The Photographic
Representation
of Empty Places

Watching,
Waiting

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Ana Šverko (Eds)

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Introduction
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Sandra Križić Roban and Ana Šverko

The oldest photograph in the world was taken in 1826–1827, and it depicts the view from Joseph Nicéphore Niépce's window. Small and blurry, it was created using an exposure time of about eight hours, most likely more. This was the time required for the plate, which was coated in bitumen from Judea known as 'Syrian asphalt', to capture a scene that is fairly difficult to make out. The slope of a neighbouring roof, the prismatic structures of the built environment, and the 'vanishing point' at the centre of the scene are the fundamental features of an image that evokes a feeling of emptiness, isolation, and a desire to capture what the eye sees and what technology had not yet been able to transfer to a stable surface. In contrast to previous experiments that took place within darkened indoor spaces, Nicéphore Niépce's view is of an outdoor space, the surrounds of Saint-Loup-de-Varennes, where his family estate was located. Some ten years later, Louis Daguerre took a photograph of the Boulevard du Temple in Paris, the first photograph to capture human figures. They are almost imperceptible, situated in the left corner (or right, depending on whether we are using the mirrored or unmirrored print as a reference), while the remainder of the image depicts the curve of the street. It gradually disappears amid the houses, which at the time still varied in height and form. The avenue of trees is still young, but its shadows are already actively contributing to the formation of a fluctuating pattern on the pavement. There are no onlookers gazing out from the windows, which helps create an atmosphere that seems distant and unreal, as though all action is entirely given over to the bootblack, whose small stand marks the end of the avenue of trees, and to his customer. This photograph was likewise taken through a window, from a heightened position. The view stretches out from this point, going beyond the range of buildings into an imaginary space whose distinctive characteristics, dating back almost two centuries, are no longer recognisable today. We owe the geometry of this space to the lenses that constructed the perspective, while a long exposure freed the scene from passers-by.

Why are we mentioning these two photographs? Primarily because of the extraordinary events that we have witnessed these past few years while forced to isolate from the rest of the world. To a certain extent we have changed the perspective of our gaze, which we previously did not think about so much, frequently unaware of the extent to which the gaze, as with so many things that form part of our existence, is in fact subject to change.

A la porte de ma maison qui viendra frapper?
Une porte ouverte on entre
Une porte fermée un antre
Le monde bat de l'autre côté de ma porte.
Pierre Albert-Birot[2]

In the aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic, the subject of 'empty places' has gained renewed topicality and resonance. Locked in and forced to transform our private spaces into working ones, into rooms that are at once playrooms and bedrooms, resigned to cameras built into computers and smartphones that transmit our 'scattered' images all over the world, and even to the gaze of people that for the most part are strangers to us, we began thinking intensively about the places that we view through windows. We began recording them and sharing them with others: people with whom we did not share memories of these places of 'ours', our 'safe havens'. Social media was thus flooded with views through other people's windows, which we commented on, expressing the hope that we would overcome the effects of the pandemic. Bachelard says that 'imagination augments the values of reality',[3] but judging by the state of the world that we have so recently shared, one is left with the impression that we have subjected our own reality and its foundations to questioning and investigation. We have gone further into our memories, into what we remember, which in the end has allowed us to interpret reality in relation to the knowledge we have acquired, to the distance that we were forced to accept and absence as a (rediscovered) state, which we frequently commented on. The relation between the 'full' and 'empty' world outside our four walls has sharpened our understanding of the meaning and reason for emptiness in space and in doing so has positioned photography as the leading medium for communicating these phenomena.

Our recent experiences of the pandemic and the fact that certain theses about universal human behaviour were brought under scrutiny has forced us to confront the differences that highlighted the divisions in the world.

As we have discovered, a universal image of suspended time did not exist, although the media frequently insisted on the existence of a universalising factor. The differences in experience were enormous, although information outside of the Western paradigm was rarely taken into account. The fascination with slow, contemplative images taken by the drones that hovered among the buildings of the world's metropolises stands in contrast with those that could be seen in neglected areas, where the epidemiological tragedy was not reflected in pictures that might suggest the existence of global unity. It was as though the differences in knowledge about the virus, and the way that information about it was accepted, were transferred to other spheres as well, including that of photography. This can be seen even from a cursory comparison of the photographs showing the mass graves in Brazil, which is the focus of Isabelle Catucci's essay in this volume, in the European and Northern American contexts, which are the focus of the majority of the remaining papers. This part of the world remained, to a great extent, focused on its own problems, while in the rest of the world, information about the experience of the deaths was not shared with the same intensity. Global relations therefore spilled into everyday life in a selective manner, and we were frequently unaware that the position we expressed using the pronoun 'we' was in fact related to a limited territory that is structured by 'our' world. However, it is indisputable that life changed on a global level, and we will develop a deeper understanding of this change in the period that is still to come, through the influence of change. The perception of change, and the change in perception, offered us the opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary research into the transformation of space through the medium of photography. We were able to delve deeply into this theme because we connected the phenomena of emptiness and isolation with photographic representations of empty space at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This publication follows on from a range of presentations that were given at the conference *Watching, Waiting – Empty Spaces and the Representation of Isolation* (Split, November 2020).[4] The contributors approach the specific interrelationships of photography and place through emptiness by considering historical and contemporary materials in equal measure. This publication offers a selection of texts that take as their starting point the following question: What can photography, with its unique approach, offer in a time of crisis and change, keeping in mind that the world we experienced during the pandemic will cease to exist in the form that inspired the topic of the conference in 2020? We therefore focused on the phenomenon of

emptiness that surrounded us, which we frequently encountered in photographs from earlier periods. This focus led to further interdisciplinary studies, bringing together an interdisciplinary group of researchers who demonstrated what the camera is telling us when it captures emptiness in a contemporary context, or how we discuss it in historical images from a contemporary perspective, to which time adds further meaning. This is because since its invention, the camera has not only recorded beings and things but also drawn attention to the various layers of emptiness. In the history of photography, such scenes were by no means rare, and they depicted places marked by an isolation that was the result of various factors. They were frequently accompanied by a general feeling of immobility. We note them in photographs of landscapes that resemble simple sculptural forms; these are depictions of stable formations that symbolise a time gone by as well as the course of history. Observing landscapes is simultaneously a process of introspection, of looking within, at that which we know and that which we have forgotten. In addition, emptiness speaks of individual and collective traumas, communicating the experiences of a of a historiographically and anthropologically relevant cultural excavation. These kinds of 'landscapes' were created through aerial photographs of the digging of mass graves. As a result of researchers' interest in the scenes of alienation and loneliness caused by the pandemic, images relating to this recent global trauma will be preserved.

