, to understand how the performativity of image changes over time and space.

**Rethinking Materiality and Spatiality**

The performativity of images is to be considered in relation to their spatiality that gives them a public status, through which images are made into pictures to be shared and looked at by many people. We can therefore think about the effects produced by the pictures once exhibited in a public space. Can the exhibition in a place everyone can access be sufficient to make these images public? How do images materialize themselves in space and through which media and locations? When analysing photographs (but we could extend the following observation to other media), Elisabeth Edwards makes a distinction between pictures from personal or collective contexts – “*Images read as 'private' are those read in a context contiguous with the 'life' from which they are extracted; meaning and memory stay with them, as in family photographs, for example. 'Public' photographs remove the image entirely from such a context, and meaning becomes free-floating, externally generated and read in terms of symbol and metaphor*” (Edwards 2001: 9). The last sentence notes one of the major issues when working with public space; pictures are addressed to everyone and no one in particular. Who then can generate the meaning of these pictures? Moreover, who has or does not have the right to interpret them? In this respect, the common interrogation on both visuality and spatiality take on its importance. The investigation of the performativity of images begins with or includes their coming into being through space, i.e., their spatial materiality. This issue thus excludes digitalized images that come from the media sphere and social networks to focus instead on public space as a physical and material entity.

**Public, Public Space and Publicness**

Long considered in terms of legal status, the contributions of cultural geography and political philosophy have helped to rethink the analysis of public spaces. The reassessment of the term “public” has opened up the questions on the polysemy of the spaces thus qualified. As Don Mitchell notes, the multiple definitions of the term are always the product of conflicts and power relationships (Don Mitchell 1995). Any conception of public space, however encompassing and inclusive it might be, generates outsiders and is part of processes of exclusion. On this basis, it no longer appears relevant to view the publicness of a space – or an image – as a cardinal value; a notion of the degree of publicness should rather substitute for it. Focussing on art in the public space,
Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose state that the public is not a notion correlated to space itself, but rather derives directly from what occurs there and from how the encounter between differences is negotiated there.

A public is about social processes, practices and relations between people that negotiate social differences. And it therefore happens in spaces where social differences are very often evident: in streets, shops, parks, malls, markets, squares, playgrounds, car parks, stations. All of these places become “public” when social differences are negotiated within them. Public spaces, then, do not simply exist. Their existence depends, instead, on what happens in them, what kinds of interactions take place to create them (Massey & Rose 2002: 6).

According to both authors, the degree of publicity of an image or a work of art depends upon its ability to generate the encounter between differences in a public space: “Finally, a piece of public art may provoke or bring out into the open new lines of differentiation” (Ibid: 9). This analysis of the public space as a place of negotiation, but also of antagonism (Mouffe 2010), has infused a large literature addressing art in the public space, which can easily be extended to the question of the place of images in a broader sense. In that respect, the contributions of Rosalyn Deutsche (1988, 1992, 1996) are particularly enlightening. These note that images derive their publicness from “politics of representations”, namely their potential to challenge constructed identities and the illusion of social coherence that results from them (Deutsche 1996: 230) or their ability to deconstruct the limits of what must be considered public problems (Deutsche 1992: 48).

One must also note that images in the public space are received both at the level of the individual and the collective, which occasionally leads to a form of dissonance. As Pauline Guinard notes, “the meaning of pictures is thus constructed at both scales, but varies according to the political, social, cultural or economic transformations that affect the spaces in which these pictures are produced and received” (Guinard 2017). The concept of “dissonance” (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) highlights the active part of the spectator to generate the meaning of a work or image, both through discourse and behaviour. The reactions of individuals, even to their defending bodies, are part of this significant gap that separates the ideal spectator, projected by the picture or the work, from the real spectator who can seize it to change or destroy its meaning, as in iconoclast gestures.

Focussing on this gap helps to understand what constitutes spectatorship, because it cannot be reduced to the mere act of looking. The literature on art in public spaces provides relevant insights about spectators and spectatorship. As Joëlle Zask describes in her book on urban sculpture, an outdoor work is perceived by a multitude that is composed neither only of authors and specialists nor strictly of an “audience”. The work can be received not only by isolated individuals but also by masses and possibly audiences. Joëlle Zask distinguishes the masses (conglomerates of individuals whose activity is identical, although they do not communicate with one another) (Zask 2013: 125), individuals (isolated individuals who take an individual look at the work without feeling the influence of others, or even by closing themselves to it (ibidem)), crowds (linked by psychological and physical contagion) and audiences (characterized by effects of suggestion and communication in the co-construction process of a common object).

This issue focusses less on the question of the public as audiences than on the question of the publicness of images – which encompasses both the effects of public space on pictures and how they produce space. Moving away from the conception of pictures as static...
objects, this issue considers them active agents that reveal the degree of “publicness” of a place and operate the partition of space.

Politics of Visibility

Based on different case studies, we address the cross-sectional issue of visibility in the different contributions. According to Andrea Brighenti, “the visible is the field in which the city and the subject interpenetrate each other and constitute each other” (Brighenti 2010: 134). Asking “what do images in the public space do?” implies an examination of their conditions of visibility, meaning what is made visible, unveiled or seen by others, and of what is in contrast hidden, obscured or concealed in the act itself of producing and exhibiting pictures in public space. The intent is to investigate pictures in terms of places and locations and to analyse what they say about both spatial and social space; are they exhibited in a central place or at the margins? What degree of visibility results from their exposure and location? In other words, what is really made visible? What do we believe we see when we see? Considering that the production and exposure of pictures are always an invisible system, yet still there when one look at them, one can say that pictures always hold a political dimension.

Beyond legal dimensions, pictures reveal how “politics of visibility” (Brighenti 2010: 137) are constructed at the scale of a place or a city. In that sense, the question raised in this issue is political because it concerns, in the broad sense, not only the organization and exercise of power in a society but also, in the strict sense of politics as the practice of power, the conflicts for power, representation and representativeness, whose public space is one of the arenas.

Representation and Representativeness

This special issue brings together a wide variety of contributions on the place, role and power of images in the public space. Beyond the cross-sectional question of visibility, the authors published here address a wide range of objects and approaches. Moving away from a unique answer or single approach to resolve the question “what do images in the public space do?” the different contributions constitute a disciplinary patchwork that reflects situated knowledge and positions to discuss the performativity of images in the public space. The authors come from various academic backgrounds – philosophy, geography, urban planning, history or art history – and work on a wide range of case studies (although they are mostly Europeans) that raise a series of common issues that we wish to address here.

The different articles of the issue complement one another on the following points: different types of spaces (centre or periphery), the constitution of collective memory and the problem of representation in terms of hegemony or resistance.

One can observe the spatial dichotomy between the articles addressing images in the centres (see the contributions of Olivier Gaudin, Vivien Philizot, Tanja Schult and Diana I. Popescu and Laurent Viala) and others studying images at the periphery (see the contributions of Damien Darcis and Zara Fournier). This overview cannot reduce the diversity of the case studies presented, but it reinforces the argument of variability in the performativity of images, depending on the areas where they are produced and exhibited.
This diversity is one of the strengths of this issue because it raises the question of visibility in areas as central as New York Station or the public squares of Bologna, Montpellier or Vienna, and in more marginal areas such as Calais or southern Lebanon.

The question of memory is also a frequent angle of analysis in some of the articles. The cross-sectional question of visibility is thus apprehended not only in terms of space but also from a diachronic perspective. Which are the traces of the past made visible? For how long are the images displayed in the public space? What type of impact does their absence have? The highly political aspect of making the past visible is addressed in several articles, examining the study of commemorative monuments, such as the Sacrario of Bologna (see the contributions of Olivier Gaudin), the memorial of Alfred Hrdlicka (see the contributions of Tanja Schult and Diana I. Popescu), or the Khiam prison in Lebanon (see the contribution of Zara Fournier).

One can finally note the common issue of representation and representativeness based on how social, political or ethnic communities mobilize pictures to represent themselves in the public space. The articles of the issue study the actors involved in the process of visualization, which is embedded in a larger reflection on the right to “picture” in public space.

Stories of Urban Visibilities

Damien Darcis’ philosophical contribution addresses the ambiguous power of images and its political meaning. Focussing on the city of Calais, he studies both graffiti and street art produced in the migration context, which leads him to compare two different types of pictures: the street art produced by the artist Bansky, highly publicized and explicitly political, and the anonymous graffiti that he named "the hearts of cardboard", produced by "both French and migrants" without any apparent political message. Drawing upon Rancière’s writings, he develops a theory of images in which the political power of pictures comes not from their message but rather from their ability to create "spheres of specific experience different from that instituted by the distribution of functions and hierarchical places that constitute the established order". For Damien Darcis, images are political not because of their ability to denounce or oppose head-on, but because of the possibilities they offer to invent another space and another time.

The article by Zara Fournier focusses on southern Lebanon. Numerous images – billboards, posters and statues – occur in public space, always bearing a political dimension. She questions how society produces images and towards what end in this context of post-conflict and economic instability. Her argument is based on a case study of the former Khiam prison, situated in a marginal space and used by the Israeli army and Lebanese armed groups from 1985 to 2000. After that, Hezbollah transformed the prison into a museum until 2006, when the Israeli army bombed the place and destroyed it. By jointly analysing the place, its different destinations, and the succession of images produced and presented in this place, the author questions the regimes of the visible and the invisible in Khiam, and more broadly in southern Lebanon, and links them to the notion of palimpsest and memory traces.

Olivier Gaudin studies the Sacrario of Bologna, a photographic monument – the result of a spontaneous initiative – in memory of the partisans killed during the Second World War. By basing his conceptual framework on the human ecology of the Chicago School and the contributions of Pragmatism, he combines the contributions of visual and urban studies.
to develop an approach that considers social interactions and the physical and symbolic environment of the context in the study of images in the public space. These aspects are all contextual elements that, for the author, reflect interactions between human actors and objects and change the meaning that an image can have and its perception by the public. For Olivier Gaudin, each passer-by, who comes into contact with the monument, brings their own knowledge of the past and their own share of memory, which guide their reception of the image.

21 The contribution of Vivien Philizot discusses how the gaze is constructed in public space through advertising images. As a historian of design, he focuses on the case of Kodak’s Colorama—a large billboard exhibited in Grand Central Station (New York) that was used for many years to project photographs showing idealized images of the white and heteronormed American family. He then examines the question of the social construction of the visual in the light of a new regime of images linked to the omnipresence of smartphone screens. This new use of the value of images—which invites spectators to enter the frame—allows them to appear as never before, neither true nor false. Vivien Philizot thus considers images ideological vectors but in which the advertising surface has, for decades, masked power relationships; the omnipresence of digital images assumes its ideology and takes up—to neutralize them—the criticisms that were directed at advertising images.

22 Tanja Schult and Diana I. Popescu invite us to reflect on the performative power of memorials. Focussing on an Alfred Hrdlicka Second World War memorial in Vienna, the authors question the gap between the artist’s intentions and the effects produced by the images. By depicting the figure of a Jewish man on the ground, humiliated and forced to clean the ground—as was true after the Anschluss—the memorial actually reproduces the humiliation inflicted to the Jewish community. The argument is reinforced by the perspective of two other artistic interventions on the memorial, which sought to highlight the missed objective of the original work. For the authors, if Hrdlicka’s memorial intended to invite a country to rethink its relationship to its past, it actually falls into the same trap that the artist wanted to denounce. Through their contribution, Tanja Schult and Diana Popescu demonstrate that, in contact with an audience and a context, images acquire in the public space a political power that often exceeds their creator.

23 Laurent Viala is interested in the politics of statuary in the public space and questions the meaning of public action in favour of statuary and the political rhetoric that goes with it. Inspired by Pragmatism, the author establishes a phenomenology of public statuary images. He thus distinguishes three modalities of the representation of power in the statuary demonstration: to represent power; to legitimize public action; and to produce consensus. His argument is based on the case study of Montpellier (France), which had an active policy in commissioning and exhibiting figurative statues. For the author, the statues in question function as “images of images” that seek to give a representation of the city by invoking well-known references (mythological, national or world history figures). They then tell a political history of the city and reflect intents, which do not necessarily correspond to a historical truth.
Finally, if this issue proposes a reflection on what images do in the public space by focussing on the modalities of their production and their visibility, the endorsement or rejection of the process often remain the uncovered part in the articles. Although the performativity of an image on a given audience arises as a methodological issue, reception is nevertheless addressed in some of the articles presented here (see the contributions of Olivier Gaudin, Zara Fournier, Diana Popescu & Tanja Schult). To go further, we have included in the summary of this issue a review of the book Urban Encounters: Art and the Public (see the contribution of Léa Sallenave & Hugo Bonin), which can be inspiring to renew methods related to reception studies insofar as the contributions of this book challenge the strict limits of academic writing to move towards a form of creative research.

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What do images in public space do?

Pictures that denounce? In the Jungle of Calais, Banksy and the hearts of cardboard

Damien Darcis
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Damien Darcis

Introduction

1 In this article, I will question the political power of pictures in the urban space, starting from the confrontation between two types of artwork created in a specific context: the city of Calais, which is now associated with the “migrant problem”. I will analyse four works by the “artivist” Banksy: The first, on a rescue post on the beach, depicts a child looking at England through a telescope on which sits a vulture. The second, on the wall of 15 rue de la Tannerie, next to the Office of Immigration and Integration on rue Charost, a few steps from the belfry and the Hotel de Ville, reimagines a famous art historical reference, Géricault’s Radeau de la Méduse (the Raft of the Medusa). The third, at the entrance of the Calais Jungle, represents Steve Jobs as a migrant. Finally, the fourth, painted in front of the French embassy in London, denounces the situation of migrants, this time representing Cosette, the heroine of Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables, with her eyes in tears due to tear gas. I will contrast this with the study of anonymous pictures in remote, less visible places including works found on the walls, doors, and even windows of “squats” such as the Vandamme squat, a former ferrous waste processing plant located in the industrial zone of Calais inhabited by migrants and others. As in the streets of Calais or in the Jungle itself, these often represent, naively or in almost a childish way, people holding hands, flowering trees, doves, hearts or stars, with poetical references or maxims evoking the existence of “humanity” as an indivisible community (see http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x227ycm).

2 While Banksy’s pictures send out a political message that blatantly denounces the migrants’ situation – a message warmly welcomed by many media outlets, from Le Monde to The New York Times – they have provoked a range of reactions. Despite their “critical
content”, they were very quickly embraced by both art lovers and political authorities. The Mayor of Calais is known for her severity towards migrants, in particular for her denouncement of the founding of camps or squats and her threats of prosecution for everyone that would be tempted to “feed the illegals” (Huffington Post, 2/3/2017). She almost immediately split from this attitude in a statement in which she announced that she would protect these pictures by covering them with plexiglass sheets to “preserve” them so that everyone could enjoy them (La Voix du Nord, 12/12/2015). Banksy’s pictures, in Calais and elsewhere, are not only visible but also the subject of constant attention by the authorities. In January 2016, only a month after the pictures were produced, La Voix du Nord announced that:

At first, the graffiti will be referenced among the tourist sites 'Les incontournables' of Calais: the church Notre-Dame, the town hall, the Burghers of Calais or the Tour du Guet [...]. In a second time, in July and August, the 'Banksy' will be part of the circuit of the summer guided tours. (La Voix du Nord, 15/01/2015)

The director of the tourist office concluded the article by pointing out that Banksy's works were a godsend for the city: “Banksy is a world famous artist. The English know him well. It can also attract new tourists.” (La Voix du Nord, 15/01/2015) However, these pictures were equally quickly the object of “damage”. Taking advantage of the visibility offered by Banksy’s graffiti, anonymous writers inscribed superimposed slogans. For example, “Steve Jobs as a migrant” was covered by “Because everything is vain” and then surrounded by “London Calling” in gigantic letters – a reference to the eponymous song of the punk rock band The Clash. These additions were erased. Before a cleaning, one of the works read: “The authorities are more concerned about Banksy's pictures than migrants”. Unlike the works by Banksy, the anonymous pictures – the “hearts of cardboard” to use an art brut expression to designate popular works – studied here contain no direct political message but simply represent “unifying” symbols. However, they are erased from the walls of the city or rendered inaccessible.

It would be easy to explain this paradox by saying that the authorities' approach is dictated by the wish to preserve the pictures of one of the world's leading artists. However, Christophe Genin stresses that it is street art, more broadly, that in recent years has been the subject of indisputable institutionalization (to which Banksy has largely contributed as asserted by Denis Saint-Amand [Saint-Amand 2016: 241-242]), especially in the academic world (Genin 2015: 11), and can therefore explain the attention paid to certain works. As such, if “The term 'Street art' can not be defined definitively, since what it designates is constantly negotiated” (Blanché 2015: 13), today, however, it is considered an official category in the history of scholarly art, including a series of historically identifiable sub-movements (Fusaro 2016: 2, Blanché 2016: 11-12). These different elements could thus explain why today Banksy's works have captured the attention of the political world and aesthetes. Such attention could, to a certain extent, explain why protecting the works of street artists serves to legitimate the erasing of the naive interventions of anonymous others. In fact, the institutionalization of street art has important consequences for more general perceptions of the graphic representations made in urban areas, i.e., the aesthetic research precisely designates such representations as art. In other words, the institutionalization of street art does not imply an integration of all that appears in the street; on the contrary, it tends towards replaying the border between art and non-art or, in some cases, between art and vandalism among graphic representations in urban spaces. This is evidenced by a recent phenomenon: on the one hand, a large number of street artists have insisted that the artistic character of their
Interventions must be distinguished from a non-artistic mode of expression, whereas on the other hand, some of them, the so-called “guardians” of a certain radicality or “purity” of street art, will claim vandalism rather than art (Genin 2015: 38). Denis Saint-Amand reminds us that a certain street art, “more informal, resistant to institutionalization [...] defends at all costs its illegality: we think of the flagship title of rappers Marseillais Fonky Family, fans will remember that the only ‘street art’ graphic it evokes is the ‘tag’, placed ‘on vans [...], on trains, dirty walls and where it sucks, like on palaces or police stations’” (Saint-Amand 2016: 229-230).

From the first perspective, the anonymous pictures’ destruction could be explained by their lack of aesthetic qualities. However, the meaning of their erasure is not as simple as that. The works of anonymous people – especially when they constitute, as in the case of the Fort Galloo squat, real ensembles – could also find their place in the history of art and be valued as testaments, for example, of popular art or art brut. This is all the more true given that, on the one hand, the environments of art brut, more widely the artistic environments that for a long time now have been the object of real consecration (Marpsat 2006) and that, on the other hand, unlike street art, the political dimension of art brut, although explicitly developed by members of the group CoBrA, especially by Pierre Alechinsky and Christian Dotremont in their controversy with the surrealists and representatives of the Communist Party (Miller 1994, 1996), is today set aside, if not widely ignored. However, it seems to me that this contradiction ultimately had to do with the question of the political power of pictures. This last hypothesis does not imply a reduction of the political power of pictures in the message they convey; otherwise, the situation should simply be reversed: Banksy’s interventions should be censored, and the anonymous works highlighted. To develop this hypothesis, I will mobilize the concepts of the French philosopher Jacques Rancière. Briefly, the interest in Rancière’s political philosophy is partly due to the importance it gives to space and time. According to Rancière, the police order (Rancière 1995: 29, 32, 33) or the order of domination (p. 11) always relies on a hierarchical division of the places, roles and functions required in the control of individuals or groups of individuals. Rancière’s originality is to then pose, as I will show below, that this order of domination is not imposed on the majority by a few, but it is exercised in the division of space (its segmentation, its arrangement, its functional configuration, its opening to some, its closure to others) and time (in terms of hours and rhythms of circulation). Because these divisions of space and time constitute the frame of everyday life, and because the sharing of places, roles and functions is confused with the shape of everyday life, the order of domination will in some instances appear to be natural (Rancière 1995: 11) or “normal” (Rancière 2000: 65). In this sense, in a previous work, we designate this order of the police as a daily order of domination [“quotidien ordonné de la domination”] (Darcis and Hagelstein 2018).

From there, Rancière develops a very specific approach to art: art precisely creates a gap or a break from the ordered domination of daily life. It creates a new space-time – one does not wander around a workplace such as a factory or a school; the time of contemplation is not the same as that of work or daily life – within which hierarchies and prosaic differences between humans are cancelled out in the exercise of a shared power to feel and think (Rancière 2004: 49). Simply put, a person is affected by a picture and can interpret it without anyone being able to say what to feel and what the meaning of the picture is. In this sense, the aesthetic experience is at the same time an experience of equality. However, the deviation from the established order that makes this equality possible is
conditioned by the indeterminacy of the object we have before us, by the impossibility of being able to identify it as an object of art. This indeterminacy prevents the confiscation of art, for example by a class of scholars authorized to speak about it, which would make art, and the capacity to speak of art, a socially determined property. At this cost, art gains autonomy from the orderly daily life of domination (Rancière 2004: 24).

7 Rancière is thus led to rethink the relationship between art and politics. He opposes two widely held ideas. The first idea is derived from work by Theodor Adorno, which posits that art is politically effective as it is clearly distinguishable from objects that are found in everyday life, mass culture or merchandise (Rancière 2004: 59-63; Adorno 1962; Darcis 2018). Schoenberg's work, for example, asserted that “to better denounce the capitalist division of labour and the embellishments of the commodity, it must be even more mechanical, more ‘inhuman’ than the products of mass capitalist consumption” (Rancière 2004: 59). Art then consists in a “struggle to preserve the material difference of the art from everything that compromises it in the affairs of the world: trade in mass exhibitions and cultural products that make it industrial enterprise to make profitable” (Rancière 2004: 61) However, by reconstituting “a front line” between art and the ordinary merchant, including the products of communication, culture and mass arts, we “somehow reconstitute the Voltairean opposition between two forms of sensitivities” (Rancière 2004: 59), one educated and one critical, which allow for the appreciation of works of art and otherwise, regardless of whether we regret it, or whether such objects are coarse or refined, and we are forced to consume goods stupidly. Because it loses its indeterminate character, art is no longer the unprecedented domain of an experience of equality, but rather it becomes a socially determined, protected sphere of scholars and authorized speech.

8 The second idea opposed by Rancière asserts that an art coming out of the museum would in principle be a political art (Bourriaud 2001: 99-10, Ardenne 2002). For Rancière, it is the opposite:

Art is not political at first by the messages and the feelings that it transmits on the order of the world. It is not political either by the way in which it represents the structures of society, the conflicts or the identities of social groups. It is political by the gap that it takes with respect to these functions, by the type of time and space that it institutes, by the manner in which it cuts this time and populates this space. (Rancière 2004: 36-37)

9 Therefore, if the museum is, to use Michel Foucault's concept, a heterotopic place (Foucault 2004: 18), that is to say, a place that suspends the orderly daily life of domination to establish another relationship to space and time, in situ art (hence, certain forms of street art), is risked because it is localized and because it targets and adapts to social groups occupying a particular place in the ordained daily life of domination. Thus, in situ art tends to reproduce and even perpetuate a society’s structures (Rancière 2004: 84; Alliez 2008; Hagelstein and Darcis 2018). In this paper, I make use of these Rancierian concepts to question both Banksy's interventions and those performed by anonymous others. I must specify that these concepts first serve to construct a perspective, a view or, to formulate it more sharply, a philosophical point of attack. Here, I am approaching an object not addressed by Rancière. This is especially the case in the last part of this paper, which deals with marginal spaces. To closely question these objects, I do not hesitate to engage concepts from Rancière and from other critical thinkers such as Étienne Balibar and Michel Foucault. I will use the concepts of the aforementioned authors less for themselves but more as tools to problematize a situation. For the analysis of conditions of life in the Jungles located near Calais, I relied on Sophie Djigo’s very interesting book, Les...
migrants à Calais. Enquête sur la vie en transit, which the author has conceived not as “an overarching analysis of the condition of migrants” but as a work in which they are considered “as subjects of speech and thought” (Djigo 2016: 17). Finally, I also refer to information from militant websites and press articles, mainly from the regional newspaper La Voix du Nord.

Police Order, Calais and the Migrants

Before understanding how a picture may suspend or question the police order, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by these terms. From Jacques Rancière’s perspective, the word police, in summary terms, does not refer to law enforcement agencies, but it refers to “the law, generally implicit, that defines a party’s share or lack of it [...] an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise” (Rancière 1999: 29). The term exists in a society where as Rancière points out, every form of community or being-together is ordered, in the sense that it is based on a distribution of functions and places [partage des fonctions et des places], for example, the professors, students, members of administration, or technicians within a university. These distributions are of course not politically neutral. They involve power or domination: some people have the power to make decisions about the organization and the “life” of the community, whereas others are deprived of it and must comply, willingly or unwillingly, with what others have decided for them. In other words, the police order is based on the separation or division of humanity into subgroups that are endowed with roles, status, and specific competences (Rancière and Monferran 1999).

Contrary to what one might think, this order is not imposed by violence (or not only by violence), nor by words, but in the division of the times and spaces of daily life, as for example in the organization of working times and workplaces. Spaces are configured in such a way that not only enables the exercise of a function, role or competence but also, at the same time, prohibits others de facto. There are places that are dedicated to production such as the factory’s production line that are designed in such a way as to leave neither room nor time for politics. These types of workspaces do not allow any political debate as found, exemplarily, in collective assembly. In Malaise dans l’Esthétique, Rancière writes: “Artisans, says Plato, have no time to be elsewhere than at work. This 'elsewhere' where they not be, it is of course the assembly of the people. 'The absence of time' is in fact the naturalized prohibition, inscribed in the forms of sensory experience” (Rancière 2004: 38). This division/organization of worktimes and workplaces shapes specific behaviours, which are gradually integrated into each other or, in other words, they produce something similar to what Pierre Bourdieu, in La misère du monde (1993), called place-effects [effets de lieux]. To formulate clearly formulate this idea, a person is an employee, for example, in his workplace, a consumer in the supermarket, and a tourist on the beach; however, in these roles, he is involved in little or no policy because, as it were, the strictly political spaces and the time necessary for debate are forbidden to him and because politics is, as such, absent from the spaces in which it evolves. Here, I must insist on a fundamental point: in this perspective, the political stakes are not directly or not necessarily related to the policy that is put in place by a government, a department or a city, but to the reconfiguration of the divisions constituting the established order.

In Calais, one group is the object of all attention, beginning with Banksy. This group, within the police order, is in a specific situation that is “more problematic” than others: that of
migrants – a category that, in Calais, as we show below, takes on a particular meaning because it is assimilated into a particular representation, that of the “jungle”. Contrary to what one might think, the police order does not exclude individuals by refusing any place to them but by enclosing them in one place more than others. In Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous identities, Étienne Balibar defends the thesis according to which the populations destined for economic over-exploitation or the undesirable populations must systematically be presented negatively, as inferior, excluded from “the national set” to be treated differently than the others. Following Balibar, the issue of anti-immigrant racism in France is exemplary: “to mark with generic signs populations which are collectively destined for capitalist exploitation - or which have to be held in reserve for it” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 213). He shows how the exclusion of a certain section of French youth involves putting them in a genealogy that then produces specific modes of designation such as “Français d’origine étrangère” (French of foreign origin), “jeunes issus de l’immigration” (children of immigrant parents) or, worse, “immigrés de deuxième generation” (second generation immigrants). The widespread interest in Balibar’s thought, especially for space specialists, is to show that these labels are an inseparable part of a process of fixation and chaining to a particular space that is itself presented as a foreign territory in the French Republic: “les banlieues”, or the “suburbs” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 213).

In short, the approach is “to keep ‘in their place’ […] those who have no fixed place” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 213).

This last formula is particularly true for migrants in Calais. They are undesirable (Agier 2008); they are too much. Because of the impossibility of “suppressing” migrants, it was necessary, even more so than for the other groups, to fix them in a place, in a “territory” cut off from other places. It is in this context that the Jungle concept is particularly important. If, to follow Sophie Djigo, the places occupied by the migrants of the Pas-de-Calais formally resemble not a Jungle but two forms of camp, that of a “ghettoised camp” and that of a “refugee camp” (Djigo 2016: 11). However, not without reason, the first term will gradually become imperative: “the semantic history of the term reveals a misunderstanding, which is also an index […] of the representations that the French nationals associate with the Migrants” (Djigo 2016: 37) While the term “Jungle” was first used by the migrants themselves to refer simply to the forest, the wood (Djigo 2016: 37) in which they were first forced to live, in the West, the term reactivates the colonial imagination (Djigo 2016: 37-38, Vieillard Baron 2011) and refers to “elsewhere, the exotic, a place where no projection of human life is possible, with which any identification is broken” (Djigo 2016: 39).

