

Antimonuments: Between Memory and Resistance

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Abstract

The essay presents a reflection upon the “antimonuments” phenomena that emerged at the end of the twentieth century as a way of dealing through art with State violence, as in the case of Nazism and the Latin American dictatorships. The text begins with an explanation of the mnemotechnics, that is, the old “art of memory”, that had Simonides of Ceos as its mythic father. It goes on presenting the contemporary “art of memory” under the sign of “antimonuments”. The article proposes to think of a “new art of memory” based on the gesture of anti-monuments. The study shows and discusses the works of, among other artists, Jochen Gerz, Horst Hoheisel, Andreas Knitz, Marcelo Brodsky and Fulvia Molina.

Keywords

Antimonuments; Art of memory; Mnemotechnics; Art and violence.

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There is a vast and interesting history of the theory of memory, which has been re-updated in recent years, owing to the cyber revolution and the construction of the Internet universe. It is as if a new continent had been discovered. But not only technological imperatives determine our new view of the human being and revolutionize its memory. We should point out, in addition, political and historical issues. The 20th century was an era of extremes. If, on one hand, for the first time in many centuries, more than one generation of men arose that did not go to war or pick up a gun, on the other, never have so many lives have been exterminated on such a scale, in the contexts of nationalist character and “ethnic cleansing”, as during this period. In addition, and as a result of these catastrophes, the end of the ideologies and universal interpretations for the “history of humankind” has caused the organization of our self-image to abandon any hope in relation to a “collectivist” utopia and move increasingly to the narrow limits of our body. Classical sociological theory has been replaced by a reflection of anthropological, psychoanalytic and biological bases. More than ever, the universal is seen now as a result of the individual: it is not only a question of the “linguistic turn” in knowledge, but a much deeper crisis that erodes its foundations as a whole and launches us into a field in which the question of memory becomes unavoidable. In this article, based on some assumptions of the tradition of the art of memory, I wish to introduce anti-monuments, as a new mode of dealing with this new role of memory. My proposal is to extract from the anti-monuments a poetics capable of illuminating a new lineage of art.

Antimonuments

The art of memory was described in Antiquity by various masters of rhetoric. The descriptions that we know are those of Cicero, Quintilian and, above all, the unknown author of the treatise *Ad Herennium*. (Müller 1996) Cicero sees memory as one of the five parts of rhetoric (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronuntiatio*) (Yates 1974: 8ss.). The art of memory served both as a technique to memorize long speeches and to develop the speaker's memorization capacity (essential, for example, in a court context, in which the arguments of any opponent should be carefully memorized). In Antiquity, neither the printing of books or paper as we know it today existed; hence the importance of memory for the speaker. In Cicero, it is clear the value assigned to vision in memory technique. The central principle of the ancient mnemotechnics consisted of memorizing the facts through their reduction to certain images that would enable their subsequent translation into words: reality (*res*) and the final discourse (*verba*) would be mediated by the images (*imagines agens*). These images would be stored in the memory in certain places (*loci*) either imaginary or inspired by the architecture of real buildings. The important thing was that the speaker had a mastery of these spaces of memory, so as to be able to run through them in the act of speech, when each image would then be retranslated into a word or an idea. (Yates 1974; Ricoeur 2000: 5-66; Seligmann-Silva 2009) My proposal here is to think to what extent a new lineage of artistic works incorporates and renews this mnemonic tradition. It is about reflecting how, in recent decades, a new art of memory has developed and once again attempts to articulate narratives, images and spaces. Let me begin by thinking about the enormous differences between monuments and anti-monuments.

The term monument comes from the Latin *monere*, meaning to warn, exhort, remember. But since Antiquity, the tradition of building monuments has been associated more with the celebration (of victories of war, for example) than with the idea of warning. It was after World War II, and especially in the context of the memorialization of Auschwitz, that an aesthetic of what became known as anti-monument,

or counter-monument, was developed (Young: 1993; 2000)¹, which somehow fuses the tradition of the monument with that of the funeral commemoration. The heroic sense of the monument is therefore totally modified and shifted to a place of remembrance, in the key of admonition, of the violence and of homage to the dead. Anti-monuments, as they are oriented towards the dead, inject a new view of history into the context of public commemoration and, at the same time, restore very ancient practices of commemoration and cult rituals for the dead.