Historical photography is positioned in relation to the contemporary, and scenes of emptiness are frequently related to the artistic vision of the photographer. In the second half of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, photographers drew attention to physical and mental boundaries through images, discussing the ownership of space and drawing attention to the processes of shaping landscapes whose original appearances are lost to us. In the second half of the twentieth century, for instance, anonymity and a specific level of information, mediated by a time dominated by New Topographics, have activated a different way of looking and a different relationship with space, a new kind of objectivity and responsibility in what are, at first glance, alienated and unsentimental scenes. Contemporary photography frequently positions emptiness within urban spaces, mediating the literal factuality of the place. While we understand cities as busy and dynamic places, contemporary photographers frequently transform them into participants of a kind, even 'actors' that express their nature based on some other relations between people and place. This mutual experience

between photographers and cities can be read through spacing and emptiness, as well as a distance that reflects the political decisions that shape public space. In some of the papers in this volume, we are confronted with contemporary flâneurism, with behaviour as an artistic or political statement. Walking, and the experience of observing and photographing, sometimes emerges from remote-controlled cameras and non-chronological time, as an expression of a new social proceduralism. Performative events are also evidence of these seemingly mute details, which, to a certain extent, had an impact on a new perception of togetherness in space, at least in those kinds of public events discussed by the authors in this volume. Their observations are in keeping with Deleuze's understanding of urban space as a dynamic processual framework that is not fixed but is rather structured by social formations – so-called 'assemblages' in the process of formation, whose key social role is artistic production.[5]

The tone of the presentations at the conference was influenced by a certain distance from the initial experience of shock that marked the early days of the pandemic. This allowed the authors, after beginning with their discussions of empty streets and mass graves, not to focus on what the photographs depict but to draw attention to the transformation of the global urban landscape. They do this using indicators of emptiness that recognise the situation was more complex than it was considered to be at the time, which herald a new view of architectural and landscape photography. The lens is frequently trained at something 'up there', or comes to us from a distant, raised zone – 'A secret perspective is, in fact, hidden *on high*', writes Paul Virilio.[6] From this zone, the gaze is directed, via remote control, to nature, which, according to Virilio, 'abhors a vacuum', because without weight and measure, nature no longer exists, or rather, even the idea of nature no longer exists. We have mastered the transmission of images at a distance, and in doing so, we have become aware of 'presence at a distance' at a time of proclaimed distance and 'a growing inertia', according to Virilio.[7] It was as though we were forced to move in one spot, handicapped not just because of our advanced technology but also because of the temporary loss of the possibility of intervention.

For a brief period, the virus defined a new urban landscape, confronting us with the theatrical immobility of the world. This extreme encouraged us to ask ourselves whether the emptiness of space is in fact a kind of dying of space or whether it points to a lack of emotional connection with time and place. Throughout history, emptiness has also symbolised certain states,

such as powerlessness and surrender. Judging by the materials selected, however, particular photographs remind us of the power of perspective, the dramatic composition of a scene and the vanishing point; they draw attention to the construction of a scene – staged or unstaged, manufactured or real. The examples that have been selected vary in terms of scale, aesthetic strategies, and techniques, and they invite us to position ourselves in relation to emptiness and how it is understood. The act of photographing is a kind of coding that conveys the geometry of a scene to a viewer. David Bate notes that no matter what kind of space is being discussed, this geometry is related to 'the viewer's different imaginings of space'.[8] An observed scene absorbs every viewer in a unique way, but global isolation determined what was shared in the powerful perception of empty space in photographs, irrespective of individual intellectual and cultural backgrounds.

The texts collected here bring emptiness into the discussion as an object of study that is not determined simply by the present historic moment. At times, the texts merely hint at this, showing how a seemingly empty space functions as a code that is subject to the interpretations of researchers from various fields and with various interests, and the fragility of the memory and identity of a space as the key factors that turn a space into a place.[9] Drawing on architecture, anthropology, sociology, and public health, among other fields, they provide insights into geographically and temporally diverse production models of empty places and their corresponding complex and sensitive global and local relations, while also tackling the ethics of behaviour and the protests that unfold within them. We will encounter a discussion of the idea of emptiness that emerged out of divided political relationships at a particular point in time, which are brought into relation with personal memories. On the other hand, the idea of emptiness in architectural space draws attention to a global social and economic situation and a power that is at times self-generating and at other times emanated by the work of the architect. The influence of new technologies on aesthetics should also be noted, particularly the aforementioned remote-controlled drone images, which demand a change in the standard manner of looking. Studies of emptiness are related to the impossibility of movement, to being in indoor spaces, to a different understanding of interior spaces whose empty hallways do not echo the health of a particular nation but rather – or in addition – complex mechanisms of control.

The positions from which the authors in this book speak about or through photography are also different. This collection of papers begins and

ends with contributions from artists. The first, by Kayla Parker and Stuart Moore, is a description of a film that they made, and it is illustrated with select, almost immobile scenes, which depict a 'modern ruin', an abandoned space in the UN Buffer Zone on Cyprus, with a focus on Nicosia, the last divided capital in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This collection ends, meanwhile, with a visual essay by Luca Nostri, who was invited to take photographs by an Italian governmental institution, with the aim of creating unique documentation of the pandemic. He asked himself what it means to be a photographer in a world that was transforming itself before his very eyes, without knowing what the future held for him or for the collective. In doing so, he took photographs that were meditative and therapeutic, addressing nature with his slower approach to photography. Between these two essays, a range of authors discuss the idea of emptiness as inspired by photography that includes the artistic and the vernacular, the conceptual and the documentary; architectural, landscape, street, and event photography; and historical and contemporary photography. The authors in this volume approach the topic primarily through research into the visual, the social, and the historical; as a result, the role of photography in this range of discussions is not consistent, but rather interdisciplinary, focused on the topic of emptiness, at times as the central theme, at others as a research tool. But emptiness nevertheless remains essential.