Thus, the mediatisation of the camps and the political interventions of left and right factions will very quickly accentuate this representation of the Jungle as a wild animal universe in every respect different from a human world – it is a place for robberies, rapes, fights and violence. The idea was, in a way, to spread the thought that the jungle was at first a dehumanizing place: in the absence of being bad and dangerous when entering the jungle, men would become so after some time living in these conditions. To better maintain the migrants in the jungle, that is to say, to better keep them in their place while preserving the order that labelled them, a particularly salient danger is emphasized by some politicians and relayed by the media using various purported facts: the possibility of seeing the jungle overflowing and contaminating Calais. The representation of migrants has thus been constructed in relation to the jungle. Indissociable from each other, they are characterized by the same evils, the most serious being their inhumanity, their animality and their dangerousness.
It seems important to note that this process is not self-evident and can be considered in contrast to another. If some politicians have succeeded in giving the impression that Calaisians can only have hostility towards a foreign population presented as wild and dangerous, it must be remembered that a law was needed to penalise all aid to migrants and to create convictions to reduce the support that had been provided to them. Migrants had found, more often than not, a haven of a garage, a guest room or a garden shed, an open bathroom or a sink to wash, hot meals and drinks; the provision of such support was made illegal. Various articles have recently highlighted the barriers faced by migrant relief associations. *Le Monde* wrote: “Calais: associations complain of obstacles to helping migrants” (*Le Monde*, 01/06/2017). It should also be noted that the images broadcasted from the jungle in some media always show a dirty and muddy camp, thus helping to emphasize this representation of the jungle as a dehumanizing universe. However, the jungle is also a restaurant open to all, a school, an art college, a mosque, a church, and a library. “The book of the Jungle” lists cultural spaces such as concert halls – one of which has been painted blue and renamed “Espace Maxime Le Forestier” in tribute to the blue open house of Le Forestier’s song *San Francisco* (*Le Monde*, 27/11/2015). From this point of view, the political and media use of the representation of the jungle has the direct effect of establishing or fostering a relationship of hostility towards migrants to the detriment of another relationship, one that is more open.

Conversely, we can inversely redefine political emancipation as the moment when those who were excluded from common affairs by the so-called distribution of the sensible, those who are condemned to obey and to remain silent, succeed in showing that they have intelligence equal to any other (Rancière 1999: 29). It designates the moments when these excluded people “break with the distribution of functions and places to which they are naturally assigned to take part in the elaboration of the commons: “politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part”, when the logics of identification, of placement and fixation of individuals are scrambled (Rancière 1999: 11; Rancière and Monferran 1999). Therefore, there may be some political emancipation on the condition of creating a gap or a departure from the police order, which makes it possible for it to be reinvented. From this perspective, the emancipatory political power of a picture is less a function of the discourse it holds, of the situation it claims to denounce, than of its capacity to create a sphere of specific experience different from that instituted by the distribution of functions and hierarchical places that constitute the established order. In Calais, the migrants themselves have intervened in many ways to try to make their world exist, to constitute themselves as subjects in their own right, including in a particularly striking way. In our opinion, this is not only to “protest against the dismantling of the Jungle” (*Le Monde* 2016) but also to try to emphasize that on March 3, 2016, migrants sewed their mouths and paraded in front of their ruined shelters carrying placards on which was written, “we are human”. Sophie Djigo insists on the need to “sew the mouth to be heard” (Djigo 2016: 178). The question then is how to blur the daily order of domination.

**Banksy in Calais or Criticism from within the System**

Banksy’s pictures in Calais are not random. He chooses precise places of intervention that, in our view, constitute a whole. The first picture, the young child with the telescope on which sits a vulture, is painted on a rescue post on the beach of Calais. Banksy thus
reaches out to a particular audience: tourists or the inhabitants of Calais who come to spend a little time on the beach, that is to say, more generally, the popular public. The image is there to remind them that if the sea is a playground or a pleasant landscape for some, for others it represents an impassable, perhaps lethal, border. From this perspective, in absence of a better term, one could say that this first work is in the register of a “denunciation” in the sense that it seeks to draw the attention of the public to a problem that it would prefer to ignore. With this work, Banksy therefore does not seek to create a gap or a break from the situation in Calais, for example, a gap that would give the problem a different view, but it “denounces” or “reveals” what all already know perfectly well. Paradoxically, it can therefore only be effective if it is addressed to individuals in a place where they are supposed to be lost in their leisure or their selfish distractions. In other words, it can be effective only if it is inscribed, without questioning, in that particular space, assimilated within the distribution that structures the established order towards stupidity or rather popular ignorance.

The second picture, parodying Géricault’s Radeau de la Méduse, in a street near the National Office of Immigration and the town hall, must be analysed alongside the fourth, the tearful Cosette of the French Embassy in London. These two pictures are realized in immediate proximity to places dedicated to politics. Although they are visible to passers-by, Banksy engages a specific interlocutor: the political world. These pictures do not work in the register of denunciation – the politicians, including the main leaders, are constantly emphasizing that the issue of migrants must be solved – but its main objective is to confront the political world with its responsibilities. However, if one considers the location of the pictures as well as their content, this political world does not appear to be a divided world. It is traversed by singular political tendencies, some of which perhaps more than others contribute to aggravating the problem, but this world is posed as indistinct. To formulate this idea more sharply, one could say that these two pictures address the political world just as they might address a function or a status, that of the leading function: it is the political world, including the main leaders, that is provoked to react.

The last work – Steve Jobs as a migrant – depicted at the entrance of the jungle as if he were escaping from it, has provoked more published responses than the others. Through one of his representatives, Banksy reveals its meaning in the New York Times, as relayed by various French newspapers: “We’re often led to believe migration is a drain on the country’s resources but Steve Jobs was the son of a Syrian migrant. Apple is the world’s most profitable company, it pays over $7bn (£4.6bn) a year in taxes – and it only exists because they allowed in a young man from Homs” (Le Figaro, 26/01/2016). At first glance, the work seems to show migrants differently by showing that each of them could be an exceptional character such as Steve Jobs. Thus, this idea has provoked a debate, as reported in the article “Banksy’s Steve Jobs mural misses the point about refugees” on the American website Wired:

Still, in a lot of ways, the message Banksy’s sending misses a crucial point about the refugee crisis. Yes, there are among the 60 million people fleeing war or persecution from Syria to Sudan plenty of people destined for the singular greatness that Jobs achieved. But there are also millions more who aren’t—millions of people who, like the rest of us, will not turn out to be the next Jobs, or the next Albert Einstein, or any of the other famous refugees whose names have been tossed about as proof that refugees are worthy of our help. Millions of ordinary human beings are suffering. They may not change the world, but they’re no less deserving for it. (Wired 12/11/2015)
I set aside this controversy to note that, again, the location of the work has importance in the reception of the picture. The entrance to the jungle is a border in itself, extremely controlled and, in many respects, mediated: in fact, there are as many policemen and perhaps journalists as “illegals”. The “Steve Jobs as a migrant” artwork remains right at the entrance of the jungle, at the border. The work does not put the border in question but suggests what we have already been shown: the limit beyond which it is something else. There are countless press photographs that juxtapose Steve Jobs, the image of social success, and a migrant, poor, dirty and sad. The Jobs picture thus tends to function as counter-employment. The figure of the migrant appears as that of an unfortunate impossible desire, the very impossibility of which precisely constitutes the danger, that of the migrant's potential to overthrow in hatred and violence. The Steve Jobs work at the entrance to the jungle marks the limit at which everything can tilt; however, in doing so, it affects neither the representation of the jungle as such nor that of the migrant. The representation of the limit is always dangerous.

Last but not least, an ultimate figure remains for consideration, that of the artist-author himself. Banksy's works are systematically identifiable (Bertini 2015: 4-5). Contrary to what one might think, Banksy is not an anonymous artist: he frequently expresses himself, authenticates his pictures and comments on them. From this perspective, the fact that one cannot put a face to the man does not mean that he has no individualised existence or rather, in this case, that there is no author of the works. He has, in the sense that Michel Foucault confers to the concept in The order of discourse, “an identity which has the form of individuality and the self” (Foucault 1981: 59). This is the remarkable nature of Banksy’s publicity stunt: it preserves in appearance a relationship to the anonymity that may have characterized certain forms of urban art in which he is engaged, except that it confines and weakens all the subversive power to make it the cause of a “celebrity game” such as those found in magazines urging their readers to recognize the star. Far from being anonymous, the works in Calais were immediately authenticated by their author on his website. They were then “commented” upon through spokespersons with Banksy specifying the meaning he had wished to give them.

This authentication of Banksy’s pictures has an important effect on their political power. First, when they are ascribed to an author, placed within a history, these works now have a precise meaning conferred on them by this author and/or this history (Foucault 1981: 59). The commentary or the exegesis tends to impose itself to the detriment of creative reprisals which, by definition, imply a displacement of meaning (Foucault 1981: 57-58). Second, this authentication also has an impact on the materiality of the pictures and, more broadly, on its environment: as authenticated pictures; they can be the object of a protection as well as their environment. They were surrounded by claims of migrants taking advantage of the visibility effect of these pictures while in a way they could have “spread” through various creative deployments such as new graffiti grafted onto the first. Today, the walls welcoming the Banksy works are blank. What tourists come to contemplate are not works that denounce a situation, a denunciation that would draw its strength from its ability to make everyone who views it think. Rather, tourists are led to the conclusion that it is Banksy who denounces a situation. If we admit that this situation as such is already the subject of all denunciations and attention from left to right, what we come to appreciate is ultimately Banksy himself. In a similar perspective, Yves Gonzalez-Quijano shows that the representations of the Walled Off Hotel in Bethlehem strictly maintain the separation between Israelis and Palestinians to first address the tourists: “We will thus arrive at ‘doing”
Bansky’s Walled Off Hotel, as we ‘made’ the other Holy Places of the country, as part of an experiment ultimately more aesthetic than militant” (Gonzalez-Quijano 2017).

It is clear that, with the series of pictures in Calais, Banksy not only denounces, such as others, a complicated situation, but also replicates the distribution of the functions and places of the police order: the ignorant person is reminded, in case he could have forgotten, that people suffer while he is distracted; politicians are called upon to fulfil their ruling function; migrants continue to exemplify the dangerous frontier between humanity and violence. Without further addressing the very thing it represents, Banksy appears, in the most classic sense of the term, as an artist-author ready to integrate into art history books. In short, everyone remains in his place. This is, in fact, what “Steve Jobs as a migrant” also means: Steve Jobs is the figure of an economic and social success inseparable from the most pitiless capitalism; criticism does not in any way target the system or the police order by showing, for example, that this system or order is perhaps a constituent part of the problem, but it consists of a call to correct a problem which, if pursued to the end, is not that of migrants as such, but the inability of this system to take advantage of this situation – an unknown Steve Jobs could pay 7 billion tax dollars. These last points, probably much more than the aesthetic qualities of his interventions, explain why Banksy is the object of the attention of the authorities of Calais, its tourist office and, broadly, of the political and the ruling worlds.

The “hearts of cardboard” or the possible invention of a new collective space

From another perspective, we are faced with pictures made by anonymous artists. In Calais and elsewhere, increasing numbers of street artists intervene in places chosen for their visibility. These anonymous creators, probably both French and migrants, intervene each time as clandestinity requires at the margins of “l’espace quadrillé du pouvoir”, in the words of Michel Foucault (Foucault 1975: 171), that is to say where they are not expected: in an old factory, a disused warehouse or an abandoned house. Calais is, from this point of view, a singular city, as it is for a large part composed of residential areas close to, or even mingling with, fairly large industrial areas, including many abandoned or underused sites but also areas dedicated to transport (roads) lined with green spaces, most often composed of marshes and bushes or wastelands. In the city centre, from the town hall, going up towards the harbour, along the rue Royale, with its bars and restaurants, near the docks and the parking lots of the Boulevard des Alliés, to the edge of sea, these interstitial spaces also exist in large numbers, although sometimes of smaller size. Clearly, Calais is particularly rich in interstitial and neglected areas. That is why, if the newspapers focus most often on the wall “intrusion” one kilometre long and four metres high, extending thirty kilometres of wire mesh topped with twisted barbed wire, built to prevent migrants to gain access to the “Shuttle” and the Calais port area, the authorities also conduct, with the help of concrete and grates, the incessant work of the suppression of all interstitial zones interior to the city (see https://passeursdhospitalites.wordpress.com/2014/03/20/calais-ville-fantome-2/).

In this sense, these anonymous creations do not arise by chance but within the dominating squared space as “lines of flight” [lignes de fuite] (Deleuze and Guattari 1980), or particular spaces beyond its control. This leads to a preliminary thought. In some
ways, the images reveal, in “the space designed, that of scientists: planners, urban planners, technocrats ‘cutters’ and ‘fitters’” (Martin 2006: 12), the clandestine spaces themselves. In my opinion, these clandestine spaces are spaces of indetermination in the sense that, neglected, they make possible behaviours other than those induced by the order of domination, the logics of identification and placement of individuals. However, it is not enough for the suddenly suspended established order for the “identities” to be blurred. It is precisely on this point that anonymous pictures deserve to be taken into consideration. The first thing that strikes one upon viewing these anonymous’ pictures is the relationship they maintain to space: they are not inscribed on the walls as if on classical surfaces of expression such as linen or a wooden panel, but they seem to mark the space in which they are inscribed. To be more precise, these creations are superimposed or juxtaposed one to another, overlapping each time on a piece of wall and running over a corner of door or window, as if the first hearts, first trees, or first doves drawn on a wall summoned others. If we take a closer look at these creations, it is possible to say that they are in many respects “unclassifiable,” not in the sense that they do not exhibit certain traits that could be found in other pictures – they are, as I have already written, very similar to the pictures that the members of CoBrA have described as popular art (Miller 1996: 214) or those that Georges Dubuffet helped to bring together in the (floating) art brut category (Dubuffet and Moreau 2014: 20) – but in the sense that they fall outside the categories of the history of scholarly art: they are not spontaneously considered to be pieces of art.

Two elements characterize these works. First, these creations mobilize simple references – hearts, trees, doves. Second, they do not show specific ability. Of these two elements, we can say that they favour everyone’s potential to be creative, to express themselves with others on a section of wall, thus contributing to the multiplication of these creations. However, they also give the pictures another power: they tend to erase or to render indistinct the cultural and social differences, most often held to be “factual”, between people. While these pictures are produced by French and migrant people from all over the world, they show no difference between people. It is impossible to know whether they were made by one or several individuals, by the inhabitants of Calais or migrants, doctors, artists, or workers, by men, women, or even children. One might reply that these works are punctuated by maxims or scraps of poems written in specific languages, which would make the differences reappear, especially national divisions. Except these maxims operate more in terms of writing or calligraphy than in terms of meaning. Or, better still, they work on these two reading levels and give rise, behind the specificity of languages and the meaning of words, to the human power that sustains them.

From this perspective, these anonymous works make possible a double experience of the spaces in which they are inscribed. First, because they are inseparable from them, because they blend into them until they become confused with them, they make these spaces themselves the object of an aesthetic experience. These spaces then present themselves as common spaces and radically break with those of well-ordered domination (Rancière 2004: 52). To put it differently, the anonymous works make these spaces of indeterminacy heterotopic places, in every respect foreign to those that constitute the everyday. They tear them away from the everyday life of domination. Second, by making indistinct those who made the creations, by erasing or complicating each other’s identities, as evidenced by the game mentioned above, between language and writing, these creations express “a way of inhabiting a common space” (Rancière 2004: 46), again...
foreign to the orderly daily life of domination: everyone is, in this space, a human being and at the same time equal to all others. In a way – but this last statement must be nuanced – to extend this second, these creations are part of a process of appropriation of space in the sense of Henri Lefebvre, that by which “a new society, appropriates itself, that is, organizes for its ends the pre-existing space, modelled before” (Lefebvre 1974: 32). Hearts and doves do not dress-up a message or a claim; however, they are similar to the many traces of the movement by which a community invents itself at the same time as it invents its environment or, better, reinvents it since such communities take possession of places that already exist – the factory or the old warehouse. Such places are neither a type of museum created out of nothing for simple contemplative purposes, nor are they new spaces for collective and concrete life, but they are both one and the other.

27 In this regard, these hearts of cardboard or maxims that affirm each man's humanity, the equality of all men, could be laughable if they did not constitute an indeterminate, autonomous space that communicates a simple idea; however, increasingly subversive is that things can be other than what they are, people are always something other than what we would like them to be. Cardboard hearts are not associated with difference, although they should be, because it would change people’s relationship with migrants; cardboard hearts assert that “we are talking like you, we are reasoning like you” (Amalric and Faure 2013: 85), that is, more radically, a “we are” who opposes the division of humanity into subgroups, or even the exclusion of those who are migrants from this humanity. The political power of these anonymous pictures is thus as follows: the places they create induce a sensible tension between humanity or the equality they establish and the order of the domination from which they deviate or, simply stated, between the human community or equals they institute and the hierarchically ordered community of everyday life. This sensitive tension tends to denaturalize, to unrealize, to highlight the artificiality of the divisions structuring the daily life by opening the way to their criticism, if not to their reconfiguration (Rancière 2004: 48). This is, in my opinion, why the political authorities in Calais are trying to avoid the multiplication of these clandestine spaces.

28 Starting from the confrontation between these two types of pictures produced in the city of Calais, I have tried to show that art, according to Rancière, is not political due to its message, or its “critics” (Rancière 2004: 37), or, simply, as we often hear, because it is shown in “public space” rather than on the bare wall of a museum. By shifting the analysis of the content of the pictures to their relationship to their location, to their mode of realization and particularly their materials and to their performative aspects, in particular concerning the anonymity question, I have sought to show that art or, more generally, pictures, are primarily political due to their capacity to suspend, for a time, the divisions and arrangements of the police order to create an experience plan that eludes this order and allows the possibility of reinventing relationships between men. More fundamentally, in the double case of Banksy’s pictures and the cardboard hearts flourishing in the neglected spaces of the city of Calais, I have sought to show that, on a certain level, pictures have a political power that is stronger, or rather more effective, because they do not directly concern problems or political issues. This is undoubtedly the political force of the cardboard hearts: they do not resist by opposing head-on an order deemed problematic, but by inventing another time, another space, other places to derealize the world that we are presented each time as a fact. Of course, this stalling of the police order within a clandestine place does not solve the immigrant problem. However, there is
undoubtedly a political stake in creating these frames, to make them as open as possible, not to realize a great unified human community, but because, from their own place, they can undo the oppositions of everyday life, move them, reconfigure them. Except that to create these frames, to confer on them a true political function of derealization and reinvention of the daily, implies the confrontation, the opposition, of the daily order of domination whose logic is that of reproduction. When one views these works, everything is done to prevent the beginning of this type of setting, especially, as I have shown, in a city such as Calais. In other words, giving these clandestine cadres a true political function, to make them the instrument of a reinvention of daily life, first implies dismantling the order of domination, transforming it, and thus, paradoxically, of confronting or opposing the “representatives” of this order.

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**Newspaper articles**


In this paper, I would like to question the political power of images in the urban space. To do this, I rely on the confrontation of two types of images displayed in Calais, a city now associated with the “migrant problem”. On the one hand, I will study four interventions by street artist Banksy. On the other side, I will analyse images made by anonymous artists, in remote, less visible sites, on the walls, on the doors or on the windows of squats including migrants. While Banksy’s images convey a political message denouncing the situation of migrants, politicians in Calais have said they want to protect these paintings. Conversely, anonymous images, which do not convey any political message, are systematically erased or rendered inaccessible. Based on the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Rancière and Étienne Balibar, I would like to show that this paradox is perhaps explained less by the celebrity of Banksy than by the relation of images to
space: Banksy’s murals maintain, even perpetuate, the divisions of space and the relations between social groups constituting the established order, whereas anonymous images suspend them for a while, to make heterotopic places exist.

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Mots-clés: Aesthetics, politics, police, space, migrant, Calais, jungle, Banksy, street art, popular art

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Images in South Lebanon: an Absent Presence. The case of the former Khiam Prison

Zara Fournier
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Introduction

1 “What do such monuments of such traces do in such remote valleys?” asks Lebanese artist Ahmad Ghossein in his film The Fourth Stage, which focuses on the sudden construction of monuments dedicated to the victory of Hezbollah / Party of God in the main squares of villages in the rural area of South Lebanon that was occupied by the Israeli army from 1978 to 2000. The question and the film in general highlight the construction of images and objects in the public space of the South that stage this territory as victorious and extra-ordinary, in contrast with the marginality of the region.

2 Ghossein’s work also allows me to introduce the subject of this paper – that is, the status, meaning and effectiveness of images in public space in a context that is both marginalized and post-conflictual.

3 South Lebanon, which today comprises the districts of Sour, Saida, Nabatiyeh, Marjayoun, Bint Jbeil and Hasbayah, is historically seen as a marginalized space where the local population has continuously mobilized itself to evolve from its isolation and socio-economic retardation (Mervin 2008: 103–10; Volk 2009: 263–82). It is also a space that has been occupied by various groups for its geographical and strategic value, the most recent such group being the Israeli army. Since the Israeli retreat, South Lebanon can be considered to be in both a conflict- and post-conflict situation characterized by blurs and interminglings (Djament-Tran G., Le Blanc A., Lhomme, S., Reghezza-Zitt M., Rufat S., 2012), between injunctions to go beyond this conflict and its regular reactivation and updating, whether in everyday narratives or in economic and social aspects. Ever since the Israeli retreat and after the 2006 July conflict, South Lebanon has been caught in a “conflict time” in which the latter “remains the main paradigm against which all actions are
read and understood” (Baillie 2013: 300). For instance, “Israel will attack some other time, anyway” is a leitmotiv heard in the common language that is still heard today, while development and reconstruction projects managed by various international stakeholders advocate reconciliation and peace in the South. In this context, various images, from billboards and posters to statues and places, are staged in the public space; if they do not all represent the Israeli occupation and the conflict condition of the area, they nevertheless “obey a logic of publicity and politicisation” (Avanza, Laferté 2005: 134–52) of various aspects related to the South. Thinkers such as Foucault, Lacan, Lefebvre and Irigaray have shown the importance of images in serving different interests, narrating and putting into politics various aspects of the society in which they are produced. Following these thinkers, questioning the status of images in South Lebanon could allow the processes through which a society represents and narrates itself in a zone that has known material destruction and socio-economic instability to be better understood. How, why and for whom are images produced in a post-conflict area such as South Lebanon, which has been perceived as invisible for twenty-two years?

To answer this question, I will focus on one case study of staging and image-making in the South: the former prison of Khiam. Between 1985 and 2000, this former barrack built during the French mandate was the main detention centre of the Israeli army and its Lebanese militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), in the occupied area. It quickly became an infamous place, where Southerners were arrested for various reasons and imprisoned in periods that lasted from several days to a decade. The reports of NGOs on the conditions of detention in Khiam speak of 2000 to 5000 detainees over a period of fifteen years; however, there are statistics about the exact number of prisoners. After 2000, the prison was transformed by Hezbollah and staged as a museum into which different types of images were inserted, making it a palimpsest of traces and marks that are themselves politicized and publicized. During the Israeli-Lebanese July 2006 conflict, Israeli aircraft bombarded Khiam, transforming it into a pile of ruins that were subsequently staged and represented. The ambivalent situation of Khiam as both invisible and visible, and as an image-making process, questions the extent to which these images publicize and politicize issues are related to the post-conflict situation in South Lebanese public space.

I develop a comprehensive approach and a multi-scalar analysis of the production, circulation and effects of these images. I consider images in their diversity of forms and of producers; they are mainly “cultural producers” (Wacquant, 2004), i.e., politicians, intellectuals, artists, activists who produce a variety of images (propaganda, advertising, art work) that stage and represent Khiam. As I focus on the location but also the circulation of these images, this implies a multi-scalar and multi-located approach – on the scale of the place itself and of the territory but also where these images are being conceived and transmitted. The elements that are analysed and discussed here are derived from a qualitative methodology. Thirteen field studies of the former Khiam prison were conducted between 2014 and 2016, in which I have engaged in participatory observation. Not only was I seen as a visitor of the prison, but I also varied the contexts of the visits: I would go alone, with former detainees, with foreigners, Lebanese (from the South and from the rest of the country), Lebanese NGOs. If the reception of these images has seldom been analysed, I will present a few elements of my own experience as a visitor and a receptor and of the visits I have been able to follow. I have also conducted various open- and semi-open interviews in Arabic with the site’s actors: former detainees (20), the actors of the transformation of the site (7) and artists (3).
I will present the results of the study in chronological order: before 2000, between 2000 and 2006, and since 2006. I will highlight the continuity of Khiam as a (symbolic) resource and as a stage based on the images produced there, where different power struggles occur. Thus, images can be seen as triggers, vectors and expressions of the power struggles but also as a space of tension between the visible and the invisible. I will conclude this paper by highlighting the discrepancies between Khiam as a fantasized resource and the lack of impact of these images on the local scene.

Imagining a Prison, from Absence to Saturation

An invisible place, an invisible territory: Khiam is striking in its invisibility (1985–2000)

South Lebanon has historically been considered a “neglected area” (Volk 2009: 263–82), and it has been represented as another space, different from the rest of the Lebanese territory (Beydoun 1992: 35–53; Jaber 1978; Mervin 2003). The production of this difference and this Otherness affects the “expression of individuals on the territory” (Avanza, Laferté 2005: 134–52) and has nourished various images and narratives. The Israeli occupation of the region has tended to exacerbate this condition. In 1978, the Israeli army invaded the southern part of the country, officially responding to the growing attacks of the Palestinian armed resistance operating from the border space of Lebanon (Beydoun 1992: 35–53). Since then, the region has known various scales of occupation but has progressively been seen as being cut-off from the rest of Lebanon, as Lebanon is seen as being cut-off from its South. In 1978, it became a space that was difficult to gain access to; checkpoints and barriers to entry were established, and the South was becoming militarily controlled. Lucia Volk describes the South as a heterotopia, a “sort of space that is out of all the places despite the fact that it is traceable” (Foucault 1967: 4) and “where routines of everyday life, social norms as well as state laws are suspended” (Volk 2009: 263–82). Indeed, when questioned about their everyday life under the occupation, several interviewees remember passing through checkpoints and recall how different life was in (the occupied area) and out (of the occupied area). The seven checkpoints that were installed by the SLA and the Israeli army to go in and out of the South can be seen as “an opening and a closing system that both isolates [the heterotopias] and makes them penetrable” (Foucault 1967 : 7). The generic appellation the South / Al Janub, because of the occupation, then clearly became a territorial entity distinct from the rest of Lebanese soil. This condition of an illegible and invisible space nourished various images, including the production of politically engaged artistic and cultural actors such as Lebanese artists Walid Raad and Jayce Salloum, Akram Zaatari and, in the 1970s, Jean Chamoun and Maroun Baghdadi. All of this artistic production questions the absence of representation and images affiliated with the South and precisely stages the South as an invisible object. For instance, in the movie Up to the South (1993), Walid Raad and Jayce Salloum highlight the tension of the South Lebanese territory as a space in between invisibility and over-visibility: “we have come to understand so very little in spite of the massive amounts of information we have received regarding Lebanon, the war and especially the situation in the South of the country that for one to even mention the name all sorts of images would come to our minds” (Raad, Salloum 1993). The artists materialize the South as a heterotopia by stating that “the security zone, where we are now,
this is what we call the South, because we don’t know what is outside the zone” (Raad, Salloum 1993).

In this context, and for these image-makers, Khiam exemplifies this enigma and nourishes fantasies. It is portrayed both as a place that incarnates and represents not only the South but the whole country: “it’s strange how this centre’s history reflects the history of my country” remark the interviewees filmed by Raad and Salloum. It is also a statement that makes Soha Bechara, one of the most notorious former prisoners in Khiam, both a “source-witness and an emblematic figure of the camp” (Launchbury 2014: 514–22): “for me, Khiam, as a place, is gigantic as a memory because in itself and until the end, it incarnates all of our histories in the Israeli-Lebanese conflict, all of them”; however, it is a “hell without a name or a hell behind closed doors” (interview with Soha Bechara, 13 September 2014). Khiam is thus depicted as a multi-scalar spatial and temporal entity: it is the “place, the South, the country”, it speaks of both the history and the memory, of both “I” and “Us”. Similar to the South, it is a place everyone has heard of but no one can picture. Lebanese artists Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige who produced a whole series on Khiam explain their interest by saying that “we started to film and make the Khiam series precisely because we couldn’t see the camp at the time, it was un-representable, we didn’t have any picture of it”. If artists represent this tension between the absence of images and visibility, Khiam is also known for the people who stayed during the occupation for being an unimaginable and un-representable place. Several interviewees, former prisoners and their families, have described how Khiam was infamous for its blurriness: people did not know whether their relatives were detained there, whether they could see them or even just see the place. These images and narratives are social images (Avanza, Laferté 2005: 134–52) because they feature certain groups (prisoners but also “people of the South” as represented by the image producers) related to different territorial entities (the place of the prison, the South) that are then represented as invisible objects. This leads the way to images that aim at picturing this invisibility, at publicizing and politicizing it. They tend to define and essentialise the borders of the In and the Out, of the Us and Them. By being produced by individuals who are out of the South and for an audience that is also out of the South, images of this region tend to extra-territorialize the occupied region during the occupation. Producing images in South Lebanon and especially in Khiam after the liberation would then be a way of reclaiming this territory and declaring its new visibility.