It can be said that the relation of each people to death is the symbolic core of its culture. If Freud insisted on the relation between death and the birth of culture, one may say with him that the symbolic is structured in a dialogue with the idea of death. In the very etymology of the Greek word *sema*, we can observe the proximity between sign and death: originally this word means “grave” and only later received the meaning of “sign”. While the concept of *mnema*, since its origins, indicates traces or vestiges of a *forgotten* past. That is, memory and the difficulty of reading its traces are archaic ideas within the Greek imagination. On the other hand, *mnema* comes to mean not only the material element of a remembrance, but also the very *dirge*, in order to finally arrive at the notion of *sema* as grave, as occurs, for example, in Euripides. *Sema* means more the place itself, the elevation that indicates the grave, while *mnema* is the quality that makes *sema* a memorial or an object of glory (*kléos*), referring to the overlap in the Greek universe between death, sign, and eternal life. *Mnemosyne*, the Mother of the

¹ I do not intend to explicitly address the issue of difference between anti-monument and counter-monument here. I merely emphasize that Latin American anti-monuments and memorial artscape owe much to counter-monuments that arose in Europe in the context of the Shoah memorialization. In Latin America, this new way of coping with the task of inscribing the violent past, however, took on its own distinctive characteristics, as I shall argue later in this article.

Muses (and therefore of culture) must, accordingly, be regarded in her aspect of a dual face: one focused on the past, another on the future.²

Michele Simondon presented in detail the various meanings of *mnema* in its relation to death, glory, and the beautiful monument (which compensates for the death), and gratitude (*cáris*). She recalls, among other essential points, that for the poet Simonides, poetry and the memory in the spirit of man (*mnastis*) were more enduring than the stone of the grave. This idea is fundamental in the aesthetics-ethics of the anti-monuments. They abandon the rhetoric of “memory written in stone forever” and choose materials and rituals that are more ephemeral, relying precisely on the strength of words and gestures, rather than on the power of the representations of war (generals on their horses, tanks and cannons) or of triumph (triumphal arches, altar of the nation etc.).

The anti-monument develops, therefore, with psychoanalysis, in an era of catastrophes and theorization of trauma. It corresponds to a desire of actively remembering the past (painful), but it also takes into account the difficulties of the “work of mourning”. Moreover, the anti-monument, which normally arises from the desire of remembering limit situations, brings with it a dual commandment: it wants to remember, but knows both that a total memory is impossible in fact and also how painful a memory is. This awareness of the precariousness of a memory is manifested in the precariousness both of the anti-monuments and of the testimonies of these catastrophes. We are talking about works that bring a mixture of memory and forgetfulness, of the work of remembering and resistance. These are bumpy works but with no shame at revealing limits that imply a new art of memory, a new entanglement between words and images in the post-heroic era. Elie Wiesel, referring to his testimonial work about the Nazi concentration camps wrote: “I did not tell something of my past so you may know it, but so you know that you will never know it.”

This impossibility of memory and its resistance was expressed in a lapidary manner in the famous phrase of Adorno, in his essay “Cultural criticism and society”, of 1949: «to write a poem after Auschwitz is a

² See Simondon 1982, *passim*.

barbaric act, and it erodes even the knowledge of why today it has become impossible to write poems»³. We may think both the testimony and the anti-monument as practices of this writing erased *avant la lettre*. This erasure is expressed in many ways and not only in the "bumpy" nature of the symbolic manifestations. We must remember that there is something like a trend to literality in the attempts of inscription of the memory of trauma. Ernst Simmel, author of *Kriegsneurosen und psychisches Trauma* (1918), described the trauma of war with a formula that makes clear the relation between technique, trauma, violence, and the registration of images: «The light of the flash of terror prints/embosses a photographically exact print/copy»⁴. This literality, however, prevents the flow of symbolization. The testimony and the anti-monument seek to break this literality and open up a space for the symbolization.