There is another connection between the first and final essays – the presence of a temporality that manifests itself as a subtle movement. The symbolic role of moving images has recently been marked by the need for action in a period of immobility: the result of standing 'in one place' or forced separation, which are threads that carry through to the other essays in this collection. Moving images draw attention to the autobiographical role in the photographic process, as well as to the organic process of growing up. In Parker and Moore's discussion, moving images are recognised as a strategy that primarily emerges from the static and from recording words in a particular place with the help of a camera, following on from the practices introduced in the 1970s by the French experimental film-maker and photographer Babette Mangolte (whom the authors reference in their essay). This is a hybrid format that draws attention to the continuous, homogenous space of the past and memory. Their images are a compromised memory that opens up a wider discursive space for viewers. In contrast to film, particularly in the context of what Deleuze refers to as 'the brain [as] a screen',[10] Parker and Moore do not create a piece that is based on the speeding up of

thinking through a fascination with the image, but rather the opposite – they present a slow event as an 'image of thinking'. Space opens up in a similar manner in Luca Nostri's visual essay. Nostri's photographs do not document the everyday life of a temporarily empty space, but rather focus on seemingly simple spatial structures through which the gaze passes and in which parts of human existence lie. In this case, as with Parker and Moore's moving images, our viewing is subject to the time the photographs were taken and is spurred by movement as a prerequisite for narration. In Nostri's dialogue through a monologue, we are intrigued by emptiness, which we recognise as our globally recent history, and which we had all but become unused to. If we ask ourselves what kind of photography their works can be categorised as – should they be considered among the photographers who believe in reality and the creation of a phenomenological art of presence or among those that focus on absence (which can, but does not need to be, Lacanian), in the words of Alain Bergala? – we can conclude that we are dealing with this second type, precisely as a resistance to alienation.[11]

The book therefore begins with Parker and Moore's text. In their film *Father-land* (2018), they use static framing to depict the state of the Buffer Zone in Nicosia, the place where they spent their childhood. Various items contribute to the development of a non-narrational sequence, which the artists use to draw attention to their own position as film-makers and make it is possible to achieve using long, static shots. The controlled conditions under which this recollection was created are a result of the emptiness of the space created by postcolonial politics. Cranes are the measures by which it is possible to determine the distance of the erased space formed along the edges of the artists' existence; the edge of a zone whose languages are unfamiliar to them, although they share sound and air with it. In discussing Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Jean-François Chevrier proposes the formation of a kind of fiction, which would be about the 'calling of the photographer as much as the calling of the writer'.[12] According to him, thanks to Proust, photographers might be encouraged to 'achieve a kind of higher awareness of their art, which is in keeping with its uncertainty and fragility', which is precisely the case in Kayla Parker and Stuart Moore's film. In their film, there is no mechanical connection of a character with the footage, but rather the recollections of these two artists function through language. Their visual essay develops on two parallel levels, which, in keeping with Chevrier's 'seven acts that define the photographic imaginary', replace the genesis of the movements of childhood with the filmic scene (with

memories that are fixed in time and space), while in their use of language (as a kind of dialogic form), they talk about 'true footage'.[13]

The papers by Bec Rengel and Anna Schober continue this research into the political dimension of photographic presentation, and they are connected by the performance of emptiness. The examples they discuss are determined by the way bodies are positioned in a space. Emptiness and the manner in which people react to it are defined by the political context, the (colonial) past, and the isolation that is a product of the present. While some of the papers in this collection discuss the past along with photographic representations of silence and contemplation, the discussion in these two papers focuses on the feeling of immobility in a time of forced lagging that is the result of a range of social conditions. The visual content contains only some of the information, while the urban context is recognised as a place of isolation and alienation, and the positions of the 'performers'' bodies participates in the creation of emptiness. Emptiness does not 'happen to other people' or somewhere in the periphery, but rather is coordinated by conditions that are not subject to the logic of the space. Urban space, as discussed by Rengel and Schober, is a kind of scenography for human be-haviour, which is significantly different from the human behaviour we have become used to or which we have inherited.

The emptiness of the public space that is the focus of Bec Rengel's re-search is a result of the destruction of history, recorded in documentary photographs. These images are more than just data about an event: they document the approaches that address social inequality. The toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, which in a changed political environ-ment and following the Black Lives Matter protests was considered an unac-ceptable marker of public space, allowed for a range of public performances. These performances do not correct a historical narrative, but rather place systemic and institutionalised racism at the heart of the problem, while the protest photographs that depict these events bring together a marginalised community, transforming them into active participants – who, via social media, occupy the new empty space by sharing visual information about the deconstruction of the meaning of public space. In addition to oppos-ing the manipulation of information generated by the official media, the photographers – from their own personal position, which is characterised by inequality – grow into powerful potential independent reporters. Their photographs challenge the emptiness that ruled the streets of Bristol in the summer of 2020. In representing historical violence, they participate in the

performance of toppling a monument and simultaneously become a kind of 'weapon' used to draw attention to the emptiness that is a product of the 'plague of racism'.

Schober, meanwhile, writes about photographs that were shared on social media and web portals, and discusses the strategy of depletion and systematic breaks in the examples of social behaviour that have brought civilisation closer to dystopia. The reconstruction of the world during the pandemic took place through photographs that frequently served to show examples of similarity – a similarity that relied on imitation as the most desirable form of behaviour to convince people that everything was under control. All of a sudden, the fullness that we were used to seeing in public spaces could only be found online, while the environment frequently echoed with an emptiness whose scenes became part of the collective imagination created by photographs archived in memory. Schober considers individual images, particularly those that reflect personal tragedies, in relation to experiential memory and staging as one of the strategies for re-creating historical protests. The photographs she selects document the solidarity that it is possible to achieve through an image. They draw attention to interpersonal relationships: at times, this is the isolation of the individual; at others, a collective performance as an expression of resistance to the wearing of face masks – the major protagonist of this period. Images on screens, as a contact zone of encounters, among other things, show us what kind of world we have created, one in which we suddenly have time for the act of photographing.

Staging techniques are the overarching strategy that connect the next group of papers. Catlin Langford, Tihana Rubić, Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Martin Kuhar discuss the topic of isolation and emptiness with new readings of staged historical and contemporary photography. The majority of the photographs taken in the nineteenth century are reduced to immobile panoramas, limited to topographic scenes and almost entirely stripped of human energy, which is a result of the limitations of the medium in its early days. While this collection of essays begins with Daguerre's 1838 image, which gives photography an element of mystery, it continues with discussions of staged photography, which is experienced as a kind of 'mirror of reality', as Maribel Castro Díaz calls it: a reality that exists outside the 'appearance of things' and relies on a storytelling strategy, which is used as much by contemporary photographers as by researchers from various fields.[14] In the papers by Catlin Langford, Tihana Rubić, and Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and

Martin Kuhar, narration emerges from the need for a shift in the boundaries of the documentary and the staging of photography, for the purposes of an elaboration of ethnographic, anthropological, and historical and medical research, as well as postmodernist artistic adaptations of 'the symptoms of reality'.[15] In doing so, the authors establish a reference to the history of photographic strategies. The contemporary scenes Langford discusses are based on cinematographic and theatrical effects. They transmit particular experiences that resemble real ones, and Langford recognises this approach as a reflection of the staged photography of the nineteenth century. The photographs discussed by these four authors are carefully staged for the purposes of transmitting experiences that originate in reality. Their shared framework brings together interpretations of individual and collective identities, in which elements of social structures and their behaviour can be recognised, and which are recorded for the purposes of 'scholarly documentation'. Historical disciplines, including ethnology and anthropology, have shaped many discussions about reality and the neutrality of the medium in question. Photography thus took up a place between the fixed and the fluid, drawing attention to the complexity of fields that it memorises visually and leaves open to interpretation.