After fifteen years of occupation, the Israeli army withdraw from South Lebanon between 23 and 25 May 2000. The roads that lead to the former occupied area are then flooded with people, refugees from the South returning to their villages, relatives, or Lebanese who come to celebrate “liberation day” or just to see this region that has been inaccessible for more than two decades. This mass movement is doubled by a mass of media images and articles that make this day and space a historic event and speak of the “Retreat from Lebanon: A Triumphant Procession” (New York Times, 24 May 2000). On 25 May, the doors of Khiam are broken, and the site is immediately invaded by thousands of people from the city, villages surrounding and from the region, so many that former prisoners and interviewees who were there on “liberation day” speak of “hours and hours of traffic to go up
to the prison”. The multiple articles published at the time in local and international newspapers on the Israeli retreat are often illustrated by the same image of the crowds entering the gates of the prison; on a larger time-scale, from 2001 onwards, the “liberation day” commemoration established by Hezbollah stages Khiam as the symbol of liberation. If the visits to the site have since become fewer, the prison is still associated with the liberation of the South in the various media and in the images produced for this annual event.

For example, the Hezbollah media campaign for the “liberation day” of 2016 featured images of prisoners being freed from Khiam prison (https://scontent-ams3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.09/13240019_1197872180247459_8411577401030989269_n.jpg?_nc_cat=103&_nc_ht=scontent-ams3 1.xx&oh=55bece90f7f0a50aeb6f5d1c8f9c7ca&oe=5D22BBDE). Articles from various Lebanese media, such as “Khiam Prison: Memory above the Ruins” (28 May 2015, Al Akhbar newspaper, affiliated with a relatively pro-Hezbollah position) or “Hezbollah greets the festivities in Khiam prison on Liberation day” (25 May 2013, Al Nahar newspaper, affiliated with a relatively anti-Hezbollah position) also associate Khiam with the Israeli retreat from South Lebanon and with the “Party of God”. The day the gates of Khiam were opened thus constitutes both a spatial and historical event: it is both remembered and staged; however, it also takes sense from the spatial and geographical dimension of the event, Khiam thus being mobilized as the symbol of the liberation of the “South”.

At the time, a project to transform Khiam into a memorial and a museum had already been planned by a group of former prisoners and activists affiliated with the Lebanese left. The project was devised in cooperation with the Lebanese ministries of culture and tourism and aimed both at “showing the horror” but also at “transforming it into a museum, something civilized; resistance is showing to the occupant that you are stronger, you can live, make art ... that’s what Khiam was for; for all the Lebanese” (interview with one of the project’s stakeholders, 24 February 2015). However, at the time, the local power balance in the region and conflicts between the ministries of culture and of tourism have allowed Hezbollah to appropriate the place and turn it into what they call a Mazar, a religious term used to designate a shrine or sanctuary. The place is also referred to as a “memorial” and as a “museum”. The Lebanese government was refusing to deploy the national army in the South under the pretext that Lebanon did not wish to acknowledge the Israeli withdrawal as complete (Picard 2000: 32–42). Hezbollah, clearly standing as the victor and as the liberator of the South (Mervin 2008: 103–10), was therefore dominant in the power struggle over the staging and managing of Khiam. Moreover, the prisoners who were politically engaged in Khiam in the last years before its liberation were mainly affiliated to the Party of God. The two main staging projects devised for the transformation of the place are “group images” because they are constituted by “entrepreneurs who claim themselves representatives of the group” (Avanza, Laferté 2005: 134–52); the identified groups range from “inhabitants”, to “Lebanese”, to “foreigners”; however, in the speeches of the stakeholders, all these groups are “united” under the cause that Khiam is supposed to represent. The staging of Khiam as a symbol for both Israeli oppression and torture thus becomes a consensus, mobilized by both entrepreneurs. However, in reality, these images serve the entrepreneurs’ competing agendas because they do not agree on the way it should be staged and on who manages the place; moreover, these entrepreneurs are politically oriented. Hence, the staging of Khiam also reflects the local power balance. Furthermore, the first “memory entrepreneurs”
express a feeling of dispossession and loss of control (Naef 2013: 9) regarding the investment of Khiam.

What stories are told in Khiam, and how are they staged? Several visual images and staging processes and artefacts were implemented at the site between 2000 and 2006 and can be divided into four categories:

- Pedagogical and documentary images: explanatory panels for visitors were installed that also traced a guideline for visits to the site. They were yellow billboards written in English and in Arabic detailing the organization and the functioning of the prison but also the different torture techniques that were used and the conditions of living of the detainees.

- Memorial and transmission images: panels with pictures of “martyrs” who died during detention were also inserted into the site, and a monument dedicated to them was built at the entrance (fig. 1).

- Witnessing and re-enacting images: a particular focus was directed at the staging of the various torture techniques that were used; not only was the torture illustrated by pictures, but it was also re-enacted. Former detainees were mobilized as tour guides for visitors, and they staged and mimed the torture techniques they themselves had suffered. They also placed the visitors in a re-enacting position by asking them, for example, to go into the “chicken box”, a very narrow box that was used as an isolation cell. The site was then staged not only as witness of the torture that was perpetuated but also as a re-enactment site of the staged trauma. Visitors were not only the receptors of the testimony, but they were also emotionally and sensorially engaged.

- Political images and projection in the future: murals were painted on the wall: https://electronicintifada.net/sites/default/files/styles/original_800w/public/2004-10/khiam483a.jpg?itok=Lwyypz27&timestamp=1448949295 with symbolic and political messages: the chains and barriers represent the place of oppression that will not contain freedom (the dove) that is made possible by the Islamic resistance of Hezbollah (the yellow flag). As resistance is the political project of Hezbollah, the message delivered by these paintings stages not only a political accomplishment (the liberation of the prison) but also a political project to be continued in the future.
On a museal scale, the way Khiam in which is staged and reflected in images between 2000 and 2006 is comparable to what Patrizia Violi describes in her article “Spectacularising Trauma: The Experientalist visitor of Memory Museums” (Violi 2014: 51–71). By the different artefacts and visual disposals that are inserted on-site, the former prison of Khiam is transformed into a semiotic object and space that manipulates the visitor and guides her or him towards a particular (political) message: oppression (by the Israeli occupier) and resistance by the (Islamic) resistance. Khiam between 2000 and 2006 hence becomes a performative space that acts on the visitor. On one hand, these devices seem to fulfil the three functions identified by Jackie Assayag regarding memory museums: they offer a space of public speech for the violence and injustices perpetuated to be staged, they are spaces of moral education, and they give justice back to the victims (Assayag 2007).

However, on the other hand, the former prison’s past is staged, and it becomes a strategic resource (Assayag 2007) for the main “heritage makers” (Rautenberg 2003). Images here indeed modify the nature of the place and narrate a selective story and history of the prison, focusing on the history of Hezbollah’s Islamic resistance and silencing other types of resistance. Nothing is staged about the diversity of resistances embodied by the former detainees at the time, and the border between “Resistance” and “Islamic Resistance” is quite blurred. Hence, by representing Hezbollah’s message, images are also screens and a tool for erasing other messages. However, the blurriness around the role of the artefacts added to the site is what makes this hegemonic message consensual. For example, the guides who were hosting visitors during the period from 2000 to 2006 (all affiliated with Hezbollah) were referring to “the prisoners” and not making clear which ones. Additionally, consensual figures such as Soha Bechara are mobilized and mediatized to...
narrate the story of the prison “in general”. Hence, the discursive and figural register that is used tends to create a consensus around the symbol and figure of the prison – a symbol of resistance against oppression and torture – but it also simplifies the shadings and different forms and branches of these events. Finally, the management of the place is also blurred.

If the common discourse on the site states that “it is run by Hezbollah”, it is difficult to identify precisely which association and branch of the party runs the place. The management of Khiam since 2000 has reflected the progressive corporatization and institutionalization of the party (Saade 2016: 35), which began with the birth of the Risalat association in 2002 that aims at “writing the history of resistance and diffusing the norms of the society of resistance” (Calabrese 2013: 171–81). Risalat, which is based in Beirut, takes central control of Khiam but also appoints local agents for the daily management of the place. I will not go into detail concerning the party’s actors’ strategies; however, Khiam’s evolution reflects the complex and satellized organization of Hezbollah between local and central governance, a changing management and ad hoc temporal structures. Since 2010 and the subcategorization of Risalat into four specialized associations in the cultural field of the party, the Khiam site has been managed by Siyaj, “the Lebanese association for resistance heritage and tourism”. Its narrative concerning the history of the former prison and the plurality of resistance movements that it witnessed is more consensual and approaches an oral recognition of the complexity of Khiam’s history.

Precise statistics are unavailable concerning the number and type of visitors; however, the significant amount of graffiti written on the walls during the first years after the Israeli retreat from South Lebanon is an indicator of the public’s consideration for the prison and what it represented. If many of the former prisoners interviewed condemned the graffiti and understood it as an absence of respect for their experience, these markings and “popular practices follow the established conventions of commemorating” (Volk 2008: 291–314). However, from 2004 onwards, according to different testimonies, the crowds decreased in Khiam, and on 19 July 2006, when Israeli aircraft bombarded the place, Khiam was already almost empty. The destruction of the site is denounced, by the media and by all the stakeholders around the place, as a deliberate attempt by Israel to physically and symbolically erase what Khiam represented: a place of oppression and torture that was perpetuated under the Israeli occupation of the South. It can also be analysed as an act of “symbolic negation” (Veschambre 2008: 92) of what Khiam had become after 2000: a “lieu de mémoire” where the Israeli “enemy” was exposed and where resistance was celebrated.

By destroying the site, the 2006 war produced a new space in which images are both a reminder of the prison’s past but also a projection into a potential future.

Dealing with destruction, absence and memory: Reconstruct, reconstitute or let be?

Immediately after the destructive summer of 2006, Khiam’s ruins are partially cleaned up, and the site is staged once again. If slight changes have occurred on the site between 2006 and today, its disposition still remains similar to what I observed during previous field work. For the site’s stakeholders, Khiam’s transformation into ruins has actually redefined the museum project and represents an opportunity for Hezbollah to narrate the 2006 war within Khiam’s walls (Deeb, Harb 2011). The Risalat association took on the initial museum project that had been intended for the prison before 2006 and planned to reconstruct it as it was in 2000. Although funds were lacking at the time, the project is still ongoing and embodies the contemporary turn in memory museums: an iconic turn (which consists in a strong utilization of visual materials), a testimonial turn (which consists in the multiplication of personal testimonies) and a multi-media turn (which consists in the use of new technologies) (Violi 2014: 53). The main objective in Siyaj’s museum project is “to make it as it was [...] in order for the visitor, – whether coming from a European country or an Arab country – to come to this place and to feel the cruelty and the violence of the prison. In order for him to feel how much these people have suffered and became tired [...]. We want to come back to that precise moment in which this man, a persecuted prisoner, suffered, to see what he felt ... and transmit it to the visitor” (interview with the manager of the project, 16 August 2016, translation from Arabic to English by the author). In accordance with a “globalization of memory politics” (Assayag 2007), the appropriation of international memorial and museum patterns in Khiam’s museum project is quite clear as Siyaj cares for “European visitors” and uses international museum terms such as “Avant-projet, scenography, visual disposals, visual identity …”; and the testimonial turn involves “re-enact (ing) the trauma, to represent it in an a-temporal dimension” (Violi 2014: 55). The images and multi-media disposals that are planned for the project also borrow from internationally inspired museums, as the museum project team went to seek inspiration amongst “Iranian museums and European museums” (interview with one of those responsible for the project, 16 August 2016). Thus, from this perspective, images play a central role: by re-enacting the time when Khiam was a prison, they blur the different temporalities the site has known and represent Khiam’s story in an a-temporal dimension. Furthermore, Khiam’s project aims to make it a museum “for all Lebanese detention centers” (under the Israeli occupation), proclaiming the former prison as an emblem. However, to date, Siyaj has not obtained sufficient funds to implement the project. Instead, several staging and scenography artefacts and devices were installed in Khiam immediately after its destruction. These measures, which were initially supposed to be temporary, are still in place today.

Waiting for the project still to come, the stakeholders of the Khiam site have chosen to keep and stage its ruins by inserting several iconic artefacts that referred both to the period of Khiam as a prison and to the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese conflict, in which Hezbollah was seen as the winner of the war (Mervin 2008). Three main iconic and artefactual
devices were established: the insertion of warcraft of 2006, a small museum displaying artefacts from the prison and the 2006 July war, and photographic billboards that depicted details of Khiam prison at the time of its liberation (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Billboards installed in the Khiam site

Source: Author, 2016

The 2006 ruins become a central element of the site, and they “crystallize different rhythms” (Brones 2010: 459-477): they can be seen as witnesses of the detention centre from 1985 to 2000, of the site as a memorial between 2000 and 2006, and of its destruction. Finally, for the site’s stakeholders, keeping these elements reinforce the message of Hezbollah: despite the multiple destructions, the (Islamic) resistance will live on. “The idea was to show the prison and what it represented, despite the destructions” (interview with one of the project managers, 6 January 2016). The idea of showing the prison is also central in the iconic artefacts that were introduced on-site. I cannot generalize the changes in the pictures that have been displayed since 2006 as my surveys were set between summer 2014 and spring 2017; however, I have noticed the following. Immediately after the 2006 conflict, just over ten panels were installed on the ruined site, which also marked the path for visitors to the converted space. The pictures displayed details of the prison (doors, cells, pathways) but also various moments from throughout the years: from the day of “liberation”, Khiam as a memorial, the destroyed site: all these fragments of temporalities and spatialities of the site staged at the same place and time. The period of their displaying also changes: judging from their state, some of the panels have been left there for several years. It also reveals the degree of consideration by Hezbollah for the place: as it has not been a priority for the party for the last ten years, panels have been left there to age. However, on my last field survey, and as the project for reconstructing Khiam has been updated, the panels had been changed and the photographs renewed.

Hence, the exhibited images induce a contraction and a blurring of temporalities and spatialities in Khiam. Within the ruins on-site, these pictures refer to both before-destruction and Khiam as a museum, Khiam as a prison and at the time of destruction and “post-destruction”. This configuration bursts rhythms and spaces. However, these artefacts, and the site itself, also serve as a constant reminder of the conflict and of the
occupation in the public space: the former Khiam prison, understood as an image and as a narrative established by its stakeholders, implies the following message: to live with the conflict (its destruction is a direct result of it), despite the conflict (but still it stands) and beyond the conflict (it will become even better and more powerful in the project to come).

The destruction of the site and the reconstruction projects yet-to-come made Khiam a “ghost building – a half-reconstructed structure where the completion of the reconstruction was abandoned due to its “unwantedness’” by a certain group (Otten 2007 in Baillie 2013: 313). When asked for their opinion on the staging of Khiam after its destruction, the former prisoners I have interviewed are clear on two points: the importance for them to keep the ruins as they are and as a witness of the prison for it “to be remembered” (interview with former prisoner belonging to the Lebanese Communist Party, 22 January 2015), and the danger of having it reconstructed. The twenty former prisoners I have met are representative of those who were politically engaged in secular political parties and who were imprisoned after having been involved in military operations against the Israeli army. For them, Khiam represents both a very strong personal engagement and a period when they contributed in the building of a political project for their country. They are concerned that the site be preserved as a trace of their engagement.

If they agree on the pictures displayed as a way of addressing the absence of the physical place, they note the incomprehension one can feel when visiting the place without any previous knowledge. Images staged here are officially a way of going beyond the destruction of Khiam and of serving its memory (according to Siyaj); however, they also serve a political message and are part of the exercise of power by Hezbollah. The status of images is then blurred and intertwined. Since 2006, visits to the site have become fewer, and several interviewees spoke of Khiam as “falling into oblivion”. On all the field surveys I have conducted on an average day (that is, apart from the commemorations celebrated in situ), I have seldom seen more than ten persons on-site.

Because of this decrease, several artistic productions question these images and the transformation of the site in general, positioning the image as a possible tool for contestation to this power.

**Landscapes of Khiam: Contesting the Official Narrative through Images?**

Khiam staged as a means of displaying Hezbollah’s domination over the territory and as a tool for re-writing history has been investigated by several Lebanese artistic productions, which also question the status of images in South Lebanon’s public space: they are presented as a means of both revealing and hiding the power and domination struggles taking place on the ground.

Among these art works is the series of Joana Hadjithomas’ and Khalil Joreige’s *Khiam*, which directly questions the methods and logic of making visible “a place you couldn’t represent”. Through Hadjithomas’ and Joreige’s art work, I examine the capacity of spatial and visual art to contest official images and official space and its ability to produce counter-images. I conclude my reflection by querying its effectiveness in public space: what does art do to Khiam’s space?

The work of these Lebanese artists generally addresses the power of images, in relation to invisibility, to absence, memory, history writing, oblivion, traces and marks, erasure.
According to art curator Suzanne Cotter, “they practice an archaeology of events where the image plays a fundamental role in the writing of history because she helps to understand the position everyone has in the world” (Cotter 2013: 27). The relationship between images, history and space writing is even more central in the work they produced on South Lebanon; all of their seven audio-visual pieces – Khiam 2000–2007, Ansar, Objects of Khiam, Trophies of War, Landscapes of Khiam, I want to See – aim to answer the question “Where is the South?” and address their yearning to “see the South” (interview with the artists, 11 January 2015). Furthermore, the first piece, Khiam 2000, which consists of interviews with seven former detainees, is motivated by the urgency they felt in front of the bursting of space and time in Khiam: “as though something was at the risk of being imminently lost unless its inscription in some form took place in the year 2000, as Israeli forces withdrew from the South. This same impetus arises once more following the camp’s destruction in 2006 as temporal borderlines, which commit the past to trace and experience to memory, instigate these cultural afterlives” (Launchbury 2014: 517). Their work on Khiam and more precisely Landscapes of Khiam, which I present here, questions both the ambiguous status of the place and its evolution since 2000 – from prison to museum, from museum to ruins, from ruins to staged ruins to a projected museum. However, above all it directly criticizes the action of the site’s stakeholders who, by bursting the space with images, end up creating an absence of narratives and memory in Khiam. For example, in the documentaries Khiam 2000–2007, the two artists interview six former prisoners who testify both to their incarceration experience but also to the injustice they felt after liberation and after 2006 concerning the transformation of the place and its stakeholders. Their main grievance was that their story had not been fully told and that some of Khiam’s history was being silenced. Landscapes of Khiam (http://www.hadjithomasjoreige.com/landscape-of-khiam/), made in 2007, revisits the insertion of the billboards into the ruined site and consists of fourteen photos of the existing billboards shot at different times of the year. For them, these billboards “transform the razed camp once more into a museum […] and recreate the topography of the camp”. However, according to them, this staging “creates a temporal confusion and challenges our position as viewers, our relationship to the image, to its ‘mise en abîme’. How can one relate to history, to memory if, whenever faced with the past, instead of coming to terms with it, we are content with superimposing another image on the ruins of an image, a temporality on another, a reality on another?” (hadjithomasjoreige.com/landscape-of-khiam). Hence, the two artists throughout their work and their critical perspective, depict an artificial place, where the denial of history, as they put it, has led to a saturation of images. Through the act of creation, they claim to allow silenced agents to speak and to make visible hidden elements. Behind the idea of temporal confusion, of superimposition of temporalities and images on one another, lies the idea of a haunted place, which is also an idea brought up by Claire Launchbury who speaks of the effects of Hadjithomas’ and Joreige’s work as making images “doubly revenant, doubly spectral”. If we understand ghosts as “the just perceptible, the barely there, the nagging presence of an absence in a variety of spaces” (Addey, Madern 2008: 291–5) then surely Landscapes of Khiam and the art works around this ambiguous place picture it as a spectral place, a place that is both over-filled with images and invisible, bursting with intertwined temporalities and multiple experiences that are silenced. As we have seen, the power struggles over the staging and picturing of Khiam have led to “silenced agencies and forgotten voices and histories”, which are precisely revealed (or at least claim to be) through art, in the sense that they attend “to the political aspects of those voices and histories” (Addey, Madern 2008: 291–5). Hence, the artistic images can be seen here as revealers of the injustices and power struggles made invisible
over the space; however, the question remains: what do the artistic images do to the place? What is the effectiveness of these images? The haunting nature both of Hadjithomas’ and Joreige’s work and of the place itself can also be a theoretical tool for assessing the performativity of the artistic images on the space. Indeed, the Khiam series defines the site as an image – that is, “a present absence” (Marin 1993). If their work directly questions the nature of space and the ability of artefacts and images to transform it, its effect on the ground is non-existent, as it has never been displayed in situ. Furthermore, and given the artists’ sociological background and geographical trajectories, the contestation potential of their work in the territory they depict is limited, as they are Beiruti artists and intellectuals, mainly living between Paris and Beirut. Hence, all the political and memorial protest the artists claim does not remain on the ground but elsewhere, where the art is exhibited and shown and the images are made visible. This leads to an extra-territoriality of Khiam but does not prevent or question the continuation of the power struggle on the ground for the investment and making of its space. If Hadjithomas’ and Joreige’s work stages a “lack of traces in Khiam” (Launchbury 2014), their work itself sustains a lack of traces, incarnating a “fabulation of geography” (Robinson in Launchbury 2014: 515).

Conclusion

By investigating the status and evolution of images in the former prison of Khiam, I have sought to address the process of image-making in post-conflict spaces such as South Lebanon that are marked by transitions and uncertainties “which reactivate heritages from several anterior historical periods” (Djament-Tran et al. 2012). The former Khiam prison, in the way its space has evolved, from prison to museum to ruins to staged ruins and projection into the future, can itself be considered a post-conflict space. We have seen that the images that have been produced on-site since 2000 contribute to naturalizing the link between the place, the people and the territory and fix the place in an a-temporal dimension. However, this making of space by images is marked by the intervention of political and artistic others who, in reality, produce these images for others. This leads to the making of what we can call discrepant images, in the sense that the production and insertion of these images are confronted with an absence of investment in them by local inhabitants. By claiming to reveal a space that has been seen as invisible during the conflict and by claiming to give back to the people the memory and control of this emblematic place, the images of Khiam contribute to renewing and fuelling power struggles over the production of the post-conflict space. They contribute to assessing Hezbollah’s domination in the spatial, social, economic and political game over the region by being a means by which to exercise this power: “il faut en somme admettre que ce pouvoir s’exerce plutôt qu’il ne possède” (Foucault 1975: 31). Images in Khiam are then in a liminal state: they are produced for Others who are not directly addressed, they are contested but not on-site, and the effect of this contestation is null. They are finally ghosts in the place, ghosts in the territory.
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ABSTRACTS

This article investigates the status and effect of images in the post-conflict public space of South Lebanon which is the stage of political and social configurations involving specific means of image production on the territory. How, why and for whom are images produced in a post-conflict area that has been perceived as “invisible” for thirty years? Are the images produced a way to go beyond this conflict or do they perpetuate it? All of these artefacts are resources for the appropriation of the southern Lebanese space; but discrepancies are created on the ground by their limited effects and reception. The aim of this paper is to point out the dissonances between the presumed power of these images and their effectiveness on the ground by focusing on the staging of the former prison of Khiam since 2000 and its reflection of all these dynamics. We will show that images in Khiam and in the South are in a liminal state: they are produced for Others who are not directly addressed, they are contested but not on-site and the effect of this contestation is null. They are finally ghosts in the place, ghosts in the territory.

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Mots-clés: Southern Lebanon, images, post-conflict, memory, power struggles
The Public Life of Images: Towards a Social Ecology of the Urban Gaze. The example of Bologna’s Sacrario dei Partigiani

Olivier Gaudin
Introduction

From monuments to advertising or political posters, from information screens to shop windows, the omnipresence of images in the public spaces of Western cities is self-evident, often criticized since the advent of “consumer societies” (Adorno and Horkheimer 1991, Barthes 1957, Debord 1967, Baudrillard 1970, Debray 1992). This pervasiveness has led to the constitution of areas of scholarship such as visual anthropology, visual culture studies and media studies (Mitchell 1994, 2005). Other fields of research commonly examine the stakes of representation in public: cultural anthropology (Descola 2006, 2010), the sociology of the arts (Becker 1982), or architecture and urban studies (Kossel & Sölch 2018). However, few social scientists, philosophers or art historians attempt to further connect those different perspectives to address the concrete modalities of the manifold presence of images in urban public space: that is, to consider their material supports or mediums while they are surrounded by the various social activities of reception on which the meaning of public images eventually depends. From the perspective of their location within public places and spaces, one could argue that our knowledge about the ordinary experience of visual representations is still limited, since most of the existing theoretical approaches, however rich and inspiring, tend to remain disconnected from one another.

Which methodological tools might address, across different intellectual traditions and learning simultaneously from them, the actual place of images in public spaces? This article argues for a contextual approach inherited from early urban sociology, rather
than aesthetics or geography: it investigates the presence of images in urban public places from a perspective of social ecology. Social ecology is an intellectual tradition that was progressively elaborated a century ago by sociologists, social psychologists and pragmatist philosophers at the University of Chicago. In the specific context of the growing American industrial metropolis, Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, in particular, attempted to define a programme of “human ecology” (Park & Burgess 1925), while John Dewey and George H. Mead insisted on studying the social and environmental conditions of individual experience and thought (Dewey 1925, Mead 1934). Although they did not always emphasize the phrase “social ecology”, these authors highlighted social and historical processes of interaction within given situations. Focusing on the mutual interdependency between human agents and their environments led them to investigate different yet simultaneous “layers” of experience, contesting every form of dualism.

The prospect of examining the public life of images is interdisciplinary; by bringing Chicago’s intellectual heritage of “human ecology” into dialogue with a site-specific analysis of public images, urban and visual studies can enrich each other. Shifting from “space” to “place” is a first step along that methodological line of thought. Arguably, an actual urban ecology of the public experience of images still awaits its development. This is partly due to the objective complexity of the interactions at stake but also to a relative lack of questioning about how those evolving relationships shape or transform empirical situations. The consideration of collective attitudes towards images in public requires a transversal curiosity, an open circulation of ideas and comparisons of experiences across different times and sites.

Describing the content and location of images in public places is not enough. We should ask who brings them to life, who puts them there and who looks at them, why, how often, and with whom. In other words, as semioticians and sociolinguists have long taught us about language use: context is also content. Further, any reflection about images should start with their genesis and existence. Since these intermediate realities are both material and intentional objects, they tend to resist ontological identification (Lavaud 2001, Schnell 2007, Alloa 2011) and to escape the mere logic of place (Nancy 2003, Coccia 2011: 102-103). However, studying their being in public does not involve solving these difficult problems in abstracto. Addressing the meaning and functions of images visible in accessible urban settings, I focus on clearly identifiable visual supports that are characterized by their relatively stable material presence in definite places and over time.

Towards a social ecology of public images: methodology

The authors who introduced the possibility of social ecology did not study images. However, other social scientists have unveiled some important factors of the public presence of images, which may serve my own ecological perspective. Especially the growing scholarship on social and collective memory, “memory studies”, now an established field of interdisciplinary research (Olick & Robbins 1998; Erll, Nünning & Young 2010; Tota & Hagen 2015), investigates public iconography, scrutinizing its ritual functions and political uses or misuses (Nora 1984-1997; François, Schulze & al. 2007). In addition to literary, photographic or cinematographic descriptions, social sciences have also learned from ground-breaking works on visual experience. László Moholy-Nagy (1927), Walter Benjamin (1989, 2005) and Aby Warburg (2012), as well as recent scholars of visual culture (Mitchell, 2001, 2005) or public performance (Schechner 1985), provide...
both materials and methodological resources for investigation, reaching far beyond art
theory. An ecological approach to public images may elaborate on those intellectual
traditions to at once address the status and content of public images as well as the
activities and the spatial organization of the social life around them. Therefore, the
overall methodology of this article is twofold: it traces its own conceptual framework of a
“social ecology of images”, extending the tradition of human ecology towards
contemporary urban and visual studies, and it aims to measure this framework against a
concrete example.

6 A first section examines and rephrases the concepts of image and public visibility from an
ecological perspective. Urban studies produce precious elements for contextualization:
looking in public, or publicly, does not mean looking together; it suggests the visible
presence of multiple, different and interacting others, going across intentionally
designed places. Visual studies emphasize that images stand there for several reasons,
which people understand or apprehend in ways that greatly vary with times and places.
The second part attempts a descriptive analysis of an example located in the heart of the
city of Bologna (Italy). Through direct observation, attentive description, and personal
photographs of the situation, I examine how the photographic portraits of the Sacrario
concentrate many stakes of an anthropological and social ecology of urban gaze at public
images. In the third and final section, I confront the peculiarities of this case with the
multiple images visible in contemporary urban situations. Arguably, their meaning
remains open-ended insofar as symbolic images are made public through shared social
activities – themselves affected by the places in which they unfold.

Images and urban public places from an ecological
perspective

Combining the theory of image with an analysis of public visibility

7 In the West, a long philosophical tradition – from Plato to Baudrillard – approached the
varying distance separating the image from reality. Among the images, most
philosophers distinguished iconic representation (eikon) from self-referential simulacra (eidolon): an icon would refer to a represented thing by keeping their distance perceptible,
such as between the copy and the original, while the simulacrum or the idol, pretending
to be a real thing, would abuse our perceptual credulity to create illusions. In both cases,
an ordinary image would be moving away from reality (Baudrillard 1981: 9-67). However,
other thinkers more attentive to material history, as well as the “documentary montages”
of certain artists (Didi-Huberman 2013: 77-136, Rancière 2011: 265-307), challenge this
simplistic separation by scrutinizing the numerous material supports, physical traces and
bodily places that make possible the very existence of images. They insist that even
internal or mental images remain strongly related to external artefacts or media. In the
wake of pioneers such as Warburg or Benjamin, visual culture scholars have observed a “remarkable transformation” (Mitchell 2005: 47) in the history of art as well as popular
culture. Turning their attention to the contemporary proliferation of images far beyond
works of art, they acknowledge their strangeness, their aura or their dialectical nature. In
parallel, Descola (2006, 2010) and Belting (2005: 304-307) have emphasized the
singularities of these meaningful surfaces, first sculpted, carved or painted, often directly
on bodies; later reproduced at large scale through various techniques and “ mediums”.