A new culture of memory

Jochen Gerz is undoubtedly one of the most interesting artists today, when it comes to thinking about the origins of our new culture of memory. His art has dealt for years with the recent history of Europe, and because of the fact that he is German, born in Berlin in 1940, the centrality of the Nazi past in his themes should not cause surprise. Another characteristic that makes this artist a particularly representative example of the current art scene is his relation with literature and philosophy. Gerz not only studied these disciplines, but incorporated texts and often the very gesture of writing in his work. *He writes with texts and images*. Often these are photographic images and the photographic device is also central to the new art of memory, as the photograph is thought, as Gerz himself affirms, as a visual writing

³ «nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frißt auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben» (Adorno 1976: 26).

⁴ «Das Blitzlicht des Schreckens prägt einen photographisch genauen Abdruck» (Assmann 1999: 157; 247)

(Mesnard 2000: 80), a set of strokes left by the light of the “real”, whose presentation – and not representation – guides his work.

In this aspect, his art develops normally in the context of projects that involve discussions with his students and with the community, research, collection of information, in such a manner that often the work “itself” or the final result is the least important. Gerz is a critic, not only of the seemingly eternal temporality of the traditional – auratic – works of art and of the element of solace that the identification with this pseudo-immortality brings, but he is also an opponent of the traditional institution of the museum.

I remember, in this regard, that one of his works, “Exit/Materialien zum Dachau-Projekt” (“Exit/ Materials for the Dachau Project”, 1972), is based on the pictures he shot in museums: these photos are not of works of art, but of boards such as “Exit”, “silence”, “no smoking” etc. Gerz revolts against the museological institution that leads us to respond mechanically to the ritual of cult of the works: in his words, in the museum we are «victims of the past» (Gerz 1995: 34). As opposed to museum exhibitions as embalming, Gerz practices an art that wants to play with the scene of the processes of embalming this past: he aims to re-update these processes of suppression and burial of the past – entombment in a crypt, we would say with psychoanalysts Maria Torok and Nicolas Abraham (1994) – particularly of events that cannot be accommodated in the false continuity of the historical. Hence, both the need to forgo (following the “classic” vanguards) the walls of the traditional, historicist museum and go to the domain of public space, and the disappearance and invisibility being at the center of his poetry. Rather than the romantic paradigm of Pygmalion, that is, of the artist as someone who should give life to his work, Gerz, in playing the scene of disappearance, is not only reaffirming the art as something beyond all illusion, but also making it eminently political.

The politics of memory, in the noblest sense of the expression, can be read, for example, in his famous anti-monument against fascism, made together with Esther Shalev-Gerz in Harburg, Hamburg. This anti-monument was basically an “obelisk”, twelve meters in height, square, one meter each side, covered with lead. Chisels were stuck to the work

and the persons in the audience were invited to write their names or words on it, in a form of collectivization of the artist's work and commitment to the theme. When the surface was completely full of inscriptions, the monument was buried at a depth of two meters and a new blank surface was made accessible for signatures. Finally, in 1993, the last two meters were eventually buried and the anti-monument disappeared. Today, it exists as a column below the ground: the signatures, anti-fascist words, but also Nazi words – even the shots that the work received – everything is buried.

This work is, now, like our pasts: always absent and, in a way, also buried in our memories. The discussion of this work has endured to date, as a potent catalyst for reflections on the mnemonic devices. The surface of lead is particularly interesting in our context: not only because this is the saturnine metal – and Saturn is the planet that governs the melancholic ones, in Freudian terms, those who have incorporated a past that cannot be mourned (Freud 1975a: v. 3) – but also because it performatizes memory as a wax tablet (a key metaphor of writing memory for the ancient mnemotechnics). Gerz became fascinated with the fact that we cannot completely erase inscriptions in lead. We can only make a partial erasure or overwrite on them – like our biological memory hardware.

Thus, there is no possibility of innocent, anonymous erasing. The column functions as a sort of Freudian magic block (*ibid.*: 1975c), defective, without the device for erasure of the strokes on the surface and in which the layers of the palimpsest end up preventing all possibility of inscription and reading, at least in the traditional sense of these activities, that is, in our alphabetical view of writing as a logical succession of phonemes and lexemes. Writing becomes pure stroking and spacing, a hybrid gesture of painting/writing hieroglyphs: like the inscriptions in our own unconscious.