Catlin Langford's paper begins with a discussion of the photograph mentioned above, the 1838 *Boulevard du Temple* by Daguerre. Langford positions this image, which includes two human figures that were entirely unintentionally captured thanks to a long exposure – with the *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man* by Hippolyte Bayard, taken just one year after Daguerre's presentation of his process, in 1840. In this image, Bayard staged suicide, intentionally creating a scene using staging techniques. The dramatic changes that photography undergoes in the era of Victorian sentimentality, when a closeness with death allowed for the construction of enigmatic and popular 'living pictures' (*tableaux vivants*) can be connected to contemporary photographers who comment on human experiences through staged scenes of isolation. To illustrate her ideas, Langford uses the staged images of Frances Kearney, Gregory Crewdson, and Philip-Lorca diCorcia. These works are stripped of contextual information and deliberately mix fact and fiction to immerse viewers in a seemingly familiar world. Our recent pandemic experience has encouraged the recontextualisation of their photographs, because both the creation and the reading of photographs is framed by the period in which the works are considered. Langford poses the question whether the topics of isolation and empty spaces will, due to the pandemic,

become more visible in future creative production, given that they are so deeply rooted in contemporary culture and knowledge. In the nineteenth century, staging was largely influenced by the technological limitations of the photographic process at the time, and during the restrictions of the pandemic period, artists and photographers once more used it as a powerful tool for creative expression and for the presentation of scenes that express our mental and physical states.

If we understand fluidity as a state of faster and easier travelling without unnecessary baggage,[16] in what ways does the fluidity of photographic memory influence the construction of knowledge in anthropological discourse? Tihana Rubić begins with Pierre Bourdieu's conception of photography as a memory device, through which historical representation is constructed. Rubić's study discusses the ethnological archive kept at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb, which does not yet function as an active memory device in the true sense of the term. It comprises a range of staged images that were created during on-site studies, in a period of traditional approaches to 'others' as the focus of research. In this paper, a particular sense of emptiness is considered from the position of a researcher who encounters old photographs whose epistemological potential no longer satisfies new academic perspectives. It is precisely emptiness that became the method by which individual ethnographic museums came to terms with these photographs, and some of them have recently been renamed, as with the museum in Frankfurt, which has become the Weltkulturen Museum (Museum of World Cultures). Limiting or preventing access to visual content has become a strategy that is used in an exhibition context. In addition, this strategy draws attention to the unsuitability of anthropometry, the measuring of the human body according to a template, which was used to establish the colonial position of the researcher. The polarising views of conservative anthropologists and ethnologies, and those of Stuart Hall, who says that 'the struggle against racism is not primarily a struggle against other people in other communities, but a struggle within our own community, within our own movements and cultures',[17] highlight the complex issue of specialised photography archives. These are archives in which the concept of staged photography always draws attention to positions of power and the decisions made by individuals relating to the kind of image they wish to leave behind as the result of all their efforts.

Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Martin Kuhar's paper is based on similar ideas. In considering the topic of emptiness, the authors offer information on the

specific kind of staging that historical content implies. These photographs depict the infrastructure that over the course of centuries improved hygiene and which was constructed by the great cultures of the Mediterranean, whose influences alternated in Croatia. By mapping the empty environments surrounding particular monuments as well as more complex infrastructure, these unknown photographers transmitted knowledge to numerous witnesses to the history of hygiene that has been built into urban spaces, functioning primarily as a reflection of the sociological and anthropological gaze. Through staged photographic compositions, the environment is here interpreted in an entirely unique way – from the perspective of medicine, using archival materials that originally served an educational purpose.

The papers by Elke Katharina Wittich and Isabelle Catucci lead us to a rethinking of emptiness in the urban and natural landscape – and its representation in photography in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Wittich considers how emptiness was presented in landscape and architectural photography throughout history, beginning with their forerunners – depictions of ancient ruins by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, when emptiness was considered to be the defining element of a dramatic atmosphere and experience of the built environment – and ending with the disappearance of human activity on photographs from the pandemic isolation period. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the way we experience and perceive cities, as seen in a drone video of an empty New York City. The images taken in this period of crisis showing iconic places in contemporary life, such as Times Square, as a symbol of a public space generated by the media, unequivocally drew attention to the crucial role that events and cultural rituals and practices play in the formation of a place. Richard Sennet has deepened our understanding of public space by drawing attention to the interaction between strangers as the key to the transformation of an urban public space into a public realm.[18] According to Sennett, a public space that does not support social interaction is 'dead', which, as he states in his later writings, leads to 'sensory deprivation'.[19]

The images that Wittich discusses are not merely records of the extreme lack of interaction that renders public space entirely pointless. She goes one step further, questioning the transformation of emptiness in the visual presentation of architectural space from a primarily aesthetic category into an elementary question of existence. The connection of the void with the city in photography often signifies a highly aestheticised experience of architecture, and Wittich connects this 'double image' of the relationship between

the city and the void with ruins as a symbol of dominance and decline in the European intellectual and aesthetic tradition, and she discusses the historical significance of ruins and architectural discourse from ancient Roman architecture to contemporary urban spaces. She begins this discussion of the evolution of the metaphor of ruins with the work of Piranesi, and his significance is suggested by the very title of this essay. The phrase 'silent ruins' is derived from Piranesi's famous quote dedicated to Roman ruins 'these *speaking ruins* have filled my spirit with images'.[20] The article argues that the traditions in pictorial reproduction of ruins and emptiness are taken up and developed further in contemporary photography, where the void is an important subject in exploring the relationship between architecture and society. In this sense, Wittich examines the work of the Russian photographer Andrej Krementschouk, who has created two series of photographs in Chernobyl since 2008, and how it visualises the destroyed interiors of public buildings in the uninhabitable surroundings of the nuclear power plant. What, Wittich asks, does emptiness mean in architecture and urbanism, and what does emptiness evoke in our perception of our environment? Can photography, with its formal and semantic tools, merely reproduce emptiness, or can it also present it and even create it, and what precisely does this allow it to do?