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Ever since the production of printed material reached an unprecedented mass scale during the industrial era, visible surfaces have expanded throughout urban areas – from electoral posters to advertising screens, signage, monuments, graffiti, tags, official artwork, and shop windows. This amplification requires an appropriate descriptive anthropology attentive to the ranges of uses and nuances, to evolving situations rather than broad categorizations. Therefore, the concept of image calls into question its traditional treatment in Western philosophy (Lavaud 2001). Renewing its analysis involves a close description of “sensible life”, starting from the living stuff of perceptual environments. This may lead to the linking together of a “physics” and an “anthropology” of “the sensible”, an association that echoes medieval conceptions of the visible (Coccia 2016).

What about the relationship between images and public space? Rejecting the dualistic division between reality and appearance, or between fixed essence and moving surface, does not cancel the need to distinguish between different types of images and their respective situations of exposure. Beyond the mere specification of “space” into “places”, an ecological analysis engages with the activities of the viewers or audience – the public, irreducible to a passive and homogeneous entity. Studying the public life of images in the city contests the traditional condemnation of “spectacle”, even in the specific sense intended by Debord (1967). Such an attitude underestimates the judgemental capacities of spectators and city dwellers, reducing them to passive subjects.

This obsessive concern with the baleful display of commodities and images, and this representation of their blind, self-satisfied victim, did not arise in the age of Barthes, Baudrillard and Debord. They became established in the second half of the nineteenth century, in a very specific context. It was when physiology discovered the multiplicity of nervous stimuli and circuits in place of what had been the unity and simplicity of the soul; and when, with Taine, psychology transformed the brain into a ‘polyp of images’. The problem is that this scientific promotion of quantity coincided with another - that of the popular multitude which was the subject of the form of government called democracy; that of the multiplicity of those individuals without qualities whom the proliferation of reproduced texts and images, window displays in shopping precincts and lights in public towns, was transforming into full inhabitants of a shared world of knowledge and pleasures. [...] Denunciation of the misleading seduction of the ‘consumer society’ was initially the deed of elites gripped by terror [...] (Rancière 2009: 46-47).

Urban studies did not wait for this “critique of the critique”. They already emancipated themselves from dualism by associating, for example, the iconography of built spaces (the history of urban representations, the theory of architecture and urban planning) with studying urban “imaginaries” and the viewpoints of urban dwellers (Roncayolo 1990: 176-180, Roncayolo 2014). These topics already involve a specific attention to the physical presence of images in cities, while connecting it to their interiorisation by people. Analyses of the “imageability” and “legibility” of urban forms (Lynch 1960: 1-13), semiology applied to urban studies (Barthes 1970: 43-56, Choay 1972: 11-30, Ledrut 1973), as well as historical anthropology (Bailly 2005, Belting 2001, 2005, Descola 2006) have thus together described the fabrication of images and the evolution of their social and cultural functions, without neglecting their material supports, cultural meaning and spatial contexts. The fieldwork of Kevin Lynch and his colleagues combined the modern psychology of perception with the engineers’ traditional practical knowledge about transportation and infrastructure planning. This approach has revealed the propensity of urban spaces to provide ordinary perception with coherence (structure, totality, edges,
limits) and orientation (elements, paths, landmarks). Their empirical investigations across European and American cities took up the framing of experience by constructed forms and fostered its psychological, anthropological and sociological analysis (Lynch 1960: 123-159). Surveying the material and temporal conditions of the formation of urban dwellers’ mental images, analysing their movement – whether pedestrians, passengers or drivers – as well as questioning the architect’s and urban planner’s means of trying to “make an image” by modifying built places, to this day all remain fruitful intellectual attitudes, especially for a social ecological perspective.

The social life of urban public places: towards an ecology of urban experiences

At the crossroads of so many different disciplines, the study of public images needs an intellectual reconstruction and a careful contextualization. The social ecological perspective offers one possible approach; since the visibility of images in public depends on social and historical processes, their analysis requires a contextualized “natural history” in the sense developed by the Chicago sociologists. If images are the product of a living circulation integrated into the vast array of social interactions, one must consider the diversity of places, contexts and forms of their presence. This encompasses the facades and portals of cathedrals, statues, posters and frescoes on the walls, monuments, museums and shop windows to the floors, construction palisades, advertising panels and screens that encumber the streets and public transport – not to mention theatres and cinemas, art galleries, and cemeteries. All are not equal in quality, content, depth or durability. Although many images in cities stand in specific urban places characterized by their social and historical complexity, many others, at the fringes or edges or urban nodes and infrastructures, are no less overwhelmed by contextual significance. Outdoor (and some indoor) built spaces constitute a vast “public realm” (Lofland 1998) with uncertain boundaries. This vagueness aggravates the difficulty of their categorizing; even if we were to stick to central urban places, should we not include, in addition to streets and squares, the shopping centres, cafés, waiting and transit areas, as well as stations and bus shelters? Just as the concept of image, the notion of public space, extremely labile, threatens to lose its relevance because of its very extension.

At this point, a fine-grained ecology of experience inspired by Dewey’s and Mead’s pragmatist philosophy of perception as well as by Lynch’s work, while bringing Chicago’s human ecology down to the scale of ordinary perceptions, may prove resourceful. Such an approach replaces images in the intermittent visibility and the permanent movement that characterize urban life (Whyte 1980, Sennett 1991, 1994, Quéré 1992, Joseph 1984, 1998). It tracks down affordances for action and means of organizing or preventing the mutual visibility of street life. Focusing on specific settings, it observes the spatial arrangements between bodies, the distance that separates or brings them closer to one another, and their rapid or slower movements. “Public space” is therefore redefined as the material context of the mutual exposure of city dwellers, i.e., as the changing framework of interactions in public – the places of the public (Joseph 1991). Certain areas of interaction become “public arenas” (Cefaï 2002), that is, contexts of mutual visibility and symbolic communication where various forms of practical engagement become possible – collective or civic mobilizations, demonstrations or celebrations, but also trials, conflicts and even confrontations (Hayden 1995). The close connection between this
pragmatist understanding of the “public” and lively urban contexts becomes more understandable. Conditions of reciprocal visibility are quickly changing with the course of daylight as well as with the transformation of built places. Meanwhile, the urban social order is constantly being negotiated or recomposed through sequences of interactions, which embody the political meaning of those conditions of visibility.

Further observation tools are the notions of open situations, interactional processes and flexible behaviour (Goffman 1963, Cefai 2002, Joseph 1984, 1998). Finally, a social ecological approach focuses on the conditions of coexistence in public and urban pluralism, understood as a tension comprised of trials and misunderstandings rather than an irrevocable achievement (Joseph 2007: 111-132, 437-459, Tonnelat 2016).

**Contextualizing the active presence of images: the contribution of visual studies**

From this perspective, the analysis of images shifts towards their conditions of visibility: i.e., their spatial and temporal situation, their concrete supports and their symbolic status. Contemporary visual studies enrich the analysis of those contextual conditions. W. J. T. Mitchell has shown how the word ‘image’ can indicate distinct realities: ‘images’ showing a resemblance, pattern or figure; ‘objects’, in the sense of the material supports on which the images appear, or in the sense of the elements of the world to which these images refer; and, finally, ‘media’, i.e., ‘material practices’ that link the first two senses to produce constructed pictures (Mitchell 2005: xiii-xiv, see also Belting 2005: 304-307). The latter combine different production elements and gestures, which calls for a contextual analysis.

What does ‘material practices’ mean? The presence of images depends on their physical locations and the spatial arrangements that maintain their visibility over time: an image only makes sense in a social situation, that is, an intentional context of meaningful relationships. These include relationships with other images, but, also and above all, they involve the viewers’ gazes and memories. Visual representations in public places change meaning with their ongoing reception by city dwellers. What are, then, the ecological and social conditions of the presence of images in cities? Some constitute a cultural heritage – statues, ornate facades and public monuments are the result of an explicit intention of staging space to serve an aesthetic or political purpose (and often the conjunction of the two). Paradigmatic examples are medieval churches and cathedrals, the Louvre Palace with its successive extensions and remodelling (from Philippe Auguste to the Grand Louvre), or funeral monuments. Celebrations and ceremonies make up the public life of these images of stone. Historical changes alter their role and meaning so that figurative objects may change their symbolic or ritual function, from religion to art for instance – which gives itself place to other types of organized rituals, as orchestrated by mass tourism or cultural promotion. Elsewhere, ordinary tools may become archaeological remains of prime importance, the material footprints of a lost era: in other words, images of the past. At the other end of the spectrum, other pictorial genres only have an ephemeral presence, such as the festive arrangements of street shows, graffiti and illegal street art, or advertising, which appeal to immediate consumption.

Thus, the overall meaning of images in public places is variable and revocable; it depends on the social and cultural context rather than on their “objective” content. This dependency is made clear by those worn out, out-dated or decontextualized monuments.
in former Communist countries made obsolete by ideological turnovers after the loss of the social ecological relations that gave them sense. A change of institutions transforms inscriptions or monuments attached to a specific political regime into archaeological remains within a matter of days. This phenomenon is in fact ordinary, although not always as quick and spectacular. Lee Friedlander's photographic series *The American Monument* provides a good overview of this uncertain destiny: [https://www.eakinspress.com/book.cfm?slug=the-american-monument](https://www.eakinspress.com/book.cfm?slug=the-american-monument). This visual inquiry through American urban squares shows both the enveloping and isolation of ancient civic monuments in their built-up contexts (Friedlander 1976): [http://exhibits.haverford.edu/finearts/lee-friedlander-the-american-monument-photographs/](http://exhibits.haverford.edu/finearts/lee-friedlander-the-american-monument-photographs/). Like a word, a building or a work of art, the meaning of a public image depends on its social environment, as well as the various social activities that take place around it. Its actual meaning changes with the framing that different uses and activities (or the decline of these uses) operate in the time and place where they are located, i.e., their situation. The following section confronts this general idea in a concrete situation.

### Faces in the city: the *Sacrario* of Bologna

[...] to do without people is for photography the most impossible of renunciations. And anyone who did not know it was taught by the best Russian films that *milieu* and landscape, too, reveal themselves most readily to those photographers who succeed in capturing their anonymous physiognomy, as it were presenting them at face value. (Benjamin 2005: 519)

### Situation: the public visibility of collective memory

Let us consider a specific location – an area of just a few square metres. In the heart of the city of Bologna (Italy), a wall panel features approximately two thousand small-format photographic portraits hung in a window: simple, barely enlarged passport photos. In a number of these small frames, only the image of a partisans' badge, instead of a photo, appears above a family name followed by an initial. The portraits are captioned twice: for each frame a surname, and above the large window, set in lead capital letters approximately ten centimetres high (recalling print typing characters), an inscription reads: **BOLOGNA 8 SETTEMBRE 1943-26 APRILE 1945, CADUTI DELLA RESISTENZA PER LA LIBERTÀ E LA GIUSTIZIA, PER L’ ONORE E L’ INDIPENDENZA DELLA PATRIA.**
Each one of these gazes, regardless of the age, social class, profession or diploma of the persons, seems to take up the written injunction carried by certain walls of French cities: “passer-by, remember!” (see Barcellini & Wieviorka 1995). This striking album of faces composes a funeral monument, the Sacrario dei partigiani e caduti per la liberazione.

Many similar monuments are visible throughout Italy, where the Partisans movements were so active. They constitute official support for collective memory, with commemorative ceremonies held every year. However, few of them suggest the painful complexity of Italian history between September 1943 and April 1945, as the world conflict took the shape of an actual civil war that brought bloodshed to central and northern Italy. Parks, museums, cultural centres, sites of memory or remembrance have been dedicated to these tragic events. Common post-war monuments are statues, steles, plaques or bas-relief located on public buildings, in enclosed cemeteries or on sites of battlegrounds: for instance, in the Versilia (between the cities of Lucca and Carrara, in Toscana), in Parma (the Monumento al Partigiano by Marino Mazzacurati and Guglielmo Lusignoli, 1954-1956) or in Venice, where the half-drowned statue of the Partigiana (by Augusto Murèr, 1961) reclines in the Laguna, in front of the entrance of the Biennale Giardini. Another interesting example, in Bologna, is the Monumento al Partigiano e alla Partigiana of Porta Lame (by Luciano Minguzzi, 1947); the two bronzes were transferred there in 1986. Both were forged out of a melted Mussolinian equestrian statue of 1929, itself forged out of Austrian cannons captured in 1848). Most of these monuments stage expressive figures and narrative texts mentioning the suffering of victims or their “glorious” sacrifice. Others, such as the “Monumento ai Partigiani” in Segrate near Milan (Aldo Rossi, 1965-1967), are very different: rather than images, figures or narratives, the
built objects suggest unanswered questions by their enigmatic presence in the midst of public squares or sites. They attempt an articulation with their environing architecture or landscape.

Although Bologna’s memorial echoes both of these tendencies, it seems quite unique, because of its very specific use of peculiar images. Its display case, with the printers and the plaque were affixed in 1961 by the Communist municipality, providing an official framework to the spontaneous hanging of photographs that preceded it. Despite the passage of generations and the increasing distance from the traumatic past evoked by the pictures, their central location still makes them most visible by everyone, every day of the year. This monument therefore seems a paradigm of public exposure of the past through images.

How public is the place? The wall belongs to the Palazzo d’Accursio, or Palazzo Comunale (the City Hall). The architectural complex, traced out in the 13th century and rebuilt many times since, opens onto a square of modest dimensions, built around 1550: Neptune Square (Piazza del Nettuno, named after the statue by Jean de Boulogne that has adorned its fountain since 1566). Previously, it was simple to gain access to the Piazza Maggiore, the nerve centre of the city and province as a whole.

Figure 2: Ferd. Artaria & son, Map of Bologna, 1859. The Piazza Maggiore and the Piazza del Nettuno lies at its geographical centre

The city centre lies on the exact route of the Roman Via Emilia, the major road axis that gave its name to the administrative region of which Bologna is the capital. The modest Neptune Square, open on its north side towards the main street of the city, also remains, practically, a street providing access to the Piazza Maggiore and the Basilica of San
Petronio. Until its pedestrianisation, as early as 1968, it was a street segment: it extends the major axis of the rectilinear Via dell’Indipendenza (built in late 19th century) connecting the central square to the train station, up north. In the corner formed by the Palazzo d’Accursio, just in front of the monument, a newspaper kiosk dating from before the war survived until the 1980s. Since this location roughly corresponds to the intersection of the *cardo* and *decumanus* of Roman colonization, this crossroads has been the city’s geographical and historical centre for two thousand years.

Figure 3: General views of Piazza del Nettuno from North-East, and from South. An inevitable meeting point for all Bolognese, the inhabitants of the region and visitors, be they local or foreign students, immigrants or tourists.

Olivier Gaudin, 2014

After having delineated an enclosed garden attached to the communal palace, this part of the building housed the stock exchange during the 19th century. It has never ceased to be the city's busiest meeting place. In 1999, the installation of a public library around the internal covered square of 19th century Sala Borsa, freely accessible to everyone and intensely used by the population, reinforced its status as a major public place.

**Facing portraits, confronting history**

The building was also a prison on several occasions, including at the end of the Second World War – which was also an extremely violent civil war in Italy. This thick outer wall has been the scene of numerous summary executions and of public exposures of resistance fighters’ and partisans’ corpses, supplicated by fascists. As soon as the city was liberated in 1945, Bolognese who had lost someone in such tragic circumstances began to hang portraits of their family members on that wall: (http://susanreep.com/blog/tag/
A short online description of the Sacrario is available on the public-funded website “Storia e Memoria di Bologna” (https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/resistenza/monumenti/sacrario-piazza-nettuno). The meaning of these ordinary photographs became commemorative and symbolic in several ways, as Italian cities were torn apart for decades by controversial narratives about the “Resistance”, in a way that singles out the Italian case (Perona 1995; 1997; 2005). For instance, Parma’s Monumento was heavily damaged in 1961, and similar attacks have occurred throughout Northern Italy. In the specific context of Bologna, which for decades was an outpost of municipal communism, these faces would have seemed, during the postwar decades, ennobled by the ethical and political meaning of their “sacrifice”. The construction of a coherent narrative of the Partigiani’s Resistance recalled this to all, publicly. They were thus given a political function that is reminiscent of the role of the funeral mask – the Roman *imago*: Far from our Vasarian tradition, where the portrait is defined as an optical imitation of the portrayed individual (at a distance) and at best a false illusion of his visible presence, the Roman notion of the imago involves a duplication by contact with the face, a process of impression (the plaster mould ‘taking’ on the face itself) and then a physical ‘expression’ of the shape obtained (the positive wax print made from the mould). *Imago* is therefore not an imitation in the classical sense of the word; it is not a fake and does not require any idea, talent or artistic magic. On the contrary, it is an image-matrix produced by adhesion, by direct contact of the material (the plaster) with the material (of the face). (Didi-Huberman 2000: 69).

The simplicity of those portraits tends to balance the political role they were assigned. Most of the images of the monument in its present shape (remade in 1961) appear to be official administrative identity photographs, perhaps even for police purposes. These images were not taken for commemoration or celebration, but for identification. Each of these faces of men and women photographed under the fascist regime that had ruled Italy for two decades had been part of a civil and state order. In this respect, they bear witness to the intense use of images by all political regimes of the last century. However, a small minority of them belong to an amateur practice, i.e., the vernacular circulation of photography: they document its ordinary uses in urban societies at a time when the generalization of the medium had reached a mass scale – particularly in the form of the reproduction of works of art (Benjamin 2005: 521-522), the mass press (Freund 1980: 103-139) and amateur photography (Rouillé 1982: 192).
Today, these portraits serve less to identify individuals – except of course for the relatives – than to make the viewer understand the importance of certain events. However, if they may reach us beyond the local, Italian or even European scale, it is precisely, and without paradox, because of their specific spatial anchoring. Their display on a crowded public square offers the memorial to everyone’s eyes, permanently, without intermediaries and with little ceremony. Its public visibility gives force to the display case, much more than its capital-lettered metal title. These portraits may remind every passer-by, regardless of his or her origin and knowledge of Italy’s troubled history, of the consequences of ideological confrontation and political assassination, of civil war with its executions without trial; of the injustice and violence that human beings are capable of inflicting on one another. However, they may also evoke the determination, courage, sacrifice and resistance, the transmission of ideals of justice and combat, and the sufferings of civil war. Arguably, one may discuss values in the sense of ideas and life forms implying a commitment and determination to act; without prejudging the content of those controversial values nor their majority approval, the presence side-by-side of these sober black-and-white portraits suffices to provoke a feeling of seriousness and questioning.

Last but not least, the monument owes its peculiarity to its assemblage of vernacular photographs; for that very reason, its formalization did not cancel the spontaneity of its spontaneous emergence. Although it was probably not unique, the presence of such pictures being more common in Italian cemeteries than in other Western European countries, the durability and especially the location of the monument makes it an exception. This use of public images even incorporates an apparent contradiction, giving permanent visibility to ordinary pictures that seem much closer to ephemeral press photographs than to marble statues.

Montage and memory

Bologna’s Sacrario is as much a monument as a memorial: it is a place of active public memory since memory and emotions, through those ordinary images, may continue to
work, disturb and move visitors. Jean Giono, for instance, did not miss this evocative force as he briefly travelled through the city in the early 1950s – that is, before the official window and plaque were installed in 1961.

Bologna has the most extraordinary memorial to the dead. Horrible but perfect. [...] I do not feel at all like pouring into sentimentality. I like this memorial to the dead very much, I say it outright. These ghosts installed at the edge of the sidewalk, in the busiest part of a city and as they were in their humble lives, are more moving than all the great architectural orders. [...] It was that good, fat, chubby, chubby cooper who stayed there when he died; it was that bank clerk, that cleric of a notary, that constipated professor with a broken collar and who died constipated despite a bayonet in his belly. It is very good that tramway travellers, cars and pedestrians do not forget it. Next to this wonderful monument, there is a newspaper kiosk. This recklessness is only possible in the land of Machiavelli.

(Giono 1954: 198-200).

Those brief illustrating remarks echo the impressions anyone can have while visiting the monument numerous times. The photographs published with the present article contribute to establishing the context in a more empirical way: they show that the portraits, in themselves banal, owe their evocative force to the conjunction of several factors. Their number and their gathering attract the eye because it gives them the presence of a crowd yet without confusing the frames: each face looks at us separately, from the limits of each individual picture. The visitor must approach to see them, one by one: the reduced scale of the portraits forces the spectator to move sideways, since when one tries to hold one of these glances, those of the other silent faces laterally attract the eye. Their disturbing number suggests a mirror with multiple facets: a possible figuration of our own memory, with its irreducibly collective dimension and its “social frameworks” (cadres sociaux, see Halbwachs 1925, 1950; see also Joseph 2007: 295-305) anchored in urban places. However, “social memory” has different meanings and implications, eventually competing: “official memory, vernacular memory, public memory, popular memory, local memory, family memory, historical memory, cultural memory, etc.” (Olick & Robbins 1998: 112).

Each onlooker operates her own montage, on behalf of the context within which she comes across the sight of the memorial, but also depending on her own shared memories and knowledge of an increasingly distant past. Each person’s socialization and biography contribute to the elaboration of different versions of this reception, which leaves open the possibility of challenging and contesting one or another of them –, i.e., the possibility of phrasing a “counter-memory” (Foucault 1977) or even envisioning a “counter-space” (Hayden 1995: 34-39. This is not to say, however, that the meaning of these public images should be considered in a relativistic way, for two reasons: every passer-by remains a participant to collective activities that make up her own socially meaningful experience of the city; moreover, the Sacrario’s layout and situation compose a frame for its perception and reception. Let us consider how our social ecological approach may throw light upon both these characteristics.

One could not mistake Bologna’s sober memorial for a fascist monument, since the simple juxtaposition of faces and the plaque are a departure from glorious celebration. Instead of imposing a hegemonic public discourse about a contested and troubled past, they remain open to different (re)interpretations through the openness of the casual photographs. The dynamic possibility of periodic new readings and interpretations remains. Additionally, if this assembly of individual faces can still bear witness to the horror of civil war and the pain of loss, rather than a cult of honour or heroic personality, it is also due to its central location in the city. The site of the Sacrario (a wall, at the city’s heart,
where political assassinations took place) is crucial for its significance and its reception: instead of being cut from the ephemeral character of city life, the portraits stand in the middle of the daily activities of passers-by, who see them without always noticing them. Most of these activities are trivial, some are not: celebrations, commemorations, demonstrations, spontaneous gatherings, simple visits, daily walks. The main meeting place of the Bolognese, the square remains the point of departure or arrival of most political demonstrations or civic gatherings, the context of solemn celebrations but also of ordinary political discussions. Thus, these “ghosts” witness wedding processions, official visits, trade union delegations, schoolchildren, and all types of public events. Bologna’s display case thus constantly reflects the incessant movement of public behaviours, gestures and interactions of passers-by: the ordinary course of urban life in peacetime. It is a historical and shared reference point, more discreet than the Neptune or the nearby Basilica, yet just as important for the transmission of stories and values.

Bologna’s memorial is not a museum, nor an ordinary commemorative monument: it neither resembles sculpted allegories nor the “unknown soldier” or the “flame of victory” of so many war memorials. It displays the individual faces of identified persons – most of them civilians. Additionally, unlike private buildings or enclosed cemeteries, images of the lost ones take part in city life: the silent faces coexist with all sorts of scenes. Therefore, their meanings are neither static nor relativistic but allow people to find a balance, as time goes by and context changes, between the “malleability and persistence” (Olick & Robbins 1998: 129) of shared memory. It may stay alive if it continues to vary, according to new interpretations and public uses of the place; i.e., with the multiple activities happening around the square.

Figure 5: Social life and public activities in front of the Sacrario

The current signification of the memorial’s presence is thus far from being monolithic. Its central location is strikingly public, in the most open and pluralistic sense of the term: it
seems that everyone, on every occasion, may sit or stand there, to meet people around
the entrance of the Sala Borsa (the public library), to rest for a while, to attend a street
show, to hear the latest local news or gossip, or just to watch the flow of passers-by. I was
able to observe on repeated occasions that the library and its whereabouts, including the
few steps in front of the Sacrario, was a popular meeting place for immigrants.

Between the wall of the Palazzo and the Neptune Fountain, the livelihood of that small
piece of square is so remarkable that it would be difficult to assert if and how people are
actually keeping an eye on the photographs. However, how could their presence be more
obvious to all, and better inserted in the ordinary public life of the city? In sum, the
ecological conditions of these images' public reception highlight the constant variation of
people’s views and attention, including their neglect. As long as they stand there and
keep looking in the onlooker’s direction, it would be difficult for anyone to pretend to
ignore them.

These observations lead me to think that Bologna’s Sacrario remains open to several types
of relationships with the past. Not only does such a traumatic event as a war imply a
plurality of social shared meanings, but these meanings themselves also shift over time. I
argue that beyond this case, most of the evocative force of public images emerges from
such open and lively interplay with their environing social and spatial situations. Just as
their sites or locations pre-exists them, public images appear amid a web of human
relations and narratives, in medias res. The further task of an ecological perspective is to
focus on this entanglement to describe it with the uttermost precision, for each case.

This claim has yet to address the larger issue of the presence of images in contemporary
urban places. As a contribution of the ecological perspective, this analysis calls for
counter-examples and must be balanced by observing more fugitive representations.

The constitutive role of public images in urban experiences

The most far-reaching shift signalled by the search for an adequate concept of
visual culture is its emphasis on the social field of the visual, the everyday
processes of looking at others and being looked at. This complex field of visual
reciprocity is not merely a by-product of social reality but actively constitutive of
it. Vision is as important as language in mediating social relations, and it is not
reducible to language, to the 'sign', or to discourse. Pictures want equal rights with
language, not to be turned into language. (Mitchell 2005: 47)

The ecological perspective facilitates the observation of how the public behaviours of city
dwellers, rooted in changing cultural, geographical and historical contexts, give
consistency to visual representations in the city (rather than mere beliefs, norms or
values that are consciously and thoughtfully shared). Just as the physical configuration of
a city reflects its social organization – much more than it may become its cause – so too,
the objects visible in public places are the result of processes of “making public” (Cefaï
2015). As Bologna’s case shows, the public presence of images depends on historical,
political and cultural factors that deeply vary with each situation. However, the Sacrario’s
peculiarities call for comparisons with the multiple images visible in contemporary urban
situations.

Elaborating a larger theoretical approach to images in urban public places requires
cooperative efforts of interpretation, opening a dialogue between aesthetics and politics
(Rancière 2009, 2011) but also social history (Hayden 1995), the theory of architecture and cities (Cardinali 2002, Choay 2006), and the anthropology of religion (Rykwert 1976, Mondzain 2003). These authors show that in the West, the relationship between public places and images is constitutive: the imagery of contemporary cities is rooted in a long genealogy (Choay 1978, Cardinali 2002, Boucheron & Offenstadt 2011). Under certain conditions, “the public”, in the sense of a people gathered to form a political community, may have produced representations of itself. In the communes of medieval Italy or during the revolutionary period in France, local authorities sought to organize the representation of their own unity, always partly fictional, within material urban space. Bologna, Siena and many other Italian cities of the 12th and 13th centuries, when they built monumental central squares, tried to instil in the material stuff of the city a shared civic sense, at the cost of a difficult overcoming of the dissensions and rivalries between aristocratic families. Architecture received the mission of producing and maintaining a central place for community life on an urban scale. In such places, a fragile political community could stage itself or even produce an image of itself; in some cases, doubts, concerns and social tensions could be expressed. On the walls of the Sala della Pace of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, Ambrogio Lorenzetti depicted a personification of the Comune but also the deleterious and harmful effects of a bad government. One might be tempted to venture that Bologna’s Sacrario originates from this distant tradition – a hypothesis requiring more in-depth historical inquiry than can be conducted here.

In contemporary urban public places of the West, the visible presence of symbolic representations in the form of civic, funerary or religious images have quite different meanings, which would also require further investigation. Of course, civic monuments and lieux de mémoire are still numerous, if not expanding. However, except in some exceptional cases or events, it seems they no longer strive to display the same collective belief, or hope, in the unity of a political community (Coccia 2013, Zask 2013), especially in our democratic regimes (Zask 2018). Think of the Republic Square in Paris, of Union Square in New York, of those multiple sites appearing in Friedlander’s American Monument: the remaining statues on our central squares no longer operate efficiently at the urban or metropolitan scale, even though our collective idea of public space still aims at shared beliefs, collective attitudes and habits – if not ideological expectations and a substantial ideal of community life. Surveying the role of images in a given public situation from an ecological perspective reveals the interdependence between symbolic or imaginary meaning (the figurative content of images, the presentation of self or the staging of a community) and the physical configuration of urban space (material supports of representations, buildings and roads, living bodies). Starting with material supports and definite situations, as the ecological framing invites one to do, allows one to observe which visual representations pervade contemporary social relations, and how they do so. Such an attitude gives more empirical content and argumentative strength, for instance, to “demonstrate the critical interplay between urban change and collective memory” (Loughran, Fine and Hunter 2015: 194; see also Hayden 1995: 46-62).