This meta or pre-semantic element of the writing on the “obelisk” also mimics our (im)possibility of giving meaning to the fascist past. This mimesis, however, cannot be reduced, in the work of Gerz, to a reflex movement: rather, in staging the movement of entombing the past, it enables reflection on this process. Instead of a figurability, which

would make the past readable – as occurs, for example, in some works of fiction about the Shoah – Gerz resorts to a superliterality that assaults our habits and our inertia, which leads us to not look at our encapsulated pasts, as we do not look at the huge 19th-century monuments in the centers of our cities (which Freud rightly compared to the symptoms of a hysterical individual). Moreover, Gerz called his work against fascism *Mahnmal* (a word derived from admonition) and not *Denkmal* (monument). While, according to him, the latter term would be associated with a commemoration of a positive past, *Mahnmal* refers to a heavy, negative inheritance (Gerz 1995: 147s.), just as his works and the contemporary art of memory negate our culture of amnesia and are games in which it is possible to turn inside out the *Unheimlich* (uncanny), revealing its other side, its other aspect, the familiar (our past) that is within us and is strange to us⁵.

Another work of Gerz can be put next to the anti-monument, his work entitled «2146 Steine, Mahnmal gegen Rassismus» (“2146 Stones, Memorial against Racism”), of 1993, made in Saarbrücken. The work resulted from working with the students of the city's School of Arts and began in an unusual manner: as a nightly activity, in which they removed the paving stones next to the castle where the State Parliament is currently located (a former headquarter of Gestapo). The stones were replaced in the dead of night by other similar stones. After writing the name of one of the 2146 Jewish cemeteries of Germany under every stone, it was returned to its place. One of the curious points in this project is that it involved the survey – unheard of – of all the Jewish cemeteries of Germany, the registration carried out by consulting all local Jewish organizations in the country; not to mention, of course, the very idea of conducting a work that again “unworks” our process of burying the past. The anti-monument exists only because of the discussions about it that occurred and still occur – as our “disappeared”

⁵ Mesnard 2000: 89: «Observe his words: "I am not on the side of the builders of monuments and manufacturers of icons. It is almost an insult to tell me I make monuments. I do *everything* that can be done to prevent that from being made. They are all devices, except for this».

past also only exists in the present. As Gerz stated in an interview: «Memory cannot be anywhere outside of us. The work deals with just that» (Gerz 1995: 157). In addition, he remarks when speaking of this work that *Steinpflaster*, paving stone, has a double meaning in German: *Pflaster* means both “pavement” and “dressing”, *Wundpflaster*, wound dressing: this word (wound) refers precisely to the Greek etymology of the word “trauma”. The work reopens the scar of the past, but also the possibility of its approach and release from the crypt that condemned it to live in the enchanted and prohibited area of taboo and, from this place where memory was, dictated our mechanical reactions, our *Agieren* (acting out), as Freud saw it.

In our context, we might recall two other works of Gerz: his “The Bremen Questionnaire 1995” and the “Monument vivant” of Biron, in 1996. In both works, a questionnaire again intervened: in Bremen, Gerz proposed to its approximately 50,000 inhabitants three questions: «What is so important to you that you want to see it carried out in the public space?», «Do you think that it can be carried out by means of contemporary art?», and: «Would you want to be personally involved in performing this work?» (Mesnard 2000: 84). The result of this questionnaire and the discussion that ensued was not the construction of any of the desired works: Gerz wrote the names of all the authors of the work – in fact, of the discussion – on a sign that was put in a “space” that he created on a bridge of Bremen. By looking at this work each one could remember their project.

In Biron, a small French town marked by the two world wars, Gerz was commissioned to create a work to replace the city's old Obelisk for the dead, which was broken. Instead of replacing it, the artist again used a questionnaire to involve the entire population, in which he asked what would be so important to the inhabitants of Biron that would be worth risking their own lives. The answers were subsequently recorded in a fragmentary and anonymous manner (in a space equivalent to seven lines for each) in small signs that were affixed to the obelisk and to its pedestal. The idea was that this “monument” would continue in perpetual becoming. Gerz integrated not only the old monument in the city, but the process of remembering itself. «We only remember that

which we forgot» (Gerz 1996: 9), says the artist. In his works, this art of memory gives continuity to the ancient mnemotechnics by intertwining the cult of the dead, the verbal and visual writing, and the procedure of making “lists” of names. «In the end, all that remains are lists, listings» (*ibid.*: 154), he also said.