Isabelle Catucci's essay is based on photographs of mass graves – particularly aerial views – published on news websites. These photographs were taken during the spring of 2020 in Brazil, where authorities did not respond to the spread of Covid-19 with any measures for mitigating its virulence. Catucci explores the influence of photographs on public discourse and collective mourning. At the same time, she raises questions about the ethics of representation and emphasises the importance of the photographer's testimonial role in creating discourses and rearticulating public opinion, referring to Susan Sontag's last book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). The article also explores the paradox of visuality, where the pain of others is felt through watching. Although the streets and stores of the majority of Brazilian cities were not empty at that time, funerals and burials were held in an empty, non-urban space, due to an awareness of the risk of contamination. The photographs showing rectangular holes for burials in the bare earth became a reference point in news reports and on social media, frequently alongside depictions of the heavy machinery used for digging the holes, cemetery workers in protective gear, and members of the deceased's immediate family. These images made visible what the authorities wanted to obscure: they drew attention to the inaccuracies in the official statistics

and drowned out the daily denials of danger. Catucci explores the relation between the visible and the visual by introducing the writings of Georges Didi-Huberman and Regina José Galindo's artistic work to the discussion. Although the images of the hole-filled earth did not slow or stop the spread of the virus, the sense of collective sorrow had a strong impact on thinking about memory and solidarity.

The empty Times Square from Wittich's essay and the empty territories with newly dug graves in Brazilian cities that Catucci writes about have become powerful visual narratives visible on a global level, reminding us of a shared experience with an uncertain outcome. The Earth, seen from afar, carries an appeal for collective belonging and absence, and the images impel us to read beyond the news about a space and event that refers to ourselves and puts us in the same situation. Personal experience is connected to viewing photographs, so because of our own experience of the pandemic, the photographs from both Wittich and Catucci's essays are similarly legible, regardless of where in the world we are located. Both authors end their essays by highlighting the importance of recognising the human dimension of the pandemic and the need for collective action and empathy in times of crisis.

The dominance of the void in contrast to the solid in a space and the photographic presentation of this kind of emptiness is considered in three entirely different contexts by Ruth Baumeister, Klaudija Sabo, and Jessie Martin. Baumeister discusses the controversial 1961 project by the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen for the new National Bank in Copenhagen, a highly controlled and isolated space. The building is a massive, monolithic structure that is closed off to the public, with a perimeter wall and reflective glass façade that does not reveal anything of its interior. Along with photographs by Jens Fredriksen, Baumeister discusses empty space and isolation in architecture as a tool for expressing power that stretches from the urban level, past the building itself, and all the way to its garden architecture. The focus is on the dramatic composition of the monumental (and all but empty) lobby, which is 100 m^2 in size and 20 metres high, with minimal furnishings and maximum exposure – the only space of the entire complex that is publicly accessible. The building also contains two introverted interior courtyards with gardens, which are isolated spaces devoid of people. Baumeister analyses the architect's subtle use of scale, materials, light, and colour in detail. In doing so, she studies the use of photography as a tool for representation and emphasising the intentions of the architect when it comes to the power related to emptiness, uncovering its transcendental dimension in

architecture. The isolation and emptiness expressed in Jacobsen's design of the lobby and the gardens surpasses the system of control and observation, and it becomes a space of spirituality and splendour, calm and serenity, which inspires contemplation and encourages us, when faced with the scale of architecture, to think about what is really important and what is not.

Sabo, meanwhile, approaches the phenomenon of globally recurring illustrations of artificially constructed field hospitals and spaces for quarantining during the pandemic, deepening our understanding of two specific aspects: the formal and aesthetic dimension of photography as well as the socio-historical one, which the spaces depicted imply. She brings the topic of a central perspective into the debate on the relation between ornament and order, from Brunelleschi to the present, while also touching upon Siegfried Kracauer and analysing the choreography of the Tiller Girls dance troupe, popular in the 1920s, and the ornament of the masses that corresponds with social form in the period of the Weimar Republic. In this way, she reflects the history of individual action consumed by the abstract ornament. The use of a central perspective, argues Sabo, conveys an impression of symmetry and order amplifying the effect of the meticulously arranged beds and the resulting geometric formations, suggesting a direct participation and transposing the viewer into the depicted space. Using a range of photographs of field hospitals, monofunctional and temporary microcosms in which ornamental patterns support scientific rules about ideal distancing with the goal of controlling and regulating behaviour, Sabo discusses a technocratic presentation and understanding of society in keeping with the theories of Lefebvre and Foucault. Lefebvre's concept of abstract space is used to analyse the socio-political dimensions of the negotiated photographic representations of field hospitals and how expectations and conventions are being enforced through the use of ornaments. The ornamental nature of quarantine space is defined by a strictly defined distance, a rationally controlled void. In this sense, the photographs of field hospitals are representations not only of the pandemic but also of technocratic control.

Jessie Martin further highlights the active role photography plays in understanding and creating – or, rather, manipulating – perceptions of a space. She asks how the representation of emptiness can be related to ideas of isolation and distance, focusing on photographs from Edgar Martins's photo-book *When Light Casts No Shadow* (2009), which depicts empty airports at night. Through an analysis of photographs and photographic processes, this text, in a manner both interdisciplinary and poetic, considers

how transitory spaces, such as airports, can be used to contextualise emptiness and create the feeling of placelessness. Martins's choice of airports corresponds with the category of 'non-place' according to the anthropologist Marc Augé, who argues that such architecture reflects the idealised planetary society that still has to be realised.[21] Non-places are defined as places that connect people in a globalised world but are emptied through conceptualisation. As Martin establishes, however, these are palimpsests where place is not erased but exists beneath the surface. Jesse Martin's study of Edgar Martins's photographic syntax and aesthetics of emptiness includes the sociology and psychology of the environment. She explores the role of photography in creating meaning and the relationship between indistinctness and universalism of the image space. By drawing a connection between viewers, the subject, and the photographer, she deconstructs readings of photography that connect emptiness with dislocation. Martin's article provides a thought-provoking exploration of the relationship between non-place, emptiness, and photography, and their implications for our understanding of place and belonging, which photography both complicates and reinforces.