One working hypothesis to examine further is the decisive role of portable technology in the current circulation of images through public places. Over the last decade, in fact, images of another type have tended to colonize in-depth urban places and to produce “publics” – this time in the sense of audiences, viewers, customers or consumers. Portable screens are everywhere in the palm of the hand of passers-by, passengers on public transport. Visual representations have extended from places of worship such as temples
or churches, into urban squares and places; from private and private collections into
museums, public exhibitions or cinemas; from billboards and street furniture into
personal telecommunication devices. This unprecedented accumulation puts city
dwellers in a situation of intense visual solicitation that echoes comments on last
century’s urban condition (Moholy-Nagy 1927, Benjamin 1989, 2005). Different modes of
visual communication continue to aggressively compete with one another. Crossing a
contemporary metropolis amounts to navigating from one abstract representation to
another.

39 How does this affect public memorials or monuments? At least, these technologies
interfere with their physical presence and their symbolic meaning, attenuating their
strength. The diversity of images visible in cities is not as pluralistic as it could be. Recent
philosophical analyses (Coccia 2013, Zask 2013) emphasize that this omnipresence in fact
concerns only very few types of visual representations. In central as well as peripheral
places, the visibility of advertising images exceeds or even excludes that of other possible
forms – works of art, civic representations, free expression, monuments. Advertising
images are produced, owned and disseminated by private companies with the sole
purpose of offering commercial objects and services. Their flooding leaves little room for
other types of activities and performances; thus, the challenge is political: What do we do
with the visible surfaces of our cities? What type of audience, what sort of public are we?
Bologna’s memorial is probably more resistant than a majority of others; however, the
daily uses of the Neptune Square and the nearby Piazza Maggiore, as I have been able to
observe over a half-year period, do not refute the general assessment of attenuation.

40 Our current doubts about public space are also a consequence of the deep physical, social
and cultural changes that have occurred since the beginning of the industrial era in late
18th century (Moholy-Nagy 1927: 120-122). The uncertain status of public images is not
the mere result of market or consumer society; it also reflects the indeterminacy of urban
forms and of broader social, cultural and political orientations (Kepes 1969: 12). We are
now experiencing the long-term results of this cultural evolution. Most inhabitants of
metropolises are scattered in built areas without limits or boundaries, because of the
urban metamorphoses of unprecedented magnitude that took place since the 1950s. The
spectacular development of communication networks has transformed the material
conditions of proximity and distance in interpersonal relationships: the heterogeneous
fragmentation of built areas now responds to the “crumbling” of urban life (Charmes
2011). Against that background, Bologna’s case appears quite exceptional and should not
be generalized. In many other cases, increased dispersion and abstraction complicate the
analysis of the presence of images in places whose unity and even public character have
become problematic – although their visual appearance, often subject to functionalism,
the market and flow-promoting design, tends to become uniform. However, that very
fragmentation is not immaterial: to the contrary, the dissemination of built situations
and moving images depends on the physical infrastructures of network communication;
and far from having a public life of their own, images exist in public spaces to the extent
that people continue to produce, transmit and observe them. Therefore, examined under
the social ecological angle for each specific case, the content and status of public images
originate in collective forms of life (and not the other way around). With its immediate
surroundings submitted to the same pressure of advertising and retail images as other
major Western urban centres, the robustness of Bologna’s memorial appears remarkable,
as do the city’s robust social habits and public institutions. However, the visible
distraction of most passers-by, their hands and eyes kept busy with mobile digital images, suggests that they have already turned their attention elsewhere.

**Conclusion**

Visual objects, objects invested with a figurability value, develop all of their efficacy to establish multiple bridges between orders of reality that are nonetheless quite heterogeneous. They are luxuriant agents of displacement and condensation, organisms for the production of knowledge as much as of not-knowledge. Their functioning is multidirectional, their efficacy polymorphous. Isn’t there something incoherent about separating their ‘definition’ from their efficacy? (Didi-Huberman 2005: 34)

This article has proposed and illustrated a possible way to describe the presence of images in urban public places: I argued for the possibility of a social ecology of urban perception, in the sense of a study of the perceptual environments, material devices and social activities that maintain a living relationship with images. The method of ecological framing has clarified this relational approach by defining public situations of social interaction, through the personal direct examination of an example, Bologna’s Sacrario. Eventually, as shown in the third section of the text, further investigations may attempt to describe and interpret the contemporary flooding of advertising images, in central urban places as well as in their peripheries. Indeed, recent discussions about public space have relevantly shifted to enlarged contexts, beyond city centres (Delbaere 2011). I have focused here on a specific example anchored in an urban historic setting to show how our understanding of public images depends on the contextual meaning carried by their location or place, rather than simply generic “spatial” qualities (of images as decontextualized material objects). However, the ongoing research about the interplay of urban change, the display of the historical past and collective or public memory (Hayden 1995; Loughran, Fine & Hunter 2015) suggests that much more remains to be done by extending the issue of images in public places in the peripheries and suburban contexts. Urban and suburban landscapes are not mere scenery or backgrounds: they are physical and symbolic scenes where posters, signs and screens can guide the behaviour, nourish the imagination and orient the dispositions, dreams or desires of viewers. Public images can be intense social symbols, connecting audiences with absent people, or shared ideas. Some may become efficacious affordances on specific occasions (religious icons or statues in processions, red flags in political demonstrations). However, this relationship remains ambiguous: people may use public images to play roles just as they can get carried away by shared emotions. Although the variable presence of images affects urban activities, the gaze of individuals is neither entirely reducible to a causal mechanism, nor the mere object of a specific knowledge. The meaning that city dwellers give to their public places remains equivocal, unstable and open-ended – just as the public interactions that make up the social life of cities.
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To investigate the active presence of images in urban public places, this article argues for the possibility of a social ecological perspective, revisiting the tradition of human ecology introduced by Chicago sociologists and social psychologists a century ago. Confronting this intellectual heritage to contributions of visual, cultural and memory studies, I propose to consider the ecological framing of urban experience as a method for investigating the public life of images. This approach consists in studying the perceptual environments, material devices and social activities that maintain a living relationship with public images in cities. To illustrate the proposal, the article examines a concrete example, the photographic portraits of the Sacrario dei Partigiani in Bologna (Italy), through personal observation and photographs. A third section of the text expands the scope of inquiry, in order to experiment with the social ecological approach: it addresses the contemporary flooding of advertising and mobile images in contemporary urban situations.

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Mots-clés: place, memory, photography, social ecology, Bologna (Italy)
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Kodak’s Colorama and the Construction of the Gaze in Public Space

Vivien Philizot
Kodak’s Colorama and the Construction of the Gaze in Public Space

Vivien Philizot

Surface and point of view

On 15 March 1950, Kodak, founded by George Eastman, inaugurated an unusual display space on the eastern balcony of New York’s Grand Central Terminal. This space, called “Colorama”, consisted of a backlit surface 18 metres wide and 5.5 metres high, with an enormous panoramic picture of approximately one hundred square metres that would be changed every three weeks. The 565 images that were successively displayed until 1990 presented scenes that were photographed specifically for the project, all showing an idealised representation of the American family in an environment filled with goods or postcard landscapes: http://www.museeniepce.com/index.php?/exposition/passees-2017/expo-Colorama. In their White Night manifesto, Vinca Kruk and Daniel Van Der Velden, founders of Metahaven, assert that “the multiplication of surface [...] is the new reality of design” (Van der Velden and Kruk 2008: 3). This surface is the area occupied by advertising in public space, which can be measured in terms of newspaper inserts, posters, and luminous displays. Each of these surfaces produces a value directly related to its expanse, on the one hand, and to its exposure time, on the other. As the two designers say:

The city becomes the profit base of a virtual spin: the multiplication of surface accounts for the exponential growth of value extracted from the public space. By our being in public, by simple existence, we already automatically affirm the exposure which grants the surface infrastructure its right to the city. The inhabitants of cities are, through this mechanism, directly inscribed into the means of value production. (Van der Velden and Kruk 2008: 3).

If one agrees with this idea – image made valuable – then the Colorama, this 100-square-metre image extended over a period of 40 years in a space frequented by half a million
people every day, appears as the huge manifestation of the consumerist image pushed to the extreme within the public space. The surface described by the designers thus seems to find its ideal form in the Kodak project at a time when the market economy was expanding.

3 In their excesses, these images are obviously to be re-read from the perspective of advertising photography critique and, more generally, from that of the visual productions of cultural industries. Since the 1960s, these have been assiduously deconstructed by many authors in the wake of the Frankfurt School and the critique of Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard and Guy Debord, to name just a few, then by scholars of English and American visual studies from the late 1980s. Put in rather simplistic terms, these different approaches then converged towards a definition of the visual field as “construction”, which WJT Mitchell thus summarised at the beginning of the 2000s:

In short, a dialectical concept of visual culture cannot rest content with a definition of its object as the social construction of the visual field, but must insist on exploring the chiastic reversal of this proposition, the visual construction of the social field. (Mitchell 2002: 171).

4 Here, the theory of visual culture postulates that every image, in its construction, necessarily takes in sets of prejudices, normative principles or perceptual schemes, which are all ways of “constructing” the visual field. However, Mitchell’s chiasmus indicates that this idea immediately finds its counterpoint in the construction of the gaze itself. That is, in everything that is outside of the image: in the field of social practices.

5 In this light, the Coloramas seem to be almost too obvious examples of the ideological regime of the image, at a time when, after the war, visual communication techniques redoubled their efforts and sophistication to reach their audiences. First, to take these images as case studies requires finding a way through the many discourses of which they are the targets (how is it possible not to reproduce, in another form, the mythological analyses that Barthes devoted to their European counterparts?). Second, it also means questioning the future of these images, of which our contemporary world, that of 2018, is the heir. The hypertrophied surface of the Coloramas has now been reduced to the more discreet space of our smartphones, laptops and other digital tablets, which govern our different visual practices and reorganize the notions of image, point of view and reflexivity in a new way. In doing so, the value of the surface has been kept or has even increased tenfold when looking at the profits generated by purchases of digital space and the smartphone economy. How did the gaze adapt to these changes? How has our way of looking at images changed? How is the iconological dimension of these surfaces connected to their physical and technical properties? Between the Coloramas of the 1960s and today’s touch screens, did the multiplication of the surfaces of which Metahaven speaks alter something in the way that the image – and therefore the gaze – is constructed in public space? Throughout this article, the surface and the point of view can certainly facilitate the understanding of the necessary tension established by visual history between the image and the gaze.

6 Finally, we must evoke the inscription of this tension within the public space – a space that has been the subject, since the sixties, of several attempts of conceptualization, and that is here to be related to these two large activities, communication and politics. The analysis of this space, from Habermas (Habermas 1962) to Oskar Negt (Negt and Kluge 1993), has included the rise of mass-media and advertising – of which the Coloramas are an accomplished example – however, its visual scope has not truly played a central role in
these studies. Furthermore, the visual field has, at least since the end of the twentieth century, become a cross-disciplinary space for reflection, characterized, as stated by Maxime Boidy, by a “resistance to disciplinarity” (Boidy 2017: 29). Thus, part of the reflection on Coloramas implies examining the way in which visual studies – in which category of study this essay falls – may refresh the reflection on public space, already conducted in the fields of sociology, philosophy or urban studies. This question is precisely addressed by some authors such as WJT Mitchell, when he talks about art and images in public space:

> The very notion of public art as we receive it is inseparable from what Jurgen Habermas has called ‘the liberal model of the public sphere’, a pacified space distinct from economic, private, and political dimensions. In this realm disinterested citizens may contemplate a transparent emblem of their own inclusiveness and solidarity and deliberate on the general good, free of coercion, violence, or private interests. (Mitchell 1994: 378-379)

We should certainly keep in mind this fictional ideal of a pacified public sphere as we observe the visual material of the Coloramas.

### The construction of the (family) image and its critique

From the early twentieth century, Kodak opted for an active communication strategy, focusing on exhibitions and major events such as “The Grand Kodak Exhibition”, an exhibition across the United States, which occurred as early as 1904, and “The Cavalcade of Color”, presented at the Kodak Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. This exhibition exploited the potential of the Kodachrome process – a colour reversal film – first developed for cinema then adapted for use in mainstream photography (Pollet 2012). The slide with its cardboard frame was introduced in 1938 and was accompanied by the Kodak Slide Projector, which would then be succeeded by the famous “Carousel”. The subsequent year's show in New York was an opportunity for Kodak to flaunt the advantages of the projected image. Ten years later, colour images still only represented two percent of Kodak's turnover; however, the company was keen to reign-in this steadily growing sector. In line with its commercial policy, in 1950, Kodak planned to present “The Cavalcade of Color” in the lobby of New York’s Grand Central Station, through which 500,000 people passed every day. Technical issues forced Kodak to revise its project to the form with which we are now familiar: rather than a slide show, it would be a single image, but one that was disproportionately large (Hope 2005). Everything in this project went beyond the usual proportions of promotional image design, including the panoramic cameras that were specially crafted by Kodak engineers to take such huge photographs. The size of the enlarger and the developing time – more than sixteen hours – were also bigger, and the backlight system consisted of one kilometre of neon lights. Photographers such as Ansel Adams, Neil Montanus, Norman Kerr and Herbert Archer produced these images.

The marketing strategies invented after the war very rapidly evolved and refocused not on the individual but on the family (Chalfen 1987). J. Walter Thompson, an advertising agency in charge of Kodak's strategy, also developed a visual rhetoric based on partnerships with television series that portrayed the family – such as The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, a sitcom that started airing on ABC in 1952 – or with Walt Disney, at a time when colour television was beginning to find its way into family homes. Kodak thus
became a partner of Walt Disney’s Wonderful World of Color, which was first broadcast in colour in 1961. As stated by the historian of photography, François Cheval, the family staged in the Coloramas is “white, of English-American origin, the foundation of the new consumerist and traditionalist middle class convinced of the benefits of liberalism” (Cheval 2015: 16). This idealised family was shown at different occasions that reflect key moments in American history: Thanksgiving, Halloween, Memorial Day. At the peak of Colorama, in the 1970s and 1980s, the photographic representation of advertising was, of course, the subject of many critical works. Here, I am thinking in particular of Erving Goffman’s iconographic analyses (Goffman 1979, 1987) or the essay on photography written by Susan Sontag, who introduces a very accurate relationship between family and photography: “Through photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself—a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness.” (Sontag 1973, 2005: 5). However, although the united family is affirmed here through photography, Sontag specifies that this unity “becomes a rite of family life just when, in the industrializing countries of Europe and America, the very institution of the family starts undergoing radical surgery” (Ibidem: 6). Photography “came along to memorialize, to restate symbolically, the imperilled continuity and vanishing extendedness of family life”, for example, by ensuring “the token presence of the dispersed relatives” (Ibidem). This poster family is also the one presented by Don Draper in the last episode of the first season of Mad Men. Don Draper, a creative director, presents to his clients – two Kodak representatives – an advertising campaign for “the Wheel”, a new slide show device that the agency suggests renaming “The Carousel”. This sequence is a reference to the history of Kodak, which actually introduced the Carousel in 1961: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUoRDUPfsHUs.

Draper bases his presentation on images of his own family, which the viewer knows is anything but a model of stability. Here, photography is meant to hold onto what remains, to allow its participants to freeze and remember moments past. Draper tells us that the Carousel is “a time machine. It goes backwards, forwards. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. [...] It lets us travel the way a child travels. Around and around, and back home again... to a place where we know we are loved.” (Mad Men, The Wheel, 2007, AMC).

As Nancy Martha West noted, nostalgia has been part of Kodak’s strategy for a long time, reminding us of the importance of the turning point that was the First World War, “when Americans [...] desperately needed photographs to perform as confirmations of family unity” (West 2000: 13). West thus demonstrates that the culture of the photographic cliché was not so much conceived as a leisure activity than as “an obligatory act of preserving memories as defence against the future and as assurance of the past” (Ibidem). The representation of the family unit serves a particular social function, and, in some cases, it even ends up possessing a real stake in power. In an essay from 1979, Umberto Eco took this example of the family to illustrate the dissemination of power:

> Never created by an arbitrary, top-level decision, power lives thanks to thousands of forms of minute or ‘molecular’ consensus. It takes thousands of fathers, mothers and children who recognize themselves in the family structure before a power can base itself on the family ethic as institution (Eco 1979, 1985: 255).

This analysis, which combines power and dissemination, can help us see images produced by Kodak as consensual images. However, it also tells us more about the necessary stability of such representations. Diane Hope, the author of an essay on family representation within the Coloramas, notes that between 1950 and 1970 “no indication of the sociocultural changes occurring through those decades found reflection in Kodak portrayals” (Hope 2005: 92). It was not before 1967 that the first black model appeared in the
Coloramas. In this sense, the Colorama, this idealised image of the family overwhelmed by consumer goods, lends itself perfectly to critical readings raised by various authors, and whose seminal model is certainly the mythological analysis developed by Roland Barthes (Barthes 1957). From Barthes to Sontag, from Erwin Goffman (Goffman 1979) to Umberto Eco: between the 1960s and 1980s, everyone gradually agrees on a definition of the image as an ideological construction. At the time when Kodak was deploying its last pictures in the late 1980s, the first programmes of visual studies were starting to emerge in the United States (Elkins 2013: 9), which contributed to the critical point of view on the surrounding images. However, this critical perspective had already made its way into people's lives through a medium far removed from an audience beyond the art and literature faculties of universities: cinema.

**Shot: a view of the west coast**

In 1988, two years before the last Colorama was displayed on the east coast, John Carpenter directed a film depicting images on the west coast in public space in Los Angeles. *They Live* tells the story of John Nada who arrives jobless in Los Angeles. One day, in a deserted church, Nada finds a mysterious box containing glasses. When worn, they allow the wearer to see the world in a different way: posters, magazines, signs and even bank notes all carry orders such as “Obey”, “Marry and reproduce” and “Do not question authority” (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JI8AMRbqY6w. Nada is thus able to see an environment that is designed to keep individuals under control, in a state of critical sleep, thereby revealing the sedative properties of images that appear in public space. The double reference to Aldous Huxley (for Soma, which plunges people into a paradiisical sleep in *Brave New World*) and George Orwell (for the structuring character of language in *1984*) is clear. It is also worth recalling that this film, released in 1988 during the Reagan years, can be read as a criticism of American conservative politics – a critique assumed as such by Carpenter himself. Just as 1950s science fiction films indirectly targeted the Soviet threat, *They Live* is assumed to be an accusation of a class enemy. The ruling aliens in the film would be a metaphor for the rich; the images would be the symbolic instrument of domination.

The first reading of this film presents it as a repetition of the criticism of images and advertising mentioned above. Nada's glasses are “ideological glasses” as noted by Slavoj Žižek, who devotes part of his *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* to an analysis of the film (Žižek and Fiennes 2012). However, Žižek asserts that this model differs from the way in which ideology is usually presented – as a veil, as something that obscures the gaze and the mind: in contrast to what the Marxist tradition suggests, the film would show us that ideology is constitutive of our relationship to the world. However, if we wish to put on Nada's glasses to observe the Coloramas, I would like to make some optical corrections. Rather than considering that we need glasses to see differently, we should say that we always wear glasses because seeing without them is simply impossible. If Nada – which means “nothing” in Spanish – can embody, as Žižek says, this “pure subject, deprived of all substantial content” (Žižek and Fiennes 2012), what would remain to be seen in the eyes of such a subject? Our eyes, paraphrasing Ernst Gombrich on the subject of painting, are not new, they are prejudiced with what they observe and construct what they seize: “We can only recognize what we know.” (Gombrich 1972). The constructivist metaphor of the glasses
is perhaps best justified by Nelson Goodman, who, in *Languages of Art*, had turned the gaze into a privileged place for the construction of the world:

The eye comes always ancient to its work, obsessed by its own past [...] Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice. It selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyses, constructs. It does not so much mirror as take and make; and what it takes and makes it sees not bare, as items without attributes, but as things, as food, as people, as enemies, as stars, as weapons. Nothing is seen nakedly or naked. (Goodman 1968: 8-9).

John Nada makes us understand that the experience of the gaze in public space, through representation, is basically an experience of producing meaning. The glasses are a metaphor for our relationship to the world, our way of seeing and knowing the world, or, in other words, what we could also call a "paradigm" according to Thomas Kuhn (Kuhn 1962). They appear here – as a result of the many visual metaphors used in the history of philosophy – as a new image, or rather as what WJT Mitchell would categorize as "hyper-icons", i.e., "images in a double sense, like Plato's cave or Locke's tabula rasa, in that they are themselves 'scenes' or sites of graphic image-production, as well as verbal or rhetorical images (metaphors, analogies, likenesses)" (Mitchell 1986: 162 and Mitchell 1994: 11-34).

**Reverse shot: the surface and its metamorphoses**

To let the Coloramas be re-read by a critical object that is contemporary to them – John Nada’s glasses – can thus reveal the system of values that accompanies the deployment of the image in public space. This image is indeed a surface necessarily engaged in representation, that is to say constructed and perceived from a point of view that is situated in social space. What the glasses reveal is that the point of view by which the Coloramas are constructed – that of a white and heteropatriarchal America – tends to impose the point of view by which they are perceived. Maybe Carpenter attended a lecture given by Pierre Bourdieu in San Diego, a few kilometres south of Los Angeles, who clearly formulated this question two years before the release of his film. In this lecture, Bourdieu began by saying that "theory" comes from *theorein*, a Greek term which means "to see", and then to recall that:

Sociology must include a sociology of the perception of the social world, that is, a sociology of the construction of visions of the world which themselves contribute to the construction of this world (Bourdieu 1986, 1989: 18).

Such a programme is opposed to the universalist view of certain lines of thought, and, one might say, to the whole project of modern science, which tends to present the world without any point of view or according to the “point of view of Sirius”. Bourdieu thus recalls this very simple idea: "the vision that every agent has of the space depends on his or her position in that space" (Bourdieu 1986, 1989: 18). This question is, incidentally, fundamental throughout his entire work, and it allows the sociologist to explain the phenomena of consensus, or, in his words, the adjustment of structuring structures to structured structures.

If the social world tends to be perceived as evident and to be grasped [...] in a doxic modality, this is because the dispositions of agents, their habitus that is, the mental structures through which they apprehend the social world, are essentially the product of the internalization of the structures of that world (Bourdieu 1986, 1989: 18).
If experiencing the world may seem natural, it is because it does not proceed from direct contact with reality, but from a naturalization of the principles and frameworks – or glasses – through which this reality can be seen. Bourdieu also adds:

Legitimation of the social world is not, as some believe, the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda or symbolic imposition; it results, rather, from the fact that agents apply to the objective structures of the social world structures of perception and appreciation which are issued out of these very structures and which tend to picture the world as evident (Bourdieu 1986, 1989: 21).

The Coloramas are nothing but the literal expression of the adjustment between principles of vision and principles of division, that is, the expression of a world of common sense. They thus portray an ideal image of the family while prescribing the focal point by which this image is constructed as an image. They offer a vision of the world while naturalising the legitimate point of view by which it is established. The Kodak Coloramas are ideological images; however, they are unique in that they are stated as images to be constructed, which involve their authors-to-be in the scene itself. We do not see the image taken by these amateur photographers, we can only assume that it captures the essence of what we see in front of us minus one: the photographer. The consensual image in public space at the time of Colorama is an enormous surface that tends to occupy the whole space. In the 1980s, it is examined by the theory – *theorein* – which makes us “see” its subjective lines of construction, but it is also re-staged by fiction, which reminds us, using the model of Carpenter’s dystopian film, of the contingency of the legitimate point of view, on the one hand, and the omnipresence of the surface of the images in public space, on the other.

Today, display in public space has grown far beyond what the Colorama designers could have imagined. Cities are covered and infiltrated by increasingly larger surfaces. However, the device presented by Kodak in public space no longer makes sense. This disproportionately large surface has been downscaled to fit our smartphones, which seem to have made the excesses of the Coloramas obsolete. In their manifesto, Kruk and Van Der Velden explain that “communicative (active) surface, or screen, is classified by its capacity to reveal and open up doorways to virtual worlds” (Van der Velden and Kruk 2008: 7). Although there is still a matter of constructing a “world of common sense” through the image, this construction no longer requires the public exposure of the visual aspects of this world. It has moved to the very border of public and private, unexpectedly realizing Kodak’s wishes: not only to “photograph oneself” – as promised in 1954 in the manual of the Kodak Retinette, the first consumer device to be fitted with a timer – but also to be a part of this piece of the world that photography now enables us to possess. The photographer around whom Kodak had carefully built its Coloramas has now entered the very frame of a new type of image: the selfie. This movement also saw the east balcony, where the Colorama was once unfurled, transformed into an Apple Store in 2011. It is no longer the surface that is inserted into public space, but public space that enters the surface. Cities are captured not only by Google street view but also by amateur shots directly posted on social networks based around specific themes. The unfolding of the image no longer embraces the unique and enormous area of the surface as it appears in public space; it operates in the multiplicity of smaller but also more varied private surfaces. These surfaces, which are those of the computer screen, the tablet, the smartphone or the smart watch, are designed to maintain eye contact to embrace the multiplicity of the aspects of an individual’s life. This person is then never abandoned by
the digital images, which constitute his/her new family. If, as Vinca Kruk and Daniel Van Der Velden argue “the multiplication of surface [...] is the new reality of design” (Van der Velden and Kruk 2008: 3), these surfaces are, however, more modest. To grasp their importance, it is necessary to relate them to the quasi-continuous exposure time they offer en masse. The new reality of design is not the surface, it is the surface multiplied by the duration.

Whereas Susan Sontag said in 1977, at the peak of the Coloramas, that “today everything exists to end in a photograph” (Sontag 1973, 2005: 19), it should be added that now everything exists to end on a screen. The adaptation of the photographs – and of all the forms of image we produce – to the new reality of the responsive web design, is illustrated in these diagrams that now prescribe the sizes to be respected to “adapt their content” to “any type of media” as to the various “social networks”. These schemes seem to employ a visual mode, i.e., directed to the gaze, to prolong the long history of the regulating traces – from the Vitruvian Man to the Modulor Man – that man has prescribed in the production of the ideal world as the world to be inhabited (Ertzscheid 2015). They also express the importance of the gaze in the standardization of this ideal today, and therefore the need to remember, as Bourdieu said, that our vision of space depends on our position in that space, and thus the way our point of view itself constructs this space (Bourdieu 1986, 1989: 18).

Construction, design, manufacturing

Illustrated by the operation of reducing and disseminating the Coloramas in the individual screens of the Apple Store of Grand Central, the recent history of advertising images in public space invites us to recall the conditions under which the image could be considered a construction. Obviously, and as I recalled above with regard to WJT Mitchell, the image is constructed in the sense that its meaning depends on the multiple eyes of the community of its performers; however, the image is also constructed in a completely prosaic way: for Kodak, it is the product of a long-pondered and then carefully retouched shooting; it is embodied in a medium, assembled in multiple transparent horizontal strips to form a surface of 100 m². Equally, the digital image formed on the surface of the screens requires constant technological adjustments and complex design concepts at an impressive scale. In recent years, however, the term “constructed” no longer has the same extensive interpretation as that given to it by visual theory. The constructed image is thus also, and above all, the manipulated image. This manipulation is no longer denounced; it is now assumed as such. It is an integral part of the way in which the public itself grasps the truth of images. We no longer only film an interview; we film the cameraman who films the interview. What happens behind the scenes has now entered the stage. The Coloramas’ photographer, an exceptional punctum on the visual horizon of the 1960s, is now necessarily integrated into the image as a focal point that is no longer considered surprising. Advertising no longer hides the evidence of retouching, it offers it to the gaze as necessary elements of its construction, such as the Snickers advertisement from 2016 showing a deliberately retouched model – her navel is placed too high, part of her leg is missing, a disembodied hand rests on her right shoulder. This image is obviously aimed at a public for whom visual manipulation is a standard game, and who only half-believe the images.

Frédéric Lambert succeeded in describing this relationship to believing:
In front of the image, we know that it imitates nature and that it translates our narratives. We hear it tell us some fabrication about the world and about ourselves. In addition, yet, faced with this double movement of a series of languages, those of the imitation of nature and those of mythography, we take the image as we want it to be: in the truth of its forms and in the evidence of its truth. This movement, this propensity to settle in the denial of its double language is, I believe, constitutive of any image. I know that it represents reality, that it is made of effects of reality, but I only see fire. I know that it reflects the myths and values of my society, but I only hear their truths (Lambert 2013: 89).