I would also like to address the art of memory of other contemporary artists such as Naomi Tereza Salmon, Christian Boltanski, Cindy Sherman, Horst Hoheisel, Andreas Knitz, Rosângela Rennó, Marcelo Brodsky, Micha Ullman, Anselm Kiefer, and Daniel Libeskind. In a postcolonial approach, we cannot forget the new art of artists like Kader Attia, Zanele Muholi and Nandipha Mntambo. (McClusky & Massaquoi 2015; Von Osten 2018; Fucks 2015) Each of them developed a particular poetics, in which memory has a role of an agglutinating nexus, and the arts live up to the fact that they are daughters of Mnemosyne. In the works of these authors – which I cannot address here for reasons of space – some of the main characteristics of the contemporary art of memory emerge.

If it were to summarize what is common to the works of all these artists, I would say: the testimonial content. All of these artists produce from what we can think of as an era marked by the testimonial turn. They create from their experiences, their place, their bodies, bidding farewell to the universalizing modalities of art. They also put an end to traditional narrative modes. They enact both forgetfulness and attempts at critical recollection. We observe, for example, the procedure of literalization of the past and of its process of transformation into crypt/archive/palimpsest/ “geological” layers (see “Asservate Exhibits” of Salmon and the work of Hoheisel and A. Knitz “Zermahlene Geschichte” in Weimar, the Aschrottbrunnen [1987] and the “Denk-Stein-Sammlung” [1988-1995] of Hoheisel in Kassel and the works of Kiefer with lead and straw), the use of photography as a medium of expression (in Gerz, Salmon, Rosângela Rennó, Boltanski, Sherman, Brodsky, Attia, Muholi, Mntambo), a poetics that is much closer to the tradition of the sublime and abject than to the beautiful (especially in Sherman, who also employs the procedure of making images shocking and gives attributes to characters, as in traditional painting that

inherited the ancient art of memory), the use of words and collages (as in the work of N. Ramos "111", in "The Missing House" of Boltanski [1989], and in the works of Kiefer, which hold a dialogue with the poetry of Paul Celan).

Antimonuments in Latin America

The exhibitions that took place in São Paulo in the second half of 2003, of artists Horst Hoheisel, Andreas Knitz (both from Kassel), Marcelo Brodsky (from Buenos Aires), and Fulvia Molina (from São Paulo) make clear to what extent a new art of memory is consolidated in the international scene. In the two exhibitions, "Free Bird/Vogelfrei" (presented in the Octagon of the Pinacoteca from São Paulo) and "MemoriAntonia" (exhibited at Universidade de São Paulo's Maria Antonia Cultural Center), metamorphoses of time and of catastrophic stories of a recent past transform into images that ask to be read and transformed into voices that want to be heard. In the two exhibitions, the artists also managed to establish communicating channels between temporalities and spaces that a traditional historiographic treatment could achieve only with great difficulty.

Let's observe, first, the installation of the Octagon. In the center of this panoptic space, Horst Hoheisel and Andréas Knitz built on a 1:1 scale a copy of the Tiradentes Prison portal (which remains preserved, next to the Pinacoteca, as the only reminder of that building that was demolished in 1973). The portal, however, was not built in stone, but rather in the form of a cage. The ruins of the prison house are cited by the artists and morphed into prison. The portal, the place of passage, through which many prisoners entered and eventually left, was turned into an allegory to represent the entire building, *pars pro toto*. During the exhibition, this portal-prison served as a shelter for twelve pigeons that, once the show started, were gradually released every weekend.

Vogelfrei is an ambiguous title and impossible to be translated, to be shifted from one language to another, to be moved from one cultural location to another. In German, in fact we have the terms "free bird" embedded in the word (Vogel-frei) and, at the exhibition, we could

watch concretely the release of birds. But in German the term means, first of all, “proscribed”: someone who was decreed “vogelfrei”, who had a price put on his/her head, one considered an outlaw. The Tiradentes’ Prison House, which the artists decided to rescue from oblivion, was an “invisible” ruin on Tiradentes Avenue. Few recognized its history: during the dire years of the military dictatorship, it housed hundreds of political prisoners, people who were transformed overnight into “outlaws”, because a government “of exception” had been installed and given itself the right to brutally persecute its enemies.