In his visual essay, which also concludes this volume, Luca Nostri considers the contemporary representation of the real in relation to photography, nature, urban space, and the state of conflict that in large part marked the period between 2020 and 2021. His scenes pose a range of questions, directing viewers to details, the significance and meaning of which we know next to nothing about. Reality appears disordered, and the real world is deconstructed before our eyes. The artist's documentary approach, marked by his own limits and contradictions, allows us to look both at and through an image, towards the implications of what it articulates. The aesthetic strategy used is simple; at the same time, it draws attention to the need for thinking about and understanding the empty spaces that Nostri photographs. He takes pictures while on the edge of a catastrophe, which in the words of Ariella Azoulay presupposes 'one's presence at the onset of a catastrophe, looking for its eventuation, that is, being able to see it as an event that is about to occur'.[22]

What will the selected papers have to say about our recent shared past, about the ways photographic practice operates in various contexts, with the aim of shedding light on the focus of our research? We are confronted with scenes of teletopical cities, in which it seems as though there is no longer any social order, and inexplicable 'accidents', which frequently symbolise

emptiness, have led to a change in the way the present is understood. We have witnessed a shift in the differences between the local and the global, changes to the meaning of political and economic legacies that are perhaps not directly problematised in the selected texts but which can be read in many of their deeper layers. At one particular moment, a social space opened up, which had customarily been employed for different purposes and which contained a cultural construct that had been all but stripped bare. The manner in which we see and react to reality, in the past as well as today, is defined by the relationship between the seen and the known, and that relationship is never orderly, according to John Berger.[23] While we collectively shared the feeling of being forgotten, and while we shared experiences of photographs that speak of a lack of belonging – perhaps primarily because of a lack of those experiences that would lead to it – we took into account vernacular images as much as professional ones. In terms of this, the free sharing of photographs fundamentally changed the production and distribution of images, as Renata Salecl notes.[24]

Cities transformed into bare urban territories of consumption echoed in an unusual way. We were confronted with new markers of place, in cities and outside them, in which the measure of time had earlier been determined by the flow of goods and capital, which motivated Saskia Sassen to develop the concept of the global city and a new concept of centrality.[25] The unseen but present cause of this state of things highlighted, among other things, the fragility of global movements. Disordered behaviour, including protests and attempts at gatherings that frequently turned violent, became even more visible because the curtains of advertising were pulled back in public space. In the end, we shared a feeling of isolation by coexisting in this state, in what Giorgio Agamben calls the 'global concentration camp',[26] in which we could recognise the characteristics of emptiness in relations that fundamentally changed, among other things, the way that human labour works – and, by extension, the way humans work with photography.

We were inspired to embark on a study of the role of photography in the interpretation of emptiness and isolation, through different time periods and spatial frameworks, by the need to face a crisis together, to establish communication and fill up the void that has been created by the absence of direct social contact. We can think back to the beginning of this text, and Daguerre's photograph focusing on a busy boulevard in Paris, undoubtedly full of people and carriages. But in the exposure, the boulevard is all but empty, because everything that was in motion was too quick to leave a trace

on the light-sensitive copper plate.[27] Only two people have been recorded, who stood in one place for several minutes so that one could shine the other's shoes. Everything that moved was left unrecorded. In the closing essay of this volume, Luca Nostri documents the emptiness caused by the sloweddown pace of life during the Covid-19 pandemic with an analogue field camera. His images are reminiscent of the emptiness in nineteenth-century photographs, which was caused by a slowing of the photographic process. The only person he recorded is artist Andrea Salvatori, who walked and observed with him and drew the scenes that Nostri photographed. Watching and waiting are, in various ways, inherent to photography from its earliest days, despite technological developments. These two conditions became universally dominant during the pandemic, in an emptied world in existential uncertainty. But has this period of waiting taught us how to wait? We hope that this book will, through research into the photographic aestheticisation of emptiness and the examination of existing stereotypes of 'empty places', fix our gaze on the human face of crisis and demonstrate the power of photography as a mediator in the positive transformation of human experiences.

Notes

1.   Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the text were produced through agreement between the authors and editors.
2.   'At the door of the house who will come knocking? / An open door, we enter / A closed door, a den / The world pulse beats beyond my door'. Pierre Albert-Birot cited in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994): 3.
3.   Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*: 3.
4.   For more on the conference, see https://www.ipu.hr/article/en/992/watching-waiting-empty-spaces-and-the-representation-of-isolation.
5.   Gilles Deleuze, *Film 1: Slika – pokret* (Zagreb: Udruga Bijeli val, 2010).
6.   Paul Virilio, *Open Sky*, trans. Julie Rose (London and New York: Verso, 1997): 2.
7.   Virilio, *Open Sky*: 20.
8.   David Bate, *Art Photography* (London: Tate Publishing, 2015): 125.
9.   Sarah De Nardi, Steven High, Eerika Koskinen Koivisto and Hilary Orange (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Memory and Place* (London: Routledge, 2019).
10. Gilles Deleuze, 'The Brain Is the Screen: An Interview with Gilles Deleuze', in *The Brain Is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 365–373.
11. Alain Bergala cited in Raymond Bellour, *Međuslika. Fotografija, film, video*, trans. Marko Gregorić (Zagreb: Udruga Bijeli val, 2016): 58–59.

12.   Raymond Bellour, *Međuslika. Fotografija, film, video* [L'Entre-images: Photo, Cinéma, Vidéo], trans. Marko Gregorić (Zagreb: Udruga Bijeli val, 2016): 45.

13.   Bellour, *Međuslika. Fotografija, film, video*: 45.

14.   Maribel Castro Díaz, 'Visual Storytelling in Hypermodernity: The Transformative Construction of Symbolic Realities Through Staged Photography', *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 42, no. 3 (2019): 84–99.

15.   Castro Díaz, 'Visual Storytelling in Hypermodernity: The Transformative Construction of Symbolic Realities Through Staged Photography': 84-99.

16.   Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000): 10.

17.   Stuart Hall quoted in Peggy Buth, '"All of Us". Trauma, Repression and Ghosts in the Museum', in *Foreign Exchange* (*or the stories you wouldn't tell a stranger*), eds. Clémentine Deliss and Yvette Mutumba (Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2014): 278.

18.   Richard Sennett, 'The Public Realm', in *The Blackwell City Reader*, eds. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 261–272.

19.   Nicolas Kenny, Daniel Morat, and Maarten Walraven, 'Introduction', *The Senses and Society* 12, no. 2 (2017): 127–131; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978): 12; Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1994): 15.

20.   'These speaking ruins have filled my spirit with images that accurate drawings, even such as those of the immortal Palladio, could never have succeeded in conveying, though I always kept them before my eyes'. Emphasis added. See *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: Drawings and Etchings at Columbia University*, exh. cat. (New York: Avery Architectural Library and Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University, 1972): 117–118.

21.   Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London and New York: Verso, 1995).

22.   Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008): 289.

23.   John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972): 7.

24.   Renata Salecl, *Čovjek je čovjeku virus* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2021): 39.

25.   Saskia Sassen, 'The Global City: Introducing a Concept and Its History', in *Mutations*, eds. Stefano Boeri, Rem Koolhaas, Sanford Kwinter, Hans U. Obrist, and Nadia Tazi (Bordeaux: Actar, 2000): 104–123.