The ambivalence of this relationship to images described as such is not unrelated to the generalization of recent notions of post-truth, or alternative facts, which accompany the spread of media images to the rhythm of social networks. However, although these notions may seem new, or at least seem to have recently gained power, they are set against an older backdrop, which image theorists have often expressed through the classical opposition between transparency and opacity. Of course, the image shows something absent, something that it takes the place of – i.e., its transitive dimension – but also, at the same time, shows itself for itself, as representing something, and this is its reflexive dimension. A whole tradition of studying the image as a representation insists on this double dimension of transparency and opacity (Marin 1989, Récanati 1979). Building on this story, André Gunthert recently suggested that contemporary representations are now governed by an “aesthetic of transparency” (Gunthert 2017), in which the device takes a back seat. Photography would have become the dominant paradigm, requiring images to function as proofs, reliable ways of grasping the different aspects of the world that they present to us in exaggerated realism to the detriment of any trace of mediation. It is, of course, possible to follow Gunthert, by observing the documentary obsession with media images he acknowledges; however, perhaps it is no longer a question of transparency alone as “the erasure of mediation”, but rather as an exposure of the device. The image does not allow its image status to disappear; now it always asserts itself as an image. This contemporary process is irony, or the metadiscourse, the process by which images are already presented as images, abandoning or defusing any recourse to any standard of correction to evaluate their truth – a notion that becomes consecutively irrelevant.

The images produced by Kodak, whose ideological scope leaves no doubt, then appear as the precursors to the reflexivity of the images of our second modernity. They invite the photographer to enter the frame of the image, exposing their construction process as if to better defuse the criticisms to which they could be subjected. In doing so, they initiated a movement of constant discrepancy to which the media industries are now accustomed: recover criticism, make it its own and include it to more effectively neutralize any dialectical opposition to the power we continue to ascribe to images.

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ABSTRACTS

Between the 1950s and 1989, Kodak continuously occupied a surface of approximately one hundred square metres in New York's Grand Central Station with a display of panoramic photographs that were changed regularly. These giant “Coloramas” presented photographed scenes that were taken specifically for the project, with the hundreds of images displayed during this period all showing an idealised representation of the American family. These photographs would, however, have remained ordinary had their defining feature not been the placement of the photographer within the frame of the image. By connecting photography to the point of view by which it is constructed, these panoramas seem to prescribe to their public a certain relation to the images, and to initiate a reflexive process which seems to have now become general. The huge area covered by the Coloramas has today given way to the more discreet surface of our smartphones, laptops and other digital tablets, which govern our various visual practices and reorganise the notions of image, point of view and reflexivity in new ways. Between the Coloramas of the 1960s and today’s touch screens, the question arises as to whether the multiplication and spread of visual surface has changed something in the way that image – and thus the gaze – is built in public space.

INDEX

Mots-clés: public space, representation, snapshot, selfie, ideology, Kodak, history of photography, advertisement

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Infelicitous Efficacy: Alfred Hrdlicka’s *Memorial against War and Fascism*

Tanja Schult and Diana I. Popescu
Introduction

What happens when a work permanently installed in the public space mediates a message that already at the time of its realization was outdated? What if that work furthermore carburizes the stereotypes it was meant to oppose and in fact evokes images that continue to offend those it was meant to memorialize? These questions describe Alfred Hrdlicka’s Memorial against War and Fascism (Vienna, 1988/91), specifically the bronze figure of the so-called Street-Washing Jew. Within our research project Making the Past Present: Public Perceptions of Performative Holocaust Commemoration since the Year 2000, our attention was drawn towards the artistic interventions recurrently occurring at Hrdlicka’s memorial. We realized that these interventions insisted that Hrdlicka’s work had failed. While other historic monuments most commonly represent the values of a reigning rule once vanished, Hrdlicka’s memorial was never the expression of a consensus nor of a governing power. Erected during Kurt Waldheim’s presidency, the work was a materialized reaction towards a memory culture in transformation. Instead of anticipating what was about to become common memorialization practice in Austria concerning its Nazi past, Hrdlicka’s memorial remained rooted in the memory culture it was meant to overcome.
Nevertheless, his work did not remain void or without consequences (cf. Austin 1975 [1962]: 16-17). It did in fact attract attention, or in philosopher J.L. Austin’s words, it secured uptake, took effect, and invited response (ibid: 118). The images Hrdlicka had established in the public space called forth afterimages. Without doubt, his Memorial against War and Fascism possesses a performative power. The artistic interventions reminded however of the work’s incapacity to live up to the performative it was meant, or should have meant to achieve, namely to commemorate the Holocaust victims adequately, and in a manner deemed acceptable for the persecuted group. It further failed to overcome the until then prevalent national founding myth that Austria was Hitler’s first victim. Thus, Hrdlicka’s memorial is an unhappy performative (ibid: 116) that remains infelicitous in its intended efficacy (McKenzie 2001: 29-33). Why then is it important to revisit Hrdlicka’s memorial? This work testifies to the power of the performative force public art works can possess. Situated in a prominent place in central Europe, Hrdlicka’s humiliated Jew flattened to the ground is visible to passers-by daily. What does this image do to them?

Ultimately, any genuine investigation into the roles of images in public spaces must explore the receivers’ individual relationships to the images installed. W.J.T. Mitchell distinctly notes that a critic’s main task is “to make the relationality of image and beholder the field of investigation” (Mitchell 2005: 49) and to examine what the image demands from the beholder “to complete its work” (ibid: 49-50). Grant H. Kester also points at how the image, as an aesthetic experience, can work “to transform our perceptions of difference and to open space for forms of knowledge that challenge cognitive, social, or political conventions” (Kester 2011:11). Thus, the power of an aesthetic experience is closely linked to its relationality and to its power to act as a performative and produce meaning. While Mitchell focusses on what pictures want, we ask what images do, occasionally even despite their or their creator’s original intention however. Agreeing with Mitchell that it can indeed “be very difficult to know anything about the real power of the image” (Mitchell 2005: 38), we aim nevertheless to explore what their power is. We want to investigate what established images do, what they call forth in the form of debates, reactions of passers-by and afterimages.

Austin’s concept of performativity thereby helps to frame this analysis of public art’s impact and speaks more broadly to art historical preoccupations with socially engaged public art (Senie and Webster 1998). Austin’s differentiation between three different types of speech acts, the locutionary, illocutionary and the perlocutionary, is adapted to the realms of art to better distinguish between what was intended by the artist, what was created in a dialogic process between art/artist and the observer(s), and what happened, or what took effect because of the established work. Our analysis is based on having experienced the work several times in situ in 2015 and 2017 and of having conducted extensive observations of visitor behaviour.

The literature on Hrdlicka’s monument most often uses the work and its brief history to illustrate how Austrian Holocaust memory changed during the 1980s and 1990s. As with other memorials dedicated to the Holocaust, Hrdlicka’s makes visible a growing preoccupation among many post-World War II countries to construct public memory of the genocide based on remembering the victims, and not the perpetrators. By far, memorials have served as the most revealing case studies to examine the politics of national memory at work (the scholarly literature of the politics of memory is broad; key references necessarily include writings by Young, Kansteiner, and Olick). Adding to the
earlier scholarly writings' critical take on Hrdlicka’s work in relation to Austria's politics of Holocaust memory, our investigation fills a gap in the academic critique by providing a close reading of the memorial within its spatial context by which it becomes clear where exactly the work's blind spot lies. Because the work’s complexity and quality are often overlooked (exceptions are Lenz 1993 and Czaplicka 1997), this article acknowledges its strengths. However, these qualities do not override its apparent failure – the figure of the humiliated Jew and its misleading placement within the memorial's composition. Although this article's focus is on Hrdlicka’s work, we conclude with two artistic interventions to illustrate the performative force the permanently installed memorial produces.

Together, all three works convey how images in public spaces operate and interact and what they want – occasionally new images that do justice to the historic facts and the changing memory culture. Thus, this case study is relevant not only for the Austrian context but more generally for the field of visual studies and its interest in understanding how images operate and what effects they cause (represented by Mitchell, Belting, Senie and Webster, and Kester). More specifically, the article adds to the recent scholarly interest in the monument genre and to discussions on the power memorials continue to have, even long after what they represent has fallen out of favour (Schmahmann and Miller 2017, Allison 2018). Although there are different opinions on what to do with such works – demolish, comment or ignore – the least convincing opinion is to argue that they are widely overlooked and therefore harmless. Memorials would not be erected if societies believed they had no relevance. Hence, despite the perception that monuments are doomed to be invisible (Musil 1987 [1927]:61), this article argues that the monument genre holds power; it provokes, it calls forth afterimages, and it influences individuals and collective memory (Widrich 2014: 1, 2, 9, 167). This is what monuments are made for: they want us to remember, they want to influence current and future generations, and they do (Schult 2009/2012: 7-18). Thus, this article asks: what are these images doing with us, and what are we doing with them?

Fig. 1. Alfred Hrdlicka. Memorial against War and Fascism 1988/1991 Vienna. Marble, granite, limestone and bronze

All images in this article by Tanja Schult.
Revisiting Alfred Hrdlicka’s Memorial against War and Fascism

Alfred Hrdlicka’s (1928–2009) *Memorial against War and Fascism* is situated in Albertinaplatz within walking distance from the State Opera and Vienna’s popular pedestrian shopping area around the Kärntnerstraße. It neighbours the famous Albertina Museum after which the square is named, the Film Museum, and famous coffee houses such as the Sacher. Albertinaplatz is a landmark, and for tourists, Hrdlicka’s memorial is often the first encounter with Vienna because many guided tours start at this central location. Hrdlicka carefully chose this site for reasons beyond its being one of the few practicably empty places in the city centre and thus available for his spacious ensemble. Important also was its connection to the events of World War II. This site was that of the former Philipp-Hof, a building bombed by Allied forces on March 12, 1945. Hundreds of civilians were trapped underneath the rubble; their corpses were never recovered (Czaplicka 1997: 270).

Fig. 2. *The Gate of Violence*

Hrdlicka’s ensemble is situated on an area of approximately 25 square meters. It consists of the *Gate of Violence* (made up of two parts: *Hinterland Front* and *Hero’s Death*; the latter was not finalized at the time of the work’s unveiling in 1988, but added first in 1991), *The Street-washing Jew, Orpheus enters Hades* and the *Stone of the Republic*. Our exploration of this multipart memorial starts where Hrdlicka ideally wanted visitors to begin: in front of the *Gate of Violence*, in which he integrated a granite stone into the pavement. This is the only text provided by the artist himself. It ends with: “*This monument is dedicated to all victims of war and fascism*”, thereby clearly expressing what the monument is about, but also...
anticipating the criticism of having remembered all of the dead on equal terms. In addition, the signboard texts added in 2012 informs about the destroyed Philipp-Hof and its civilian casualties. It further tells that the Gate of Violence consists of granite pedestals quarried at Mauthausen, a material also used for the plinth of Orpheus enters Hades and the Stone of the Republic. Already shortly after the war, the former concentration and labour camp Mauthausen had become a memorial site. In the decades to come, official Austrian memorial efforts were largely directed towards Mauthausen (Young 1993: 92). In the former camp, prisoners had to work in the quarries under terrifying conditions. By using material from this region, Hrdlicka anchors his work historically in the wider landscape of Austria and loads its physicality with symbolic meaning. In contrast, the figurative sculptures on top of most plinths are executed in white shining Carrara marble.

What does the Gate of Violence display? Looking upwards, one deciphers on one side the torso of a woman giving birth (Fig. 2); next to her, “a fist plunges into the abdomen of a man as if to grab his entrails and rip them out” (Czaplicka 1997: 275). We recognize body parts, some clearly elaborated, others only adumbrated, but all wriggle uncomfortably. Their forceful, terrible and hopeless struggle occurs on the corpse of a soldier lying on the ground.

Circumventing the entry-gate, one meets with more emaciated bodies, bound arms, and an old man slumped in exhaustion (see Fig. 5). The scenes capture the general chaos, horror and despair of war. Allusions to some of this terror regime’s specificities are found in the representation of emaciated concentration camp prisoners or a henchman in Nazi uniform. There are additional references to both world wars as in the soldier with a gasmask or the figure of a man stabbed in the back, apparently by a knight in armour, representing yet another timeframe or the honourable reputation knighthood represents. Furthermore, we are confronted with a soldier’s huge boot and with an oversized injection needle referring to the Nazi regime’s killings of the disabled and to the medical experiments conducted in the camps (Fig. 3). A skull dominates the scene, indicating that death is the master of all wars and the master of the stage that we have entered.
Standing in front of the Gate of Violence with its impressive height of almost 7 meters and looking through the narrow passage that separates the two pedestals, one discovers another element. Some people might circumvent the two pieces; others enter the walk-in monument (Czaplicka 1997: 285, note 21) through the constriction, sensing “one’s own smallness” and perhaps even fear (ibid: 274). Walking further in, or circumventing the gate, one passes along the described scenes from a violent war and the crimes against humanity committed in its shadow. These images evoke our image repertoire reminding of scenes from former concentration camps we know from history books and documentaries (cf. ibid: 275).
In this state of mind, one comes across the third piece, the bronze figure on the ground depicting an old man with an amorphous body covered by some type of coat. The man has an open and friendly face with a full beard and wears a kippa. If one has read the sideboard text carefully, one recalls that this element is entitled The Street-washing Jew. When viewed from the front, one recognizes the man’s hand holding a brush towards the pavement’s surface (Fig. 4). His head is placed in an unnatural position, at a 90-degree angle, and his body is flattened to the ground. It is this piece that became the point of contention in the many public discussions before and after the monument was installed, and it has remained so ever since (Scheufele 1993: 7). This piece will be discussed in greater detail in a separate section. For the moment, it is worth noting that this element stands out in sharp contrast to the other sculptural elements because of the chosen material, the dark patinated bronze, and because of its low height of approximately 50 cm. Thus, this element is the only one of the ensemble that one looks down on (cp. Beckermann 2005 [1989]: 15).

From the figure on the ground, one turns towards the fourth element. Given the title, one identifies the muscular body displayed as Orpheus, the legendary musician from ancient Greek mythology who attempted to rescue his wife Eurydice (Fig. 4). In Hrdlicka’s representation, Orpheus’ upper body dissolves into the stone block, the realm of the underworld. His right arm is stretched down, apparently about to be gripped by another hand, perhaps belonging to the seemingly half-dead head on the ground (Fig. 5). This representation might refer to Orpheus’ beheading after his emergence from Hades (Lenz 1993: 57).
Eva Kuttenberg considered “the choice of a mythological figure to recall resistance to National Socialism in a monument against war and fascism” confusing, “especially if Hrdlicka wanted to correct the myth of widespread Austrian resistance” (Kuttenberg 2007: 482). We share her critique, but cannot follow when she detects some likeness with Leni Riefenstahl’s “celebrations of masculinity” in Nazi propaganda films (ibid: 482). Noteworthy, there is no heroization of any kind in Hrdlicka’s memorial (cf. Czaplicka 1997: 268). In particular, the woman giving birth, close to the young fallen soldier, makes palpable the “meaninglessness of hero-death and birth for such a hero-death” (Lenz 1993:56, cf. also Jenni 1993: 99). Hrdlicka’s Orpheus reminds rather, and fittingly, of Michelangelo’s sculptures of slaves – illustrations of resistance par excellence (Michelangelo was Hrdlicka’s artistic role model; cf. Rauterberg 2009).

What becomes apparent is that this memorial is the work of a classically trained artist who demands a sophisticated audience. Those less trained in art might be helped by the sideboard informing that this part commemorates “the victims of bombings and all who lost their lives resisting National Socialism”. Obviously, in Hrdlicka’s presentation, the resistant fighters during World War II sacrificed themselves for their loved ones, who they however were unable to save, such as the civilians buried on this site – as did Orpheus, who “embodies the concept of tragic resistance” (Czaplicka 1997: 279), unable to bring back Eurydice. In Hrdlicka’s memorial, both resistance fighters and innocent civilians are honoured, side by side, facing the horrors of a for them unfamiliar world full of risks and uncertain endings. Clearly, the dedication of the original inscription and the sideboards together with the visual representations commemorate all of the dead on equal terms.

Like the bronze figure of the Street-washing Jew, the last piece of the memorial ensemble, the Stone of the Republic is situated directly on the ground (Fig. 1). Although set apart in
the background, this stela impresses due to its sheer height, which even slightly towers above the Gate of Violence. It displays extracts from the policy statement of the provisional government signed by the three newly reconstituted political parties on April 27, 1945, when Austria was not yet entirely liberated (Czaplicka 1997: 285, note 24). This text was essential for the state treaty from 1955 and was considered the hour of birth of the Second Republic. Its impressive height of over 7 meters and above all its literal legibility hints at this element’s importance (cf. ibid: 274). The excerpts (the full length of the declaration is provided by Jenni 1993: 73-76) contain a plea to all “antifascists” to overcome old resentments in this chaotic time, thereby referring indirectly to the violent struggles between left- and right-wing movements in Austria’s Ständestaat prior to 1938. These struggles weakened the democratic system and inured Austro-fascism. The policy statement was meant to assure the Austrians that the Allies would support an independent Austria within the borders of 1938. The citizens were admonished to show courage and reassured that there was no need for them to fear any repercussions. They were furthermore encouraged to set aside all ideological differences, contribute to a stable government and restore the Austrian economy. Notably, the chosen excerpts do not mention Austria’s complicity with Nazism; nor do they leave room for any future confrontation with the Austrian perpetrator past. Instead, the call of the hour was a new dawn filled with the vision of a democratic order (cf. Bunzl 1995: 24) – a call Hrdlicka chose to highlight 40 years later, inscribed in granite.

Together with the dedication and the long inscriptions on the last formation, Hrdlicka’s ensemble provides a complex but highly legible narrative. In light of its given setting with its beautiful architecture, the equestrian monument of Archduke Albrecht, the Augustinian church spire, and the horse-drawn carriages waiting for tourists, this memorial with its dreadful scenes was a courageous statement at the time of its unveiling on November 24, 1988. This date was significant because it recalled the November pogroms of 1938 when Austrians alongside Nazi officers committed acts of violence against their fellow citizens. With its depiction of violence and cruelty, the memorial provides in fact a much needed Denkanstoß (a thought-provoking impulse; Czaplicka 1997: 274). Its quality lies in the chosen forms of representations – the ever-incomplete sense of Hrdlicka’s fragmentary sculptures and the rough texture of the stones’ secure uptake. The busy atmosphere of the square might not suggest extensive contemplation, but its placement is central and accessible. This multipart memorial succeeds in establishing, as the signboard from 2012 suggests, a “walk-about commemorative site” within the Albertinaplatz and its many visitors.

However, the work’s monumentality, pathos and figurative over-subscription differ much from the in the meantime established canon of Holocaust iconography with voids and abstract architectural formations. When this work was realized, memorial practice had undergone radical changes. Significantly, Hrdlicka’s figurative and expressionistic style was realized at a time when counter-monuments such as Jochen and Esther Shalev-Gerz’ Monument against Fascism (1986) in Hamburg-Harburg had already been erected. The Gerzes accepted their minimalistic monument’s slow disappearance into the ground as a result of audience participation, thereby questioning the genre’s traditional claim to permanence (Schneede 1989). Their work changed both the practice and purpose of memorialization by “contractually binding its spectators as agents” (Widrich 2014: 161, quote 9). Following art historian Mechtild Widrich, Jochen Gerz became the “leading designer of performative monuments”, which in the decades to come “entered the mainstream” (ibid: 161).
Retrospectively, the Harburg memorial is one of the most prominent examples for this change in monument culture. Nothing of this shift can be traced in Hrdlicka’s memorial. The insufficiency of Hrdlicka’s work results however not from not being at the forefront of artistic developments but from addressing the historic events insensitively.

**Agency and Impact of the Reibpartien**

To understand Hrdlicka’s memorial and the outcry it caused and to understand the urgency of later artistic interventions, we must step back in time and consider the historic images Hrdlicka used as a point of reference for his bronze figure. The point of departure were the scenes of public degradation when people, primarily Jews, were forced to clean the streets of political slogans with brushes, occasionally toothbrushes in the days, weeks and months after the so-called *Anschluss* (Botz 1990: 19, 15). These incidents were referred to as *Reibpartien*, scrubbing squads, a word that does not reflect the violent nature of the incidents but does capture the agitation and malicious joy that characterized this form of humiliation (Petschar 2008b:16; 2008a: 66).

After the German Wehrmacht had marched into Austria during the night of March 11 to March 12, Jewish life changed completely. Jews lost all rights and protection (cf. Hecht, Lappin-Eppeli & Raggam-Blesche 2015: 16-41). On March 15, 1938, a cheering crowd of over 100,000 Austrians gathered in Heldenplatz (Hero Square) to hear Hitler’s celebratory speech announcing the entry of his fatherland into the *Reich* (Kuttenberg 2007: 469). Hitler’s speech was met with enormous enthusiasm, which exceeded German expectations and discharged a high potential of destructive violence against Austrian Jews (*Hörspuren*). During the weeks to come, political opponents, and Jews in particular, were exposed to pogrom-like persecutions, arrests and recurrent humiliations. Their shops were plundered; they were beaten and raped; many were driven to suicide (Safrian and Witek 2008: 23-27, 61-65; Krist and Lichtblau 2017: 74, 81, 241-245.). These attacks were executed not only by (state) authorities but also by ordinary fellow citizens. Their violent nature and extent were only comparable to those in the *Altreich* some months later, when the November pogroms reached a similarly high level of brutality (Hecht, Lappin-Eppeli & Raggam-Blesche 2015: 17).

It was above all the reactions of their fellow citizens enjoying the scenes deprived Austrian Jews of all hope and took away their faith in humanity (ibid: 35). The terrifying events had been captured in amateur photographs. Despite the relevance of these iconic images for our perception of this past, these photographs remain widely under-researched. It is still unclear whether there are “numerous” photos documenting the event (Botz 1990: 9) or only very few (Petschar 2008a: 58, 66–67; idem 2008b: 16). Consequently, the identity of the portrayed and thus the reasons for their degradation as Jews or as political opponents, remain in most cases uncertain. Viewed in relation to the contemporary reports from international journalists, the survivors’ and eye-witnesses’ later accounts and historical research, these photographs are nevertheless useful. They mediate the ominous atmosphere of those days, inform about the number of people gathered, and how these reacted; some appear disturbed, whereas many others are grinning and applauding, raising their hands enthusiastically in the Hitler salute. More than the witness reports and the memoirs, the photographs have the capacity to visually situate the *Reibpartien* in the spatial context of the city and reveal the faces and possible
identities of those who participated in the spectacle of degradation that the Jews were forced to perform.

Despite the photographs clearly indicating Austrian involvement in the antisemitic violence, for decades this memory had been widely repressed (Bunzl 1995: 12-13). Instead, many Austrians considered the German Nazis or the unruly mob responsible and not ordinary Austrians (Botz 1990: 9). Although no one could anticipate that the incidents of 1938 were the prelude to a genocide, when viewed retrospectively, these events appear to point to what followed: the systematic deprivation, the forced exile and the deportations to death camps of the Austrian Jews. Of Austria’s approximately 200,000 Jews around 125,000 fled into exile, and more than 65,000 were murdered in the Holocaust (Uhl 2016: 242).

**Hrdlicka’s Memorial: A Symptom of a Memorial Culture in Transformation**

Before we return to Hrdlicka’s unhappy performative, his memorial must be situated within the historic context in which it came into being. Fifty years after the Reibpartien, many of Hrdlicka’s contemporaries, playwrights, writers, artists and intellectuals, worked to develop a critical historical consciousness towards World War II (for examples, see Young 1993 or Kuttenberg 2007). The 1980s was a decade of political controversy and national turmoil. Internal and international pressure forced Austria to re-evaluate its role during the war. Noteworthy, some of the most significant events, which entirely reshaped the European landscape, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain, occurred during the time Hrdlicka’s monument was realized, between its first inauguration in 1988 and the day the missing piece was added on June 21, 1991 (Scheufele 1993: 7).

For decades, Austrians had portrayed themselves as Nazi Germany’s ‘first victims’, abandoned by the world and occupied by a foreign power. This founding myth can be traced back to the early post-war decades when the Allies had proclaimed “Austria the ‘first victim’ of Nazi Germany’s aggression in a strategic move intended to stimulate Austrian resistance against the Third Reich” (Bunzl 1995: 10). This myth was then written into Austria’s declaration of independence, as observed in the extracts on the Stone of the Republic. It dominated Austrian historiography and collective identity for more than 40 years. However, as James E. Young noted, at least Austrians “never had the audacity to formalize this boldly self-serving myth in stone” (Young 1993: 91).

After a short period of de-Nazification, former Nazis were quickly re-integrated into the political system. For decades, (Wehrmacht) soldiers were the focus of public remembrance, although this behaviour visibly displayed a “stark contradiction with the official position of Austria as Hitler’s ‘first victim’” (Uhl 2016: 226). In contrast, the victims of Nazi persecution “received no corresponding tribute in remembrance” (Uhl 2016: 233). The fact that the driving political force behind the monument projects to resistance fighters were communists, and therefore alone considered suspicious by many Austrians (Uhl 2016: 225), did not make it easier for Hrdlicka to realize his memorial idea, given that he was a communist himself.

In the post-war years, the small nation had successfully managed to externalize the war years. During the Cold War, this perception was also in the interest of the former Allies to ensure Austria’s neutrality (Young 1993: 91). This externalization implied that Austrians “...
were never confronted with their role in the Third Reich’’ (Bunzl 1995:12). First in the mid- and late 1980s, this narrative began to be challenged. Austrian memory culture underwent a crucial re-evaluation (Uhl 2016), prompted by the 1986 Waldheim affair and the 1988 Be/ Gedenkjahr, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Anschluss in 1938 and the November pogroms that followed some months later.

A proposal for the Memorial against War and Fascism had already found wide political acclaim when the Waldheim affair affected the discussion and almost prevented the work from realization. In 1985, former UN-Secretary General Kurt Waldheim (1918–2007) was nominated as a candidate for the Austrian presidency. Austrian media exposed his until then unknown military involvement in the Balkans during World War II. In the following months, he was placed under scrutiny, particularly by US media and the World Jewish Congress. What disturbed was Waldheim’s blatant rejection of any kind of knowledge of what he must have at least seen, if not participated in – Nazis’ atrocities in the Balkans and the deportation of the Greek Jews (Bunzl 1995: 13-14). When he finally could not escape the documentary evidence, he countered that he had only done his duty as a soldier. This attitude caused intense reactions – either strong opposition or strong support, the latter leading to him being elected. The support for Waldheim was symptomatic of Austria’s general attitude towards this past. The investigation was perceived as a massive attack on the country from outside that demanded the small nation’s firm solidarity.

Despite Waldheim being elected, the affair can be considered a “cataclysmic event that brought Austria’s relation to its past under intense scrutiny” (Bunzl 1995:13). Consequently, the years 1986–1988 are called the watershed years. They resulted in the emergence of a new culture of memory “spurred by the generation whose thinking had been shaped by the Waldheim debate [...] and who demanded a probing confrontation with repressed history of National Socialism and an appropriate and dignified memorialization of the victims of persecution” (Uhl 2016: 223, 233). These internal developments also depended upon the international scene having changed; in Western democracies, the confrontation with each country’s role during World War II had started to appear on the political agenda.

Artist and political activist Alfred Hrdlicka was one of the most outspoken and prominent critics of Waldheim (Bunzl 1995: 16-17). Consequently, two years after Waldheim was elected, any opposition against Hrdlicka’s monument was understood as support “of the accepted master narrative of the country’s past” (ibid: 10; for the charged media debate, see the impressive collection of articles in Scheufele 1993). Waldheim supporters considered Hrdlicka’s monument a threat because it demanded confrontation with a past that they preferred to leave swept under the carpet, an attitude Hrdlicka strongly opposed (cf. Young 1993: 105). Hrdlicka’s monument was a “direct challenge to those who refused to acknowledge the country’s co-responsibility for the Third Reich”; thus, its permanent instalment had to be prevented (Bunzl 1995: 17). The heated controversies allowed neither any self-critical distance (cf. Austin 1975: 21) nor nuanced criticism or renegotiation of his problematic draft. It was a fierce ideological battle over whether – but not how – this past should be confronted (Wodak et al.1994: 112, 114). In fact, Hrdlicka had entirely free hands in terms of placement and chosen iconography but remained stubbornly ignorant against any criticism directed towards the chosen site or the language of forms. In the shadow of the Waldheim controversy, any criticism against his work was per se viewed as supporting a non-confrontation with the past (ibid: 113).
The monument struggle was ended by Vienna’s mayor, Helmut Zilk, a strong supporter of Hrdlicka. Zilk authoritatively pushed Hrdlicka’s proposal through, allowing it to be realized in the symbolic Be-/Gedenkjahr (Wise 1990). Given the international pressure and changed attitude towards each country’s role during World War II, Zilk realized that Austria had no other option than to re-evaluate its stance towards this past and that this change in attitude needed public manifestation. Since 2009, one year after Zilk’s death, the area around Hrdlicka’s memorial bears his name.

Both the work and its brief history indicate that the memorial is a symptom of a memory culture in transition (for the use of the term, cf. Bunzl 2004). Hrdlicka had openly expressed the need to re-evaluate Austria’s role, including the systematic persecution and annihilation of Austrian Jews, and clearly wanted to challenge the “comfortable Austrian self-image as Nazi victim based on selective recall”; thus, one could state that at least verbally, the artist had successfully broken up the “solidified memory structures” (Kuttenberg 2007: 469). However, the memorial itself tells a different story. Hrdlicka had summoned diverse victim groups – resistance fighters, disabled, Jews, and political prisoners – but left out others – the Roma and Sinti, Jehovah’s witnesses and homosexuals – groups who were acknowledged only in the later-added sign boards. Moreover, he had not made any clear distinction between the murdered victims, the dead soldiers and the civilian casualties buried under the square. Thus, the memorial marks the will to confront and re-evaluate Austrians’ past during 1938–1945 with a visible, tangible and permanent object in a prominent place accessible to many people (Kuttenberg 2007: 470) but without acknowledging Austrian guilt over the country’s participation in the persecution and annihilation of Jews. Instead, it provided a promise of salvation (ibid: 482), an absolution turned into stone (cf. Bunzl 1995: 24). Noteworthy, it was however the Second Republic, praised in Hrdlicka’s memorial by its last element, that, despite having been “largely a Republic of Denial”, “allowed Hrdlicka’s highly critical monument […] to be built even while a president who had served the Third Reich held office” (Czaplicka 1997: 281).