The work in question (which like Duchamp's art consists of a set of images in tension with its title-slogan) reminds us that the law depends essentially on its relation to penitentiary institutions. The law has as the entrance of the prison as one of its doors, because it is subject to the possibility of the State of exception. The State of exception is precisely a legal creation that, paradoxically, allows the established political power to suspend *in toto* the Law of the laws, that is, the very Constitution of a country. Thus, the so-called “sovereign power” is an authority itself also inside and, at the same time, outside the law, and therefore cannot be incarcerated, but rather can create laws, incarcerate and sacrifice the other, deciding not only what the order is in extreme cases of emergency, but also the actions that should be taken to overcome the political situation established. The figure of the law that bans, proscribes, has never been as re-updated as throughout the history of the 20th century. This portal in form of a prison reminds us, not by chance, of another outcast who was born from the pen of one of the writers who best understood this political truth of the legal institution: I am referring to Kafka, author of the novel *The Trial* and of the short narrative “Vor dem Gesetz”, “Before the Law”.

This narrative, of only two pages, gathers all the law has that is mysteriously perverse: it tells the story of a country man that wants to “enter the law”. But it turns out that “before the law is a doorman”. The man spends his whole life trying to enter but the doorman does not grant him passage. In the end, when the now dying man asks why, in all those years of waiting, no one else appeared to enter the law, the doorman answers: “Nobody else could receive permission to enter here, because

this entrance was intended only for you. Now I am going to leave and close it”.

The law already brings with itself the capacity for generating the “exception”; it cannot rely on examples, facts, or people, and this autonomy is the guarantee of its capacity to proscribe, to banish. In the extreme case of the Brazilian dictatorship – when we even had “secret decrees” – the Tiradentes Prison House represented symbolically the barbarism established by power. The building had been erected in 1850 to serve as a slave depot. Little more than a century later, it served as a prison for victims of political persecution, as well as to practice torture on common prisoners, as we read in reports of political prisoners that stayed there⁶. The political prisons of that period were divided between the institutions of interrogation (OBAN, DOI/CODI, CENIMAR, DEOPS etc.) and those of incarceration, as in the case of the Tiradentes Prison (Gorender 1987: 220). Over 400 political prisoners lived there in the worst prison conditions imaginable (or unimaginable), entitled only to the “sun bath” of 2 hours per week, in overcrowded, filthy, damp cells, locked up the whole time.

Alípio Freire, who remained imprisoned there, as he was persecuted by the military dictatorship, released the first of the pigeons of the Octagon cage. Thinking of this act as literalizing the term *Vogelfrei*, free-bird/proscription, shifts it to a field far from the apparent stereotypical gesture of peace. On this day, also, Alípio took those present there on a journey into the murky past of persecution and “disappearances”: on the walls of the Octagon they attached small mug shots of the faces of many of the victims of political persecution who were incarcerated there. Alípio recalled the names and some characteristic moments of the history of those fighters. In this act of memory, the “transparency” of the Tiradentes Avenue portal stone (that is, the invisibility of this monument) became opaque. History once again

⁶ See the fundamental text of Jacob Gorender (1987: 215-225) and the well-documented volume of Alípio Freire, Izaias Almada, and J. A. de Granville Ponce, 1997.

gained density and weight. This work of Horst Hoheisel and Andreas Knitz makes us open our eyes to a past that we resist looking at.

The works of these same artists, alongside those of photographer and artist Marcelo Brodsky and artist Fulvia Molina, exhibited at the Maria Antonia Cultural Center, developed this poetics – ethics – of the memory. In the room with the works of Horst Hoheisel, one could see two desks with lamps and two office chairs. Between them, there was a screen and a banner. On the first desk, the lamps were facing the wall, forming two circles focusing on two books of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, each one perforated by a bullet. On a monitor, one saw the scene of the "execution" of the books. A magnifying glass over the hole in one of the books enabled one to read the word *sehen*, "see". On the other desk, a book also perforated by a bullet was in the open drawer: Norbert Haase, *Das Reichskriegsgericht und der Widerstand gegen die Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft* (The superior martial court and the resistance against the Nazi dominance, 1993) and a sheet of paper that contained the phrase "Deutscher Wiederstad", "German resistance".⁷