26.   Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998): 166.

27.   Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas About the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 114.

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The Politics
of Emptiness

Chapter 1
Separation Anxiety: Filming the Nicosia Buffer Zone[1]

Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker

1.1 Introduction

Father-land (2018) is a 20-minute essay film made collaboratively by the authors, Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, through an artist research residency hosted by the Nicosia Municipal Arts centre (NiMAC) in Cyprus.[2] The story of Nicosia itself unfolds through a montage of views of the fractured landscape of the Buffer Zone and its accompanying ambient soundscape, while the voices of two unseen narrators share their childhood recollections and reflect on images of conflict and the legacies of colonialism, occupation, and the Cold War.

The film interweaves our personal memories as children, growing up with fathers who served with the Royal Air Force (RAF) on the island, with our lived experience of present-day Nicosia, as we explored the suspended animation of the politically charged Buffer Zone,[3] the demilitarised strip of land controlled by the United Nations that has partitioned Cyprus from east to west since the military conflict of 1974. Our principal residency period was for four weeks in November and December 2016. This followed the 'Brexit' referendum on 23 June 2016, when the UK voted to leave the European Union. For us, our imminent – and unwelcome – isolation from the continent of Europe and England's resurgent nationalistic ideology resonated with our childhood memories of separation and displacement, living in temporary homes in various RAF camps, and our day-to-day experience as temporary residents of Nicosia, the only divided capital city in Europe. We returned for a second, week-long residency period in spring 2018 to record additional locations, sound, and the narration for the film. *Father-land* was exhibited at NiMAC, close to where the film was made. *Father-land* creates an autoethnographic memory archive that brings together the personal and the political in our post-Brexit and increasingly unstable times.

1.2 *Father-land*: Opening Scene

The first image on the screen is a static view of a landscape through a window that fills the screen (Figure 1.1). Thin horizontal slats of venetian blinds partially obscure the view outside, which is in bright sunshine in contrast to the shadowed room where the camera is positioned. The shot is 'locked off': the camera is fixed to a tripod, and there are no 'moves', such as pans, zooms, or tilts. The only perceptible movement is outside the window. From our position on the first floor of the building, we observe the sway of foliage at the tops of palm trees that grow close by, and a couple of telephone wires strung loosely across the outdoor space – possibly a courtyard – move in a light breeze. A two-storey building made of sandstone blocks, painted white and with a red-tiled roof, occupies a third of the view on the right. Beyond the courtyard are the red tiles of other buildings. The sun is high in a muted blue sky, softened by gentle white cumulus clouds on the distant horizon. The scene suggests a warm Mediterranean location in the early afternoon, when the interior of the building is kept cool by shading the windows from the heat of the overhead sun.

The image is accompanied by the melody played on the bouzouki, a stringed musical instrument similar to a mandolin or lute. There are hints of human presence in the ambient sounds that accompany the video sequence, including people conversing in low voices, perhaps enjoying lunch with friends at a table in the courtyard below the window.

The film's titles appear in white across the scene:

<div align="center">

Father-land

a film by Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker

</div>

A pigeon flies languidly across the frame from left to right. The music slows and stops, the words fade from view, and the screen dims for an instant. A montage of views appears, which seems connected to the outdoor location in the opening sequence by the light blue sky – which can be observed by looking upwards. First, the great arm and cab of a tall, pale blue tower crane, its great metal structure cutting diagonally across the frame and forming a perch for a flock of hooded crows. Low, incidental sounds originate from unseen sources off screen: a car driving past nearby, the hoarse, repetitive call of a crow, a man's voice in the distance. Then, a hazy perspective of a distant mountain whose rocky flanks and scrubby vegetation are warmed

Figure 1.1: *Father-land* film still: view through apartment window in the old walled city of Nicosia, close to the Buffer Zone. (© Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, Sundog Media)

by a low sun, framed on the left by a curtain of eucalyptus leaves on the tree growing in the middle distance. Fair-weather clouds move gently across the sky, as the voice of an unseen woman shares a memory from her childhood: 'I was walking along the back streets with my friend who's a Cypriot boy . . . ah, whose name I can't remember now. I was about seven . . . and he took me to visit his grandmother who used to process carobs'.[4]

The woman continues to recount her memory over the third shot, a blue tower crane in action – the swaying trunks of two great palm trees break up the frame vertically on the left: 'in a caravan, a little old caravan. And she let us taste the carob syrup. That's one thing that's always stayed with me – the taste of the carob syrup . . . and the smell'.[5]

We are now at ground level in a paved pedestrian alley, shaded from the sun by a vine growing on an overhead trellis and facing a traditional Greek Cypriot sandstone single-storey building. The woman's voice from Google Maps gives directions and speaks the Greek letters that spell the name of the road. A barrier of wooden pallets blocks the front door of the building. There's an old grey metal shutter with its paint peeling away, pulled down to the right of the door. To the left, the words 'NO FUNERALs' have been sprayed in black paint onto a sandstone lintel. Below, leaning against an open entrance into the building, a large sheet of plywood with another graffito in black paint, quoting the chorus from a 1979 song by the British rock band Pink Floyd: 'All in all / You're just / another brick / in the wall'. Just visible

on the far left is a barricade of stacked oil drums painted grey, which marks the edge of the Buffer Zone. A small old man in a dark jacket with a red plastic bag held in his left arm walks slowly and somewhat unevenly across the scene from the lower left of the frame to the upper right. He disappears around the corner as the woman continues: 'I'm quite reluctant to speak out loud here . . . because the voice tends to impose itself on the space'.[6]

Father-land's opening sequence sets the scene for the remainder of the film and establishes our principal cinematographic approach, with a fixed camera positioned above the ground and at street level, the focus on elements of urban landscape, the incidental presence of animals and humans who inhabit the environment close to or within the Buffer Zone in Nicosia, and long views beyond the Buffer Zone. In the title sequence, the use of the window as a 'frame within a frame' draws attention to the main point of interest – the view beyond. The framing separates the audience from the landscape depicted and effectively distances the viewer from the subject of the film. In addition, the view framed by the window is seen through a succession of layered signifiers, such as the bars of the venetian blinds that suggest an association with Nicosia's past and the medieval walls that encircle the old city, built by the Venetian governors of Nicosia in the sixteenth century, and the palm trees, which are not native to the island but now form an integral part of the landscape. The 'locked-off' camera ensures that the only movement visible is what was in motion within the fixed frame recorded on the digital sensor. The viewer's gaze is drawn into the scene depicted and looks around to discern and make sense of the interrelationship of the visual features of this multilayered landscape, while being distanced from it. The beginning of *Father-land* also implies the entangled histories and cultures of Greece, Turkey, and colonial Britain.