At the day of the inauguration, President Waldheim did not join the assembled dignitaries in the state ceremony, which appears only logical given that the president “epitomized all that the monument was meant to oppose” (Czaplicka 1997: 263). Interestingly and perhaps also symptomatically, Waldheim decided to not run for a second term, a decision announced on the very day the missing element was added to Hrdlicka’s Gate of Violence in 1991 (Scheufele 1993: 247).

To summarize, erecting the Memorial against War and Fascism in the chosen, prominent setting of Albertinaplatz clearly was a statement to confront the past and integrate its memory in the public sphere and thereby public memory, permanently. Its realization is the materialization of a memory culture in transformation, thereby capturing a moment in time. However, although attempting to break free from a memory culture that had dominated Austria for five decades, Hrdlicka’s work proves that the country was still caught in it.

Hrdlicka’s Unhappy Performative

To “elaborate [Austria’s] founding myth into a coherent master narrative”, “some crucial aspects of the years 1938–1945 had to be suppressed, most importantly the systematic persecution and annihilation of Austrian Jews” (Bunzl 1995: 11). Having been Europe’s third-largest Jewish
community, by 1945, only approximately 5,700 Jews had survived within the country, and another 2,000 came back from the concentration camps (ibid.). In post-war Austria and until the Waldheim affair, Jews remained a marginalized group, widely invisible in the public arena. Returning survivors did not feel welcome and were perceived by many as a painful reminder of what most Austrians were unwilling to confront. The Waldheim affair had yet again revealed Austrians’ deep-rooted antisemitism (ibid: 27, 14).

Fear of antisemitic repercussions often led to adaptation and assimilation. However, Austrian Jews had never been completely silent. Notably, in 1972, the Viennese Community of Auschwitz Survivors approached Hrdlicka, asking him for a symbolic representation of what happened during the war for the Austrian pavilion in the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial. “He replied that since nothing symbolic had happened at Auschwitz, he would create a realistic representation instead” (Bunzl 1995: 33, note 13). Given the aniconism in Judaism, the wish of the survivors was understandable, as was Hrdlicka’s answer, given his training as a figurative sculptor. His line of argumentation was shared also by many survivors who objected to the use of abstract expression to represent Nazi atrocities (Schult 2009: 13). Still, Hrdlicka’s unwillingness to listen to the representatives of the victim group astonishes. Two years later, in 1974, regardless of the voiced criticism, Hrdlicka suggested the bronze sculpture of the Street-washing Jew for another monument project (Jenni 1993: 87-93). This project was not realized, but the figure reappeared 14 years later in his design for the Memorial against War and Fascism. This time, it caused several Viennese Jews to utter their concern, publicly and with sharpness. Recognizing the artist’s good intentions, many were worried that this figure would be installed permanently, given that there were so “few public representations of Jewish experience” (Bunzl 1995: 28), and this one showed a Jew being humiliated. Despite all criticism, Hrdlicka did however not change his design.

Given the coat, the beard and the kippa, this figure evoked the dressing code of orthodox Jews during the 1930s, although the Viennese Jewish population was a diverse group, both secular and religious. In contrast to Hrdlicka’s image, during the months after the Anschluss, Austrian Jews were primarily identifiable as Jews due to not being allowed to wear the swastika, the sign which ironically might have given them some protection. Except for the orthodox Jews who lived in the Viennese district of Leopoldstadt, most Austrian Jews became visible and stigmatized because of the absence of the sign (Hecht, Lappin-Eppeli & Raggam-Blesche 2015: 24, 37) rather than by specific outer characteristics.

Among the memorial’s vehement critics was writer and filmmaker Ruth Beckermann, daughter of Holocaust survivors. She viewed Hrdlicka’s portrayal as being representative of a perception of Jews in Austria as humiliated and pious old people, eternal victims of anonymous violence who were about to die anyway (Beckermann 2005 [1989]: 14-15). Similarly, the acclaimed historian, writer, and leading activist Doron Rabinovici argued, “Today’s Jews do not want to be wandering monuments, not solely deputies of the gassed” (Kuttenberg 2007: 473). In Czaplicka’s analysis, the bronze figure “presents the Jew as a docile victim robbed of dignity and [who] seems almost to conform with the caricatures of Jews used by the Nazis to construct their internal Other” (Czaplicka 1997: 278).

In response to all criticism, the artist countered that the monument’s five distinct elements were to be viewed in a specific order. In fact, Hrdlicka had a performative reading in mind for his memorial ensemble and had initially entitled the piece not Street-washing Jew but Bei der Reibpartie (At the scrubbing squad, Czaplicka 1997: 275). These
words imply the presence of a spectator to the scene. One might then argue that Hrdlicka suggested, quite subtly, that the visitors take the positions of the bystanders. Visitors would recall the historic scenes known from historic images within their mind’s eye publicly enacting the scenes themselves by filling in the positions of the bystanders and perpetrators with their own presence. The sculpture of the Jew was, as Hrdlicka stated, intended to be a “thorn in the flesh” of his fellow citizens, who would be forced to confront their “deep-rooted, home-grown anti-Semitism” every time they were passing by the ensemble (Wise 1990; see also Young 1993: 110; Kuttenberg 2007: 481). Audience members would activate their repertoire of historic images and realize that they themselves had filled in the gap by performing an action in the public space leading to self-critical questioning.

Without doubt, Hrdlicka had recurrently expressed his disgust with Austrian ignorance and their avoiding confronting their bystander role; in fact, he viewed these behaviours as typical Austrian and, in particular, Viennese characteristics (Kuttenberg 2007: 474). He had envisaged that the figure of the Jew would confront the Viennese population to reflect upon their own or other Austrians’ roles and responsibilities in the weeks and months following the Anschluss (Bunzl 1995: 22). Despite the good intentions and outspoken convictions, the reception of the work shows that it had failed to embody Hrdlicka’s ambitions. His outspoken aim to confront the non-Jewish audience with their guilt and shame (Czaplicka 1997: 278) was met with harsh criticism from Austrian Jews; they stated that it was the body of the Jew and not that of the perpetrator or of the laughing bystander that was on public display. To many Austrian Jews the work not only disregarded the concerns of the victims but directly contributed to [their] marginalization […] Hrdlicka’s iconography thus remained a cynical marker of Jewish suffering, perpetuating the symbolic violence that excluded Jews from the production of official memory of the Third Reich and the Holocaust (Bunzl 1995: 30).

Following Austin, the unhappy performative results from the artist’s misconception that the public shared his conviction of being felicitous. Hrdlicka misjudged the circumstances, and the procedure he invoked was not accepted or enacted by the visitors. Thus, the work is a misfire (cf. Austin 1975 [1962]: 27, 28). The image of the Jew Hrdlicka created is easily identifiable, but it remains a classical stereotype. In 1988, the artist failed to meet the historical images of 1938 with the necessary empathy.

That the criticism by Beckermann and Rabinovici was expressed publicly and with such intensity indicates the Jewish community’s assertiveness in the context of a changing Austrian society. The 1980s became a turning point during which Austrian Jews gained increasing confidence. The Jewish community was influenced by the global civil rights movement, the end of the Cold War, the Waldheim affair, and Austria’s entrance into the European Union in 1995 (Bunzl 2004: 179-186). The absence of Jewish representation in the public sphere was no longer tolerated; nor was the fact that Jews were not listened to in how the destiny of their relatives and friends should be publicly commemorated. However, in light of the Waldheim affair, and not willing to sabotage the memorial’s realization, the Vienna Kultusgemeinde supported its instalment and participated in its unveiling (Bunzl 1995: 40, note 83). The fierceness of the debate, and particularly Hrdlicka’s many insensitive utterances (cf. articles collected in Scheufele 1993: 287, 288) continued to charge the bronze figure destructively.
First and foremost, it is however the figure itself that is problematic. Hrdlicka's representational choice of the old man washing the street led to highly uncomfortable afterimages produced by how passers-by subsequently used the low sculpture. One could observe people sitting on the old man's back, eating ice cream or tying their shoes using the old Jew's back as support, and dogs left their marks (Wise 1990; see images in Young 1993). Contrary to Hrdlicka's postulated intention, the sculpture became a symbol of a continuing and renewed humiliation. After an act of what many considered vandalism but which was indeed an artistic intervention in May 1990 (by artist Johannes Angerbauer-Goldhoff, see Schult 2019), Hrdlicka's bronze was temporarily removed. Many, particularly from the Jewish community, hoped it would not return (Wise 1990). However, it was reinstalled two months later, now with barbed wire added to prevent people from sitting on it. This intervention, followed by its 'protection' added to the old man's back, created other difficult images. References to Christian iconography were close at hand because the metal spikes resembled the crown of thorns worn by Jesus. Far from solving the problem, the barbed wire on the old Jew became a too painful reminder of Jewish humiliation. Some Viennese Jews avoided the Albertinaplatz altogether (Wise 1990).

The negative reactions towards the work will not go away, not only because of the highly disturbing figure of the humiliated Jew but also because of the fundamental misconception about Austria's World War II history expressed in the monument ensemble's composition. Hrdlicka's intention could not find realization because the scene he set out is based on an essential error. The crucial point for the work's failure lies exactly in the movement in space the artist had arranged. According to the placement, entering the scene of degradation through the narrow passageway of the Gate of Violence or circumventing it, the humiliation of the Jews occurred in the shadow of the war – whereas, in fact, it was the opposite; the humiliating scenes were the prelude of forced exile and deportation. It is exactly here, in the placement of the figure among scenes of war atrocities, in which one finds the Achilles tendon of Hrdlicka's Memorial against War and Fascism.

Performative Power of a Blind Spot

The problem with Hrdlicka's work is that it performs. Each day, it attracts people's attention from all over the world and continues to imprint the image of the humiliated Jew with each photograph taken. As a physical marker in a prominent setting, Hrdlicka's memorial claims to this day an authority over the narrative of Jewish suffering without having asked how the Austrian Jewish community wanted to be represented and without having addressed the Jewish community's concerns. Significant responses followed in the form of new memorials such as Rachel Whiteread's Nameless Library (2000) but also through temporary artistic interventions at the site with which we will conclude this article (for a close investigation of these artistic afterimages, see Schult 2019; for an audience reception study, see Popescu, forthcoming).

In his performance Cleaning Time (2007, photographed by Marianne Greber), South African performance artist Steven Cohen embodies the suffering Jews were exposed to by using his own, very much alive body. His artistic rendition of a Jew washing the street is equipped with oversized and highly symbolic props such as a giant red toothbrush and authentic items such as the Judenstern and a gasmask. This strange being, almost naked,
crawls through the streets of Vienna, pulled down by oversized red lacquer plateau high heels and burdened by a Chanukah candelabra. From his pole, a cork adorned with crystal sticks out, catching the viewer’s reluctant but recurrent attention. Clearly, Cohen uses exaggerations to express the grotesque absurdity of the situation Jews were exposed to in 1938. Nevertheless, this figure takes on a more historically accurate position than the Jew in Hrdlicka’s work. On his knees, and not lying on his stomach, Cohen allegorically cleaned the streets.

Where Hrdlicka failed to convey performative engagement, Cohen succeeded. His mythical tragic-comic persona made visible something that passers-by might not have been aware of, namely their lack of reflectivity or awareness of what is in fact being enacted – the behaviour many Austrians displayed when seeing their fellow citizens publicly humiliated 69 years earlier. Their reactions were frighteningly similar to those faced by the Viennese Jews in 1938: middle-aged men and women laughing, enjoying the unfamiliar scene in the familiarity of the city setting. Viewed as a commentary on Hrdlicka’s Jew, Cohen’s performance claims ownership over the images of humiliation. He forces viewers to reflect on Austrians’ participation and complicity with the Nazi crimes by making his own Jewish body extremely vulnerable.

Not sharing Hrdlicka’s idea of a performative standing in, Beckermann’s installation The Missing Image (2015) stages an amateur archival film footage, in fact the only moving image of the historical scenes known to date (see Uhl 2016: 236). This footage was found in 2005 and shown in 2008 (one year after Cohen’s performance) at the Film Museum, situated just across the road from Hrdlicka’s memorial. The film clip became key to her two-channel-installation on LED screens, integrated into the Gate to Violence, right in front of the bronze figure. The oversized historical images in black and white of originally only a few seconds were presented in slow motion and in a loop that lasted 1 minute and 24 seconds (Beckermann’s homepage, 2015). The blunt historical authenticity of the footage in its repetitiveness endows the spectators with agency. The viewer sees the enforced humiliation of Jewish citizens and the venomous smiles of the bystanders. One man scrubs the streets, and another pauses for a moment, looking towards the camera, towards us, meeting our gaze watching the scene. The work’s performativity relates to its communicative power, its effectiveness in lending the existing memorial site a new dimension. Beckermann demanded a confrontation with the individuals in the footage. Viewers are not forced into the role of the former bystander, but they are invited to witness or, in Hans Belting’s words, “By exchanging gazes, one cannot remain a viewer only, one becomes a taker,” forced to react to the staged scene one has become part of (Belting 2005: 51).

In her criticism of Hrdlicka in 1989, Beckermann had opposed the street-scrubbing Jew, remarking that “in this country, our feelings and thoughts, our identity as children of the survivors are ignored and offended” (Beckermann, 2005 [1989]: 10, all quotes from German by Schult). Cleaning Time and The Missing Image can therefore be understood as acts to set things right. Both interventions offer a representation of the past that gives expression to the feelings and thoughts of the surviving Viennese Jews and their descendants and exhibit an aspect of Austrians’ past as Nazi sympathizers and accomplices that had been kept away from plain view. This is a question of ownership – who claims and occupies the public space and who defines what is permanently or temporarily made visible to a wider public – and thus defines how this past is publicly narrated and mediated for generations to come.
Hrdlicka’s monument, although visibly contesting war, had remained the captive of a blind spot because it did not visually confront Austrian participation in the Nazi crimes. Both Cohen and Beckermann filled a missing gap by inserting Jewish perspectives into the public space, thereby acting as correctives to Hrdlicka’s memorial. In their temporality, they argued for a continuous confrontation with Austrian guilt and shame, an aspect that is not yet addressed in a permanent memorial. Today, Hrdlicka’s *Memorial against War and Fascism* accentuates foremost that something remains missing. It is only a question of time until a new intervention will be staged at Albertinaplatz.

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ABSTRACTS

Austrian sculptor Alfred Hrdlicka’s Monument against War and Fascism (1988/91) in central Vienna is the focal point of this article, which asks what contested images in public places do. Hrdlicka’s memorial is treated as a symptom of the changing Austrian memory culture of the late 1980s. We locate the memorial in the context of its realisation and reflect on the performative force, which results from its central sculpture and point of contention: the bronze figure of the so-called Street-washing Jew. This visual element caused prominent after-effects such as public discussions and artistic interventions. Two such interventions by artists Steven Cohen (2007) and Ruth Beckermann (2015) will be briefly invoked in relation to what we argue is this memorial’s blind spot. In their own distinct performative ways, all three works make visible how Austrian participations in the Nazi crimes are being negotiated in the public space over a period of 30 years. However, since only Hrdlicka’s monument is permanently installed, its central image echoes a memory culture in transformation no longer valid.

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Mots-clés: Alfred Hrdlicka, Steven Cohen, Ruth Beckermann, Austrian Holocaust memory, memorials, after-images, performativity
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The political mission of contemporary urban statuary. Image, history and territorial identity in Montpellier (France)

Laurent Viala
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Laurent Viala

Introduction

1 The function of the symbolic dimension in the production of the space of the city is a known phenomenon (Choay 1972, Claval 1974, Chorra-Gobin 2001, Monnet 2007). Maurice Agulhon’s works (Agulhon 1975) illustrate this topic on the subject of forms, nature and social effects of French Republican proprieties, especially through the 19th century public statuary. Implicitly, its problematic introduces the political dimension of space; however, it is somewhat reversed compared to ours. He explains that "[…] an allegorical political statue was not only, by its explicit sense, the element of a propaganda, but also, by itself, a piece of urban scenery." (Agulhon 1975: 33-56) Contrary to Agulhon, we would like to gain insight into the political signification of contemporary statuary. If statuary today is an important element of the urban setting, designed to win people over, what about its political dimension? At present, democratic order is overwhelmed under by the "culture industry" that emerged in the 20th century as a powerful path to the "myth of the future" (Michaud 2001). More than ever images play a determining role in this process by saturating space with sense (Berdet 2013). For political leaders, the relevance is mainly economic, and the only aim is urban attractiveness (Chadoin 2014). Architecture and urban design are the main lever of this quest. Indeed, designing high quality urban public spaces seems to be one of the best ways to achieve this. Contemporary statuary and its potential political dimension are investigated in this context, which is not so favourable to such a re-emergence of the political sense of public spaces.
In our hypothesis, the public space of the city is, for the inhabitants, a semantic universe whose content is openly political. The study of the meaning of contemporary statuary implies giving up of a strict aesthetic scope and requires adopting a position at the crossroads of social and political issues. Indeed, when a city council decides to initiate an action for the urban art by spreading several statues (copies, replicas, originals) with historical sense (great names of history, and / or with reference to the period of creation of the original), what are its motivations? An effect is certainly expected: at any rate, this effect is commonly aesthetic; however, can the didactic intention cohabit with the implementation of a political rhetoric (Robelin 2007)? Is it about renewing civic imagery? Does the statuary aim to reproduce ancient motivations - to celebrate an authority, the local history and its actors - or to imagine new ones? We seek to understand these new motivations through a phenomenological approach inspired by Charles S. Peirce.

The research carried out in Montpellier (France) addresses three public spaces that gather most of the contemporary statues in that region. The term "contemporary" (see above) does not qualify the work of art, but the recent installation (1980-2012) of statues in new neighbourhoods created in the east part of the town’s territory. Those statues, which are often copies, may have various geographical and historical origins. Our first study of public spaces corresponds to the Antigone district, the second is the Place de la Révolution in the Richter district, and the third is La Place du 20e siècle in Odysseum, an entertainment and shopping centre (Figure 1). On the methodological level, a documentary work (understanding the context) has been conducted on the basis of field surveys (describe): a first series relating to the public spaces invested (localization, urban planning, sizing, street furniture, vegetation, materiality, landscape, uses and practices, frequentation, general condition) and a second for statues in their spaces (original or copy, context of public commission, artist or manufacturer, materials, description, history of the original statue, history of the character, associated text, date of installation, motivation, appropriation / reception / diversion / rejection / alteration, position in the public space, size, type of financial participation). Then, we qualify the relationship to the place and identify (analyse) the associated values (aesthetic, historical, political, ethical) to prepare the interpretation of the effects of meaning.
Finally, this paper addresses the emblematic images (or images of images) of universal, real or mythical, characters as several arguments to overhaul the political order in and by urban public space. This re-foundation is read in the perspective of an historical assertion of territorial identity. The first part synthesizes the epistemological and theoretical framework of this research. A second introduces the studied case (Montpellier) by delivering three historical modalities of how a political power shows itself in space. The third insists on the sensible universe experienced in contact with the analysed statuary. Before concluding, the last part exposes a fluctuating urban rhetoric that underscores the images that reveal the political order.

The political meanings of urban public space to the test of indisciplinarity

The images in the urban public space are of diverse nature and origin. However, all these images mark places and practices attached to such space. The treatment of these problematics is entrusted to geography. We practice an urban geography that adheres to the purposes and principles of a critical social geography and can interact with cultural geography (Séchet, Veschambre 2006: 22). We choose social geography because it considers society in its relationship to space and is therefore in opposition to geography as spatial science, making space an autonomous reality; we choose a critical one because the political and ideological positions it develops contest positivist theories, attached more to explain a single part (globally behaviourist) of the relationship of man to space.
than to formulate principles that help to release him from situations of domination and to change his life. In 2010, the *Géographie et cultures* journal addressed the meeting between image and public space. Concerning the evocation of a concrete public space, the authors discuss a "physical environment", that is, a fitted-out one. At the same time, the image is considered to be both a "product object" and a "cognitive representation". Thinking together one and the other are based on a "shared spatiality". Image and public space would thus be hand-in-glove with the expression of social reality, and together would speak of constraint, freedom, order and control, that is, of polity. Probing the depth of "the life of the images in the public space" is the form taken by the invitation to which our text answers. Here, geography is mobilized to investigate images; however, the epistemological, theoretical and methodological framework of our research must be completed. Thus, three aspects are clarified.

6 The first aspect is the status of the image. What can the link be between the social sciences (and geography in particular) and visual studies? In this paper, it will not be direct and, and it will undoubtedly be clearer ex-post facto. Visual studies have gained a form of autonomy, and their corpus of reference took shape precisely through disciplinarity (Catellin and Loty 2013). Presenting an overview of visual studies, with regard to the iconic turn, Keith Moxey (2008) insists on the diversity of approaches (visual studies, image science, anthropology of the image, visual culture) and their respective contributions. The interference of the social sciences in the field of visual studies challenges the contribution of the first approaches to the transdisciplinary or de-disciplinary dimension of the second approaches as proposed W.J.T. Mitchell. It is a scientific challenge for the researcher in social sciences if he must integrate image into his problematics. Going beyond the field of representations to touch upon the image's capacity for action, promoting the idea according to which the images would have power (Freedberg 1989), such is the first level of meeting around the notions of agency (Latour 2006) and performativity (Arquembourg 2010) or more generally of the iconic performance that associates agency and performativity with two other notions: efficiency (the image fulfils a function) and the power of the image, that is to say what it can bring or provoke (Dierkens et al., 2009). Of course, representation and action are intended to converge; however, there is, on the one hand, the meaning diffused by these images, and on the other hand, the idea of their presence (Gumbrecht 2004), less examined by the geographer: the images would view us as much as we can contemplate them. Although engaging an asymmetrical relationship, the image would exist by this order of reciprocity. The second level of encounter is directly deduced from the first one: the purely declarative postures must be avoided to make this idea of presentation an effective one. This risk is not easy to manage. However, first of all, it is possible to refer to social practices, which are capable, if they are questioned, of revealing the possible effects of images on city dwellers. Certain images in public space have an obvious practical function (signage), and evoking their power creates no difficulty. For all the other cases, where the symbolic mission dominates, the discussion evidence is more delicate. In this case, the phenomenological experience of spaces by the researcher himself is conceivable. Finally, we have chosen this solution; however, it is completed by an empirical work that our introduction briefly recalls. Peircean semiotics have a form of relevance in the comprehension of the images of our analysis, particularly in the final perspective of a global interpretation of the situation in Montpellier. Charles S. Peirce's theory of signs articulates three trichotomies (Peirce 1978) taking successively for its basis the sign...
(representamen), the object and the interpretant. Our approach focuses on the object (in its connexion with the sign). It remains subject to the three modes of being that account for human experience. This is the basis of his conception of phenomenology. Indeed, Pierce first evokes the immediate quality (firstness) describing being for what it basically is. Then, he speaks about experience (secondness) and thus refers to the practice. Finally, he evokes thought (thirdness) to signify the capacity of each being to make his world intelligible. The three components of the semiotic process (sign, object, interpretant) are decomposed according to these three categories (firstness, secondness, thirdness). With respect to its object, the sign will therefore be successively icon, index, symbol. The reference to this theory is made incompletely but knowingly; indeed, if the object is dissociated from the representamen and the interpretant, the Peircean device becomes less operative. Thus, it is only the means of analysis suggested by Peirce that we adopt. Therefore, there is an icon as soon as the sign refers to its object on the mode of resemblance. The index is manifested as soon as the sign is affected by the object and, as soon as a context is established, it can become a symbol.

The second clarification concerns the essential help of historians’ works about France. Indeed, a double story has been summoned: that of public art, including its most recent manifestations in urban spaces, and that, more specifically, of public statuary, also having a contemporary expression. The mission of this art (the revealing of a community’s unity) would have been somewhat lost after having known its finest hour in the 19th century, in particular in its last third; which led Maurice Agulhon to speak about "statuomania" (Agulhon 1978). "The republican era invents desacralized public places, among which is the market place with its fountain, at the same time as the public political space (one and indivisible). As a secular place, it confers on public art the mission of presenting, through art, the being and harmony of public life." (Ruby 1998: 50) In the 20th century, "the renewal of public art and its thinking requires an analysis of the functions of the street, public places as a whole, the public, as well as an analysis of the prospects of political unity/diversity, and the life of the political body." (Ruby 1998: 51) Moreover, Sylvie Lagnier (2001) explains that "[...] the public sculpture participates less in the aesthetics of the city [...] than the introduction of a problematic aimed at questioning the public about its knowledge, practices and uses of the place, and at offering it a different approach and reading of its urban environment." (Lagnier 2001: 236-237) The book she has published from his doctoral thesis also sheds light on types of intervention: "The first deals with an identified urban function, in which case the artwork is defined as an urban development because it is involved in the structural development of the place. The second type of intervention has a common aspect to all the works, that is to say it testifies to the contemporary artistic creation [...] The third remodels the place by appropriating the surrounding elements or by creating dissonances, counterpoints. [...] Finally, the fourth type of intervention, like the previous one, brings together works that are also designed for a specific place, but which are constructed from social elements. These rediscover or partially redefine the initial missions of the monument: starting from a particular event or from everyday life, they contribute to the identity of the local social fabric." (Lagnier 2001: 107-108) The statuary assemblies studied which illustrate three of these types of intervention: the fourth refers to Antigone, the third to Place de la Révolution to Richter urban district and the first to the Place du 20e siècle in Odysseum.

Our survey of the literature on this problematic allowed a third level of precision in the positioning. Our observation reveals the dispersion of objects and, at the same time, the convergence of issues towards the question of policy. Although in France it is not an over-invested field, several references were useful to the demarcation of the problematic.
Thus, we can successively evoke the following: the staging of power through the image of the Great Man and his cult (Agulhon 2003, Bonhomme and Jaoul 2010), "gender specificity" of the figure of the celebrity "even though the traditional feminine representations in public art were limited to a saint, a queen, the decorative object and the allegory" (Sniter 2008), the bourgeois construction of the ideal feminine worker in Paris (Monjaret 2012), the reception and the political sense of the statues of Joan of Arc, still in Paris at the turn of the 19th century (Sniter 2001), the Parisian equestrian statuary (Pelosse 1995), the speech on the black-Africans to Brussels, without being reduced to stiatus (Vincke 1993), or finally, but without claiming to be exhaustive, the three-dimensional production in Lisbon before and after the 1974 Carnation Revolution (Delgado Tomás 2013). This diversity of objects and approaches does not hide the political purpose; it interferes in a transversal way, sometimes by placing itself in the foreground, sometimes in the background.

Three historical forms to make power visible

9 Different historical forms of the visibility (and visuality) of power introduce the studied case. Indeed, in Montpellier, as in many other cities, the political dimension has been, in some situations, closely associated with an element of statuary or the public space that takes it in. Three modalities are described for an optimal consideration of the elements of contemporary statuary.

10 The first refers to a major form of figuration of a political order in the town's space. The statue of Louis XIV on horseback was accepted in the city in 1718. It sits in the centre of the royal square of Peyrou. Mireille Lacave explains that "never before have the councillors of Montpellier testified to recognition, admiration or respect to any of their sovereigns, scholars or lords." (Lacave 1990: 6) However, it has the particularity of being located beyond the fortifications, thus it is outside the city. The hazards of the political history of France have led to its deposit: the withdrawal from the square the statue of the King, disputed, is a strong act. This statue reappears in 1838. The practices in public art were thus aimed at strengthening the unity of the country including the erection of the statue of the man embodying the people. Thus, in the collective memory, the place of Peyrou has long symbolized a highly political urban public space towards which converged Montpellier society. In this case, the didacticism of the statuary is unambiguous. This is the local translation of a masterful urban and political expression, shared nationwide, namely, the royal square and its element of statuary in central position remembering the political body of the King and the people. This statue reinforces the qualification of the public space that welcomes it.

11 The installation of a statue that pays tribute to Jean Jaurès exemplifies the second modality. In 1999, following Georges Frêche's (mayor of the city, 1977-2004) decision, the replica of a bronze statue (the original statue is located in Castres) was placed in the eponymous square which, from 1922, had received a first bust of Jaurès. The vicissitudes of history made it disappear under the Vichy regime's injunctions in 1941. Thus, the return of the image of this great man in this place in 1999 is presented as a strong political act. Jean Jaurès' memory already had another monument erected in 1964 on the Esplanade to reconnect with the pre-war profaned testimony. What happened in 1999 is important. Beyond the image of the unanimous politician, this is the decision to affirm an overtly ideological sense to the 1977 municipal elections, which is actualized through the
implementation of the programme of the socialist left party coming to power. "[...] in Montpellier, during the demonstration [...] of protest against the CPE project (a draft law on the contract of first employment), the statue of Jaurès was damaged. [...] the operation was not violent [...] The town council, directed since 2004 by Hélène Mandroux, had immediately stand up again the statue [...] erected in 1999 on the initiative of Georges Frêche. The operation may have been orchestrated by some students of far left to protest against the renouncement of the jauresian spirit by its official successors." ("Glanes", Cahiers Jaurès 2006/1, n° 179, 86) In this case, the power is enhanced by the attempt to legitimize the current public action by the evocation of the image of a leading political figure.