Both works depict the violence against books, in an explicit reference to the context of the exhibition, to the building of the Maria Antonia street, with the memory of the resistance struggles against the Brazilian military dictatorship, as well as the Nazi persecution against intellectuals and the book burnings. The shift to German culture and its historical and cultural references generate both bewilderment and resistance, by exposing books pierced by bullets. In addition, it triggers a dialogue between different memories of barbarism. On the screen between the desks, there was the projection of a computer-manipulated scene of the central area of Berlin, with the Brandenburg Gate, which gradually disappeared. This is a media implementation of the proposal that Horst Hoheisel had made during the contest in 1993/94 for a memorial to remember the murder of European Jews in the Holocaust and that was built next to the Brandenburg Gate. As we read on the banner, Hoheisel proposed the explosion of the gate (symbol of the

⁷ This work of Hoheisel is at the *Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand* in Berlin and was lent for this exhibition.

German national unity: another portal of law, therefore, representing the constitution of the nation) followed by the dispersion of the dust on the ground planned for the memorial. Hoheisel proposed, in fact, an anti-monument: an action that would literalize the murders and the disappearance of the Jewish corpses in the crematoria.

In the room with the works of Marcelo Brodsky, we could see a photographic and video documentation of his intervention the "Column with the torchbearer" on the edge of the Maschsee, in Hannover. Brodsky, on one occasion, when he had finished preparing his famous exhibition "Buena Memoria", at the Sprengel Museum in Hannover, realized that only 50 meters from the museum there was a column known as the "Fackelträger am Maschsee" (Torchbearer in the Masch lake) by the sculptor Hermann Scheuernstuhl (who, as the better known artist Arno Breker, worked during the Nazi regime). On a column 15 meters high, a young athlete holds a torch in his left hand and his right hand makes a gesture that resembles a Nazi salute. The work was made in 1936, as a landmark to celebrate the Olympics in Berlin of the same year. Brodsky decided to perform an intervention on the fascist monument that he called "Images against ignorance": that is, against the indifference of Hannover's population concerning that historical landmark and in favor of not forgetting its significance.

In this intervention, the poetics of the anti-monument is also explicit. As the artist Christo showed in his works, an effective strategy to open our eyes to a past that is "entombed" in huge "invisible monuments" is precisely to cover them up again. Marcelo covered the Third Reich Eagle at the base of the column with a Venetian blind. When closed, this blind alluded to the work "Black square against white background" of Kasimir Malevitch, which is in the Sprengel Museum. On its base, we could read: "*Nie wieder*, nevermore. "On the other two sides of the column he affixed two huge banners with photographs he shot of two memorial plates: one of them in Berlin, with the sentence "*Orte des Schreckens, die wir niemals vergessen dürfen*" ("Terror sites which we shall never forget") followed by the list of Nazi extermination and concentration camps. Memory is treated here as a law: "Do not forget".

The other plate is identical in shape and is in Buenos Aires, displaying the words: "*Lugares de Memoria que no debemos olvidar jamás,*" followed by the list of the Argentinian camps where political prisoners were tortured, imprisoned, or "disappeared". Marcelo's work of memory – supported by the Sprengel Museum and by the city – was so effective that it not only raised debate on this and other German Nazi-era monuments, but also aroused the destructive urge of those who wish to cultivate the positive memory of that past. Thus, Brodsky's installation was attacked twice over the period of the two and a half months it was mounted. According to the police, the possible participation of neo-Nazis in the attacks "should not be ruled out."

Additionally, in the same room with the works of Marcelo Brodsky, one could see photographic works from another of his exhibitions, the "Buena memoria", which was represented by photographs of his colleagues at the Colégio Nacional de Buenos Aires. These photos feature young people from Marcelo's class, some of whom would later be victims of the policy of "disappearance" perpetrated by the dictatorship, as had occurred with Brodsky's own brother. It turns out that the photos displayed are actually photographs of photographs: over those in black and white, of the 1970s, we see reflected on the protective glass, faces in color of young Argentinians who, in the 1990s, contemplated the document-pictures and which mixed with the faces of the past. Again, Marcelo works not only with the photographic and mnemonic device of copy and repetition, of inscription of the past in layers on the photographic paper, but also with the topographic phenomenon of "telescoping": the overlap of different temporalities in the same space.