Lastly, the Three Graces statue is another well-known element of Montpellier's statuary, associated with the major square of the city (Place de la Comédie). The image of the goddesses of antiquity has been somewhat forgotten (goddesses of charm, beauty and creativity). Discussing public monuments, Pierre Sansot considers that this statue "[...] belongs to the flatter academicism." However, he calls upon us not to neglect the role that some people (politicians) and others (the inhabitants) are likely to attribute occasionally, or even continually, to these objects. "Consequently, their real or supposed beauty does not matter if they have been adopted by the inhabitants following a discreet or permanent plebiscite. In the last instance, the power returns to ordinary men". (Sansot 1993: 55) This statue has never stopped, in communion with the Place de la Comédie, symbolizing the Languedoc regional district capital, which is therefore a part of its identity. The Three Graces are an object of a meaningless consensus but are yet always ready to publicly release the words of political leaders (the inauguration of the tramway in Montpellier, for example, by wearing its local colours), and sometimes the claims of citizens with regard to various causes (the situation of Algerian women, for example). The Three Graces raises the question of the meaning and position of any ordinary object in the town's space. The capacity of such an element of statuary to establish the urban public space, and thus to assume a political form, can find expression in the appropriation of the statue and its misrepresentation for a just cause. The third historical form to make power visible and visual reverses the logic hitherto observed, since the element of statuary is overlaid with a political dimension.

Places of deployment of a new civic imagery

These three modalities of visibility of power introduce the case study by guiding the analysis of the elements of contemporary statuary. The three new public spaces that we decipher were first briefly addressed and then carefully observed and studied before being compared with the political history of urban planning in this city (Volle, Viala, Négrier, Bernie-Boissard 2010). Can we conceive a social imagery taking from any perspectives for the city in remote references (in both spatial and temporal terms), mythology included? Traditional civic imagery, mobilizing history, the French Republic, those who died for those ideas, does not really work anymore. As an inheritance, this imagery only becomes an element of the urban scenery because it no longer requests the memory of a population less inclined to root its existence to such symbols. The reference to the nation collapses. Grand narratives give way to the small stories of daily life for which the cultural industry is avid. However, with this new offer, political leaders must bring up-to-date this imagery and give it a social utility.
Georges Frêche (1938–2010), historian, professor, powerful politician, authoritarian mayor, gives mission to this statuary to enlighten citizens’ everyday life (civilities) and to give meaning to the city by resituating it in history (public-spiritedness). Georges Frêche’s leadership (Négrier 2001), the central aspect in the intelligibility of our analysis, mobilizes explanatory levels that refer to the "desire to lead" and his relationship to a "territorial imaginary". In this framework, references to time and space dominate in the form of "two thoughts". "The expression of a "desire for history"(Damamme 1994) proceeds by a particular selection of the moments that make sense for the leader, which put Montpellier in a long-term coherence. [...] Far from being a concession to the times, the identification with an historical imaginary is at the beginning of certain orientations in the urban action." (Négrier 2001: 73) Further: "To project politics on space is, beyond the classic references of modern political domination (Allies 1980), one of the leaders' lever." (Négrier 2001: 74) With this deciphering, which provides an explanatory framework attached to a political personality and his view, the confrontation of the sets of statues in their public spaces allows for the collection, with a form of immediacy, of indices of the desired political sense. This convincing argument is reinforced by Anne Zisman’s analysis: "Everything ties up and aims to make hybrid some symmetrical couples (history and historian, past and future, mayor and the historical destiny, concerted policy and individual initiative) bending to fuse together Georges Frêche in his own historical discourse, overshadowing the future of Montpellier in favour of his enthronement in the history of the city" (Zisman 2000: 488).

First, let us try to understand what he intends to formulate in a new way by establishing a form of ancient anthology in Antigone (Figure 2)?

Fig. 2. Montpellier. Antigone neighbourhood. Discobolus, Victory of Samothrace in front of the Hôtel de Région, Demosthenes, Apollo, Dionysus, Diane of Versailles

(Source: Laurent Viala)

From Place Paul Bec, connecting the old city to the new one through the modern urban project called Polygone (1975) to the Esplanade de l’Europe, images abound. The statues (copies of ancient classics for the most part), installed in different places of the
neighbourhood designed by Ricardo Bofill, the Catalan architect, in the 1980s, form a coherent whole.

17 The liberating action of Demosthenes and Moses, as an expression of a kind of self-transcendence, explains away their presence near of the media library, a place where everybody can improve their knowledge for a better use of it. Both characters carry essential qualities for any political project. Knowledge and freedom seem to be put in the same category of logic. The celebration of the naval victory of Demetrius I, the city-taker (copy of the marble of the Victory of Samothrace placed in front of the Hôtel de Région district), refers to the possible links revived with the Mediterranean through the Port Marianne district (Zisman 1998). It is equally an opportunity of casting a long glance onto the contemporary city, to recall the 1977 political change, the take-over of the city by Georges Frêche and the unveiling of a major urban project.

18 Not far from these first statues, a reproduction of the Discobolus and a copy of an Apollo offer a meaningful introduction to public space. The crossing of the neighbourhood, down to the river (Lez), makes the visitor aware of several qualities: beauty, perfection, the harmony of forms, movement inspired by the architecture of the place, its lighting. The walker partakes of a piece of art that questions him. Public space spurs a confusing and indeterminable knowledge emphasized a bit more by the specifics of the historicizing architecture. Between the swimming pool and the library, the Dionysian interlude transgresses the moderation introduced by the Apollonian announcement. However, Antigone combines political thought with the expression of a transient euphoria celebrating the living, the joy in living and being there with others. For a moment, the walker’s mind is released from the little chance happenings of life to give back to the body all its fullness. It is well worth noting that this place has been the stage for Tohu-Bohu, a famous electronic music festival.

19 The right position of Venus and Diane evokes the place given to nature in the city: artificial nature, socialized nature, the nature of gardens or wild nature. In this place, Zeus is omnipresent: the eponymous place works as a haven for these goddesses. The political metaphor is not missing. The Victory of Samothrace announced this performance just to make us believe in the political struggle. The evocation of the supreme god pursues this assignment: it highlights the ultimate place of urban power (headquarters of the Metropolitan municipality) and echoes the Hôtel de Région, located nearby and having been the symbol of the political opposition to Georges Frêche’s party. The presentation of places of power has returned. The emptiness is no longer empty; however, it dwells in ideas and bodies.

20 In Antigone, the public space expresses the whole city. It tells a story to the inhabitant or the stranger, and it suggests that one live what is announced by the public space and the statues. Perhaps it is simply the asking of passers-by to believe in this possibility that is required for it to happen? This situation is an invitation to re-read Jean Baudrillard about the American city. Antigone “[...] is neither a dream nor a reality, it is hyper-reality because it is a utopia which from the beginning has been lived as a reality.” (Baudrillard 1986: 57) Antigone offers something primitive, which begins. The territorial imaginary produces its first effects.

21 In the second public space studied - Place de la Révolution in the Richter district - the witnesses of 1789 arrive in the form of bronze busts (Figure 3).
Additionally, images of French historical figures including Marat, Danton, and even Robespierre, were drawn up more recently (2009) and financed by the Metropolitan municipality; Georges Frêche was no longer the mayor of Montpellier, then the budget of the inter-municipal group was taken over from the city. On the left bank of the river, the presence of the University marks public space. Two arcs of a circle have an impact on the place; the fifteen busts take their place there, arranged on steel bases of two different heights. They are all oriented in the same direction, like a jury on the way to the Lez, in the axis of the Passerelle des Barons de Caravètes that spans the river. The buildings of the district take advantage of this opening. The busts are built around a fountain on the ground, on a part of its perimeter. In this place, and after having offered to himself an ancient pantheon, Georges Frêche once again declaims what the political order represents and what it dispenses in and by the city, at the risk of a form of general abstruseness. In Antigone, the remarkable act of neighbourhood planning, that the architectural party did not manage to popularize, requested some images. These images give rhythm to the urban public space in various strategic points and take place on the path of the inhabitant, the user, the passer-by. Here, the figure of the place is mobilized. The gathered images are set in only one spot. Although it is not a particularly significant place, the Place de la Révolution has an attractive architectural structure: square shape, the drawing on the ground, the fountain, its opening on one side towards the axis of the footbridge.

Odysseum is the third and last place of the deployment of new civic imagery in Montpellier (Figure 4). This vast public space develops the leisure activities part on the model of the street and its shopping part is conceived as an open-air gallery. At the joint of the part combining amenities (planetarium, aquarium, ice rink, cinema) and restaurants, and the part bringing together dozens of shops, medium (Darty) and large stores (Casino, Ikea, Decathlon), a circular space of sixty metres in diameter has been planned, called the Place du 20e siècle.
In 2010 and 2012, ten monumental statues three metres high, erected by order of Georges Frêche with the help of the artist François Cacheux (1923-2011), were arranged in a circle on the last step of the amphitheatre Helios. The great Bronze Men (De Gaulle, Golda Meir, Nasser, Gandhi, Lenin and Mao, or Mandela, Churchill, Roosevelt and Jaures) rest on a base that adds to the visual impact due to the height of each statue. A small premise, building near this square is occupied by an interpretation centre. The set is named "Memoria Mundi: History through the great men." The visitor can consult several interactive screens that provide a considerable amount of information on each of these characters. Postcards are available to visitors; however, they do not represent the statues made for this public space. For the postcards, one of the first priorities is to stress the characters and their public life; one might infer that the artistic value of the statues is only of minor interest. This medium is exclusively dedicated to the diffusion of historical knowledge in the public reception area. The visitor may take portraits (photographs) of historical figures, supplied by a biography sentence: "Mao Zedong (1893-1976). Founder and President of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party", and "Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, aka Lenin (1870-1924), Russian politician, founder of the U.S.S.R." Considering the profile of several of the characters chosen by Georges Frêche, the decision to raise these statues in the public space was not unanimously approved. His explanations to regional press are instructive: "We are in a world that knows nothing! Lenin has never murdered anyone: he has nothing to do with Stalin. So yes, he has blood on his hands like De Gaulle has that of 30,000 Tunisians, 40,000 Malagasy. I want to create La Place du 20e siècle in Odysseum. I will put De Gaulle, Churchill, Roosevelt, Lenin, Mao Tse-Tung. These are the men who made the twentieth century: whether one’s like it or not!" (Midi Libre, 12.2.08)
The political signification of statuary in the production of the territorial imaginary

Why do these images together have the ability to locally institute a political, social and urban order? How does this order contribute to the territorial imaginary promoted by political power? All these images (the statuary) must be interpreted from the perspective of the political history of Montpellier’s urban planning. In fact, on the one hand, the investigation of the urban public space by the studied statuary is only one aspect of a thought of the city embodied in a global intervention strategy. On the other hand, this topic concerns a decisive period of this history that corresponds to the successive mandates of Georges Frêche as mayor of the city and president of the inter-communal institution from 1977 to 2010 (District then Communauté d’agglomération, which became Métropole in 2015).

The conditions and modalities of action of these images on the production of places that by virtue of being public shape the historical, political and social depth of the city, are examined at crossing of urban planning, of a rhetoric of metropolitan ideology and the reinvention of a civic imagery. A three-dimensional intelligibility of the historical trajectory of Montpellier emerges from the analysis. This trajectory appears as Mediterranean, revolutionary and global. These are the lessons learned from each of the three statuary groups studied.

The first group of statues again takes the founding logic of the district of Antigone: the reassertion of the city needs the re-foundation of its Mediterranean identity. However, it refutes the historical facts because it appeals to a time before the birth of the city in 985. The ancient register, unfamiliar with the history of Montpellier, is essential. After interpretation and generalization, the statues are the index of the crucible of Mediterranean civilizations and have a high degree of iconicity, they are even "images" (reproductions) of images removed from their original context. The texts systematically provided on the base of each statue summarize the useful information: the character’s name, dates relating to the character and / or the realization of the statue, its author and the museum where the original is located. These texts help reveal their iconic, indicial, and symbolic missions. These statues still represent real or mythical characters referring to the ancient Greek world in particular and, through the knowledge of their respective life-courses, bear the political principles attached to democracy, likely to nourish the project of a new political foundation. From all of this it follows that the symbolic meaning prevails over the iconic one and confirms that city and polity are two historically consubstantial ideas.

From the time of the Consulate (13th century), the city of Montpellier has a reputation in Mediterranean region that today could be enough to establish its territorial inscription. The evocation of the antiquity dream, major episode of the universal history, comes to enhance an historical trajectory insufficiently dimensioned, also less explicit, contrary to what can be observed in neighbouring cities (Nîmes, Marseille for example). Thus, it is in reverse, by the invention of an adherence to the ideals of the Mediterranean civilization, that an imaginary takes over ideologically, enhances the historical reality of the city and consolidates its territorial identity. So is the political signification we attribute to the symbolic dimension of this first group of statues.
In the Richter neighbourhood, the images are grouped together in one place. First it must be stated that the bronze busts (all are reproductions, whose originals have, for more than a half, only one author, the sculptor Pierre-Jean David d'Angers (1788-1856)) participate in the spatial structuring of place. Their spatial arrangement in one spot and their very precise disposition form an iconic system that brings together leaders of the Revolution (Barnave, Sieyes, Bailly, La Fayette, Mrs. Roland, Chénier, Marat, Danton, Desmoulins, Robespierre, Couthon, Saint-Just, La Révellière-Lépeaux, Lakanal). The social and political qualities of the city resurface by the values attached to this historic event: freedom, equality, fraternity. Busts explain that each one's presence in the city should be committed, in other words the qualities of citizen shall be won by citadinity. The Richter neighbourhood is a university one, suited to the reception of these images and their associated values. In Montpellier, on a slightly forced symbolic mode (the revolutionary vigour), the statuary set refers to a disposition of political mind that created Montpellier at the end of the 20th century. Georges Frêche personifies the idea of radical change, of upheaval without a spirit of conciliation, of profound transformations in a very short time. What we are mainly concerned with here is the sudden break in with a political situation, supported by a popular adherence more dreamed than sought after. Thus, by the revolutionary metaphor, the form of political action retained is, through the statuary, connoted as being not only risky but also extraordinary. The busts then appear as the index of the urgent transformation of one world into another. The first is near its limits; it cannot reproduce itself or change its ways. The second world opens new future prospects.

Finally, the images of the third set of statues at Odysseum indicate the universal nature of the political process initiated by Georges Frêche in 1977. Indeed, what happens in this place, dedicated to mass consumption, reminds every inhabitant that anyone is caught up in a logic that connects local and global scales in a dialectical process. In this place, the visitor knows he's in Montpellier; however, his body and his mind are in a world where truly no sign anchors it to this city. He could be elsewhere. Therefore, in this place, the images of the great historical figures who have influenced in a decisive way the march of our world in the 20th century water-down this effect. In other words, the loss of landmarks in such places is not compensated but coupled with an invitation to open to the world in a way no longer undergone (at the neighbourhood scale in Odysseum) but chosen (at the scale of this place). The window on the political history of the world (the statues of great men) is an iconic staging of this type of place, but with a rather unusual goal. Indeed, this objective is not only to raise awareness and to educate for civic renewal but also, on another level, to consolidate the historical and political scope of the territory. The capacity of public authorities to articulate its local anchorage to the destiny of the world is, in this case, clearly highlighted.

When he died in 2010, Georges Frêche took with him an entire side of the city's history. His bronze statue (Figure 5), a height of 3.2 meters, the posture in which it represents him (standing, professorial tone, although slightly smiling), its location (Odysseum), its directing (his forefinger pointing the town's future development towards the sea), attests of a gap that nothing could fill.
The icon is nearly religious. The pilgrimage of followers, gathered in a not-for-profit club (http://www.georgesfreche-lassociation.fr/), delays in vain at the end of this history. What comes next has been implicitly initiated during his lifetime (he left the mayor's seat in 2004). However, it will not ensure the continuation of his work. Although installed in a roundabout (place Odysseum), in actual fact a nonplace (Augé 1992), this impressive statue would like to mark territory. Beyond the tribute to the political leader, this statue shouts once more by challenging the destiny of the city, already under this type of images' authority. Nevertheless, the statue takes the form of a will without succession. It becomes a specific local place of memory that, if it can gather Georges Frêche's followers, will also crystallize the speech of the discontented ones. The spread image is the incarnation of some idea of the city, of the production of space, of its development, of the political nature of the city, and finally, metropolitan ideology at work. The statue of Georges Frêche has already been the receptacle of a citizen criticism about the policy conducted for more than thirty years. In 2010, during his lifetime, a demonstration had anticipated this announcement in the parody mode. The project of several militants of a political party already proposed, with some sense of irony, to raise a statue to this major political man (Figure 6). The real statue of Georges Frêche puts an end to the construction of this orchestrated historical path.
Fig. 6. The statue of G. Frêche: place of citizen discontent

Sources: www.contribuables.org/ and Harmonie, 277, 2010

Conclusion

In Montpellier, the images (the statues) will no longer haunt the urban public space. The statue of Georges Frêche symbolically comes to end an intense phase of 30 years of urban planning and politics in this city. This statue is similar to an ironic gesture that Georges Frêche himself could have done. The statues erected after this most recent one seem to be details.

The historical images were introduced in an urban context, to which they do not belong, through a forced assembling, and transposed into a contemporaneousness to which a political leader wanted to make sense. In 2010, Vincent Berdoulay explained that "the force of the image comes from the narrative it allows, in and through the public space". The idea of the invention of an historical path in Montpellier is apprehended in light of this narrative constructed by images. Old grand narratives (nation, homeland, republic) have evolved in favour of an urban culture locally expressed, which transcends the national scale to interfere with the global one, thus pretending not to undergo it. In this city, the new mesh size of the urban public space is the expression of the territorial personal foresight, made by a political leader, based on an historical knowledge, speaking on behalf of all and who reinvents an obsolete civic imagery by production of a social imagery supported by politics. This imagery takes part in an historical urban rhetoric.

Our hypothesis has given up trying to understand contemporary statuary as an element of urban scenery, affirmed the possibility of its political signification and, even more, the active capacity of this. Our analysis did not explore the meaning that the author gives to his work, but it has aimed at the one underlying the political decision when it decided to put up a statue in a public space. The study of the supposed political signification of images associated with it led to a three-dimensional approach. First, a geographical basis marked the attention paid to the spatial dimension of social and therefore political matters. Second, an historical knowledge was added to this basis. It has guaranteed the
right apprehension of multifarious temporal shifts. Indeed, in our corpus, reproductions of ancient statues (images of images) meet original works representing great characters of the 20th century. The basis has finally been expanded on by the very visual semiology of Charles S. Peirce. This made it possible to adapt the interpretation plan to the interest shown in the meaning of the image as part of a significant conception of space.

In a rather simple way, urban rhetoric unfolds at first spatially by an articulation of the three public spaces studied. Then, this rhetoric considers, still in an interwoven way, the three statuary sets associated with their spaces, and the signification they respectively take. At this stage, the socio-spatial basis of the territorial imaginary (the Mediterranean aim), the way of political change (radical), chosen to make this imaginary happen, and the historical perspective (the great history of the world), which is crucial for this imaginary's success, are successively revealed. Finally, concerning the objectives pursued and the motivations for the making of such an urban public space, three parallel meanings form the guidelines of this rhetoric.

The first has its stakes in iconic meaning to revive and renew the links between citadinity, public-spiritedness and perhaps civility. Second meaning mobilizes the symbolic signification to express the path of the city through the realization of the political project of a type of socialist left incarnated by Georges Frêche. The third element precisely stretches the symbolic signification. Actually, it leads one to think that, by his political leadership, Georges Frêche has left some traces of his intellectual and political autobiography in urban public space. In this way, he brought his experience closer to great moments of the world universal history. Then, this urban rhetoric meets an astonishing echo in Georges Frêche’s statue. Then, when citizens’ discontent is re-awakened, it finds a place to express itself. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, in these postmodern times, if the political king's body (of the mayor’s body) is again in the centre (in the heart of Port Marianne district), the statue remains nonetheless erected nearby a roundabout, front door to Odysseum.

Ultimately, questioning images in urban public space and precisely their potential effectiveness, proved to be useful. However, the case remains complex. Jérôme Baschet discusses the assessment of the "connection of conformity between the effect produced by an image and the intention which led to its realization" (in Dierkens et al., 2010: 24) and more globally that of their power, even their performativity, notably the political intention to appropriate an image. The visual mission assigned to the spatial dimension of this phenomenon appears. The visuality must be understood as "the dominant technical, spatial, visual order." (Bartholeyns 2016: 20) Its dominant character has a political basis. "These are not the aesthetic arrangements for accepting a state of the world or winning popular support; it is not the propaganda, the iconisation of great men or the overhanging palaces. This is not the "aestheticisation of politics" denounced by W. Benjamin [...]. Here, visuality is domination, and this domination is that of colonial, imperial, then military-industrial complexes. The visual history of polity as an history of law and the lack of right of scrutiny, as the production of invisibilities by one another, is therefore not neutral. Logical consequence: one cannot be for the visuality, but only for another kind of visuality able to rethink the common space." (Bartholeyns 2016: 21-23) From all this, it follows that, faced with a deliberate act of domination in urban public space — in our case in the urban order taken up by the metropolitan affirmation of the city (dogmatic, normative, idolatrous, authoritarian) — images out of place of this order, conveying a counter visuality, would only be able to make known an urban public space that is collectively accepted because it is socially constructed. Thus, at the end of our
paper, we will conclude that the contemporary statuary in Montpellier is matter for thinking "politics" for lack of being able to prove the political and ideological influence of the statuary on the public space and its users.

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 This paper deals with the political dimension of the urban public space. It examines the political meaning of a contemporary statutory. The research carried out in Montpellier (France) deals with three public spaces which gather most of the contemporary statues. We explore the emblematic images (or images of images) of universal, real or mythical characters as several arguments in order to overhaul a new political order in and by the urban public space. This order is read in the perspective of an historical assertion of the territorial identity of the city of Montpellier. We use some aspects of the semiotic triad (icon, index, symbol) of Charles Peirce’s theory of signs. First, we consider the new mesh size of the urban public space, which is understood as the expression of a territorial personal foresight, thought by Georges Frêche, former mayor of Montpellier. Then, the obsolete civic imagery is reformulated by valuing a social imagery which takes part in an historical urban rhetoric. A triple dimensioning of the historical path of Montpellier is identified: it appears as Mediterranean, revolutionary and global. Finally, in line with the critical urban geography developed, it results in three political effects of the statutory: the first formulates new principles for public-spiritedness and civility through the citadinity; secondly, in a form of paradox, these statues tell a story about the future of the city; last, it shows how a political leader makes space a political one.

ABSTRACTS

This paper deals with the political dimension of the urban public space. It examines the political meaning of a contemporary statutory. The research carried out in Montpellier (France) deals with three public spaces which gather most of the contemporary statues. We explore the emblematic images (or images of images) of universal, real or mythical characters as several arguments in order to overhaul a new political order in and by the urban public space. This order is read in the perspective of an historical assertion of the territorial identity of the city of Montpellier. We use some aspects of the semiotic triad (icon, index, symbol) of Charles Peirce’s theory of signs. First, we consider the new mesh size of the urban public space, which is understood as the expression of a territorial personal foresight, thought by Georges Frêche, former mayor of Montpellier. Then, the obsolete civic imagery is reformulated by valuing a social imagery which takes part in an historical urban rhetoric. A triple dimensioning of the historical path of Montpellier is identified: it appears as Mediterranean, revolutionary and global. Finally, in line with the critical urban geography developed, it results in three political effects of the statutory: the first formulates new principles for public-spiritedness and civility through the citadinity; secondly, in a form of paradox, these statues tell a story about the future of the city; last, it shows how a political leader makes space a political one.
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Mots-clés: Statue, statuary, urban public space, polity, Montpellier

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LAURENT VIALA

Urban Encounters: Art and the Public
Book review of: Martha Radice, Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier (ed.)
Urban encounters: Art and the public.

Léa Sallenave and Hugo Bonin

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The result of a 2013 conference held in Halifax, this collective book brings together scholars, artists and many more to see how “the interactions between art and the public actually play out in the urban social context” (p.3). Crossing boundaries between artistic creations and social science research, focused mainly on Canadian cities, this provocative project will appeal to anyone, both inside and outside of academia, seeking new ways to study the relationships between artists, publics and their spatiotemporal dimensions.

In their introduction, anthropologists and co-editors Martha Radice and Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier underscore the dialogical aspect of public art: most of the performances and artworks at the centre of this book are both transformed by their public dimension but in turn transform their publics. With the exception of the first chapter, this is due to the ephemeral temporality of most of the objects studied: being time-based or time limited, these public artworks and performances are less likely to fall into daily oblivion. Radice and Boudreault-Fournier link this profusion of short-term temporalities to both a potential for experimentation and a lack of financial resources for art. However, seeing how the Creative City (Mould, 2015) thrives on “pop-up” infrastructures, one might see larger processes at play, such as the acceleration of time inherent to neoliberalism.

Distinguishing between three different meanings of “public” (as “spatialized realm, discursive sphere, and addressed audience” (p.8)), the editors also emphasize the diversity of “the public”, now understood as being configured by different social relationships (class, race, gender, ethnicity). This heterogeneity of the public is reflected in the diversity inherent to the urban space – both in terms of people but also of resources, density and mobility. This space is therefore much more unpredictable than the gallery or the studio. Art in public(s) can therefore but rejected or ignored; however, it can also (re)appropriate the streets, squares and interstices of the city, subverting the mainstream uses and
functions of the urban landscape. Between subversion and outright rejection lays the path of institutionalization: using the images of the festival (as a top-down structure) and the carnival (as a bottom-up practice), Radice and Boudreault-Fournier argue that, for public art, “the trick may be to foster works of arts that are [...] multipurpose, rewarding both fleeting and in-depth engagement” (p.13).

Divided in three parts, each brilliantly introduced in a few pages by the editors, the chapters of Urban Encounters deal respectively with events and performances (chapters 1 to 4), urban fabrics (chapters 5 to 8) and plural receptions (chapters 9 to 11). Part 1 is concerned with artistic performances that transform everyday life and conventional visions of urban space. This is done by studying punctual musical events around public statues in Montréal (Vernet), through collective action in the form of pranks and flash-mobs in Toronto (Shawyer), by blurring the patterns of social interaction through dance choreographies (Matthias) or by reworking past and present temporalities in an abandoned Hippodrome with digital tools (Bean and al.), both in Montreal. Part 2 presents attempts to make and remake, both practically and theoretically, the city through public art. These take different forms: for example, a critique of an urban art festival as gentrifying downtown Hamilton (Bain and Rallis), shining a light on interstitial spaces in Winnipeg and Halifax through cinema (Bird and Nagler), monitoring body rhythms in Paris, Halifax, Regina and Saskatoon (Moffat and Morgan) or capturing Vancouver’s back alleys through audio-visual recordings to show their artistic potential (Boudreault-Fournier and Wees). Finally, Part 3 addresses the relationships between artistic offerings and public reception and how to conceive these exchanges: as democratic, antagonistic, or, for the editors, as a form of “gift exchange” (p.216). This can be seen in Christophe Migone’s Door to Door events in which art is brought to the doorstep of the citizens of Mississauga, in the Halifax-based Fieldwork Residency Projects, and their concerns for the engagement of the public on regional and environmental issues (Johnston), or even more clearly in the use of ethnography to interrogate the artists and the few participants in the case of the Situated Cinema in Winnipeg (Radice, Harvey and Turner).

While the aforementioned chapters differ widely in style, length or objects, there is nonetheless a coherence to the whole, mainly because all contributors – some more willingly than others – blur the line between research and creation. The large use of digital techniques and objects by the artists and researchers also highlights the possibilities these tools offer for a better understanding of the spatial and temporal dimensions of the urban landscape. However, it is worth noting that such a “digital turn”, in both the social sciences and the creative arts, is not synonymous with dematerialization and does not free us from paying attention to the politics of the body. For example, the experience of the city for feminized, racialized or disabled bodies is still crucial both for the production and the reception of public art. Whereas Radice and Boudreault-Fournier write that the city is an unequal space and regret the lack of attention to this dimension of urban space (p.9), one wonders what type of public space is built and/or analysed by some of the chapters. A more (self)critical approach to the public sphere might allow researchers-creators to underscore the distinctions between which art can be accessible and inaccessible, depending on the bodies at play.

Nevertheless, Urban Encounters offers a collection of multiple perspectives and experiences on the articulation of art and the city. Often thought-provoking, beautifully illustrated by various photos and stills of the artworks, the book is well in the spirit of the
times. Indeed, by focusing on the cracks and the not-so-visible spaces of the urban fabric, it is part of a larger movement in urban studies that is crossing boundaries, spatial, artistic, and disciplinary.

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