As memory only exists in the present, the artist works with the multiplicity of times and generations involved in his work. From Brodsky's exhibition, *Nexo*⁸, we also saw the photographs of books that

⁸ See the two Marcelo Brodsky catalogs (1997 and 2001) in which the reader can learn about his many productions, including his works around the ruins of the AMIA (the Asociación Mutua Israelita Argentina at Pasteur Street in Buenos Aires, which suffered a terrorist attack on July 18, 1994, leaving 84

had been buried during the Argentinian dictatorship in the house of Nélide Valdez and Oscar Elissamburu, in Mar del Plata. These unearthed works appear on the ground and worn by moisture. Among them, the book *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Franz Fanon, reminds other places of memory, of the anticolonial struggles, but also, with its name, leads us to think about these books that were condemned to remain underground, in an imposed oblivion. These books remained in a tomb, while internment was denied to more than 30,000 people who disappeared during Argentina's military dictatorship.

The largest room of the exhibition held the memory of the Maria Antônia building of the School of Philosophy of the University of São Paulo concerning the time of the resistance against the dictatorship. Parts of the annex building that served for many years – after the School was transferred to the Butantã Campus – as the administration of São Paulo's prison system: windows, a latrine with lid and a thick layer of dust, excrement, and pigeon feathers, photographs by Marcelo Brodsky of the same debris while still in the annex building, before being “saved” by the artists Horst Hoheisel and Andreas Knitz.

These aforementioned fragments lead visitors to a field of ruins, where those pieces demanded a meaning impossible to be assigned to them. The operation carried out in that room was precisely the recovery of an “amputated” past, legacy of the dictatorship in the form of a torso. The artists decided to revive it, assemble its pieces: give a face and a voice to a traumatic past, difficult to represent, but that calls for a space and requests a dialogue.

Fulvia Molina built human-sized cylinders with the photos of the students killed during the struggles of 1968. She also conducted a series of interviews with participants of the student movement of the 1960s (she herself was part of the movement). In her research, she found a list with more than 300 signatures of participants of an assembly of 1966. This document was also exhibited in a horizontal window and

dead), as well as his involvement in the construction of the “Parque de la Memoria” in Buenos Aires.

reproduced and overlapped with the photos of the cylinders: building memory hieroglyphs, using a mix of image and text. Next to the cylinders, a series of videos presented the interviews of the struggles against the dictatorship and, within walking distance of the monitors, a headset enabled visitors to listen to each of the interviews. When a visitor entered the empty room, it was totally dark, with only a monitor at the back, showing life, the work of renovation of the annex building. As the visitor moved along the windows – which also contained journalistic material on the history of the crackdown against students of Maria Antônia – the lights gradually turned on and illuminated only the spot closest to the visitor: a true metaphor of the work of archaeology of memory, as always, based on the location and ground of the present.

As we may learn from Walter Benjamin's theory of memory, our relationship to the past can be compared with a work of collecting the wreckage of history (which according to him would be only one catastrophe), the ruins, partly buried, that keep hold of the forgotten. The one who recalls is shocked by the secret that the forgotten kept. "It may be that what makes the forgotten so weighty and so pregnant" – Benjamin affirmed in his book *Berlin Childhood around 1900* – «is nothing but the trace of misplaced habits in which we could no longer find ourselves. Perhaps the mingling of the forgotten with the dust of our vanished dwellings is the secret of its survival» (Benjamin 2006: 140). These new artists of memory that we follow today can and, I believe, must be thought about from a new mnemonic and cultural landscape that has come to value this memory of trauma. From the poetry of anti-monuments we can open a way to better illuminate this new art of memory. The testimonial element of this art reinvents the political content of the arts. They become part of life, breaking with museum walls and white cubes that were too white.

The works of the artists I have discussed here lead us along the paths of the archaeology of memory in whose landscapes we recognize, mixed – sometimes clearer, at other times less so – images that astound us as they cry out for justice. It is our responsibility to know how to continue this work of exposing openly what neglect and injustice managed to conceal and make "invisible".

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