The characteristic elements of *Father-land*'s audio design are introduced in the first scenes. The bouzouki melody played over the title sequence is external to the scene, though accepted as part of it. It is identifiable as 'traditional Greek music' and tells the audience where the film is set and shapes their expectations of what will happen in the film. British and non-Greek audiences may be familiar with bouzouki music from holidaying in one of the Greek islands – or perhaps they recall the bouzouki tune from the popular and highly successful 1960s film *Zorba the Greek*.[7] The bouzouki and its characteristic music are products of a synthesis of the cultural and political histories of the region. It has deep historical connections both with Greek music and Turkish music and combines components of European music and the traditional elements of

Figure 1.2: *Father-land* film still: cars abandoned in 1974, Tempon Street, Nicosia, close to the Buffer Zone. (© Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, Sundog Media)

Greek and Ottoman musical motifs.[8] Throughout the film, the sources of the ambient noises of construction, passing cars, birds, and low male voices are never identified specifically. The origins of these background location sounds exist off screen but are understood by the audience to belong to the world created on the screen and affect the atmosphere and mood (Figure 1.2). The narration is spoken by a man and a woman who are not seen or identified, and their function is never explained. As the film unfolds, the voices recall memories that relate to their childhood. They share their emotions and express their thoughts about their environment and the past.

1.3 Speaking in Place

During the residency, we lived on the edge of the Buffer Zone, the strip of land controlled by the United Nations that cuts through the centre of the capital city and has divided the island for over forty years. In 1974, an attempted coup d'état by nationalist Greek Cypriots seeking union with Greece (*enosis*) prompted a military invasion by Turkey, which continues to occupy northern Cyprus today. To make *Father-land*, we chose not to refer to family archival materials, such as photographs and personal memorabilia, and drew instead on our childhood memories and our experience of a politically charged location. For the film's narration, we developed a

technique of structured improvisation that built on the legacy of French American cinematographer and film director Babette Mangolte's practice of 'putting words in place', exemplified in her essay film *Visible Cities* (1991). In *Father-land*, we recorded the narration in the locations we had filmed in many months earlier, following Mangolte's method with her actors in *Visible Cities*. However, we used unrehearsed rather than scripted dialogue recorded on site – literally putting our 'words into place' to amplify affective impact when we exchanged memories as the children of military personnel who were stationed in Cyprus during the Cold War. These impromptu conversations, recorded inside the Buffer Zone in spring 2018, were inflected by recollections of our previous visit to Nicosia in late 2016. We used an iPhone and a small gun microphone for these recordings because we wanted to be as unobtrusive as possible in this public yet highly charged space that was closely monitored by border guards.

1.4 Shared Histories, Collaborative Practice

As film-makers, we have interests that converge around place, memory, and subjectivity. We prefer to use a more organic and evolutionary, process-based approach to film production, which is collaborative in nature and aligns with non-fictional, experimental practices. Our film-making incorporates critical reflection and the writing of expositionary texts for publication. We do not write scripts or create storyboards, and we have never used 'authoritative' narration or voice-over in any of our moving-image work. In our individual practices, both of us have drawn on personal archives in creating work: Stuart has an extensive collection of Super 8 films dating to the 1980s, whereas I have incorporated photographs from my family albums in films that explore early childhood. Both our fathers served in the RAF for several years, and we have a shared background as 'armed forces children', subjected to being moved around intermittently, as our fathers were posted to different airbases around the UK and abroad. While we did not know one another as children – and it is unlikely that our fathers ever met – we have in common the experience of growing up in a militaristic environment with its separation from 'normal' society, a dislocated home life, the disruption of leaving the school we had only just settled into and the new friends we had made, and having to pack up and start over again when it was time for our fathers to be posted somewhere else.

After the Second World War, the RAF maintained many bases around the world, from Goose Bay in Canada to many airfields in Germany, Gibraltar, and Ascension Island. Servicemen could be sent to any of these locations, sometimes for a few weeks, at other times for several years. As children, we learned that our fathers could disappear at a moment's notice, returning home with souvenirs but giving little explanation about what they had been doing while they were away. Family life was nomadic, and we both moved to new homes many times – usually within Britain, but also to continental Europe and the Far East. Home was often in 'married quarters' on an RAF base, segregated into neighbourhoods by the rank of the family patriarch: officer, non-commissioned officer, or airman. Families were issued standardised furniture, crockery, bedding, and other essentials, which were logged out and back in after the posting was over, forming a shared domestic landscape for the extended military family – domestic uniformity. Home was always temporary, and personal belongings were constrained by the knowledge that one day they would have to fit into provided shipping crates, plus what one could carry.

For financial and strategic reasons, over the latter years of the twentieth century and during this century, many of these airbases have been decommissioned and postings to distant bases have been reduced. A few overseas airbases, such as those in Cyprus, remain to this day. Both our fathers were stationed on the island at different times during the Cold War period. Kayla lived in Cyprus for three years as a child, when her father was working in RAF Akrotiri on the south coast. Stuart's father was deployed to the island several times, while the family remained in Britain. He has a strong memory of a red pencil case, marked on the front with a map of the island in gold and the names of the principal towns in black, a gift from his father.

1.5 The Plymouth-Nicosia Residency

Since 2012, NiMAC has operated a residency programme for artists, researchers, curators, and other cultural producers from different countries. The initiative has enabled participants to spend a set period of time – usually one month – away from their home country so that they can focus on 'creative thinking, research and study in the Cypriot socio-political and cultural environment'.[9] The programme invites artists from the south-east Mediterranean region to stay in the centre's residency apartment and initiates residency exchanges between Nicosia and Alexandria, and Nicosia and Tel Aviv. It has also

included collaborations with the universities in Plymouth and Southampton in the UK and the university in Amiens in France.

There were six Plymouth-Nicosia residencies between 2013 and 2017, with artist-researchers selected through peer review of their project proposal by a panel of members of the Land/Water and the Visual Arts research group at University of Plymouth, led by Liz Wells during that time. The work produced through the residencies was presented in the *Layers of Visibility* exhibition at NiMAC, which was curated by Wells and NiMAC's director Yiannis Toumazis, and it was open to the public from 20 October 2018 to 12 January 2019.

In her essay, 'On Being Out of Place', Wells describes how 'it is the creativity that can result from being out of place, working – and exploring – somewhere where phenomena are freshly observed, smelt or touched'.[10] The Plymouth-Nicosia artist residency gave us the opportunity to work together on a film that drew on our memories as the children of RAF servicemen who had served in Cyprus before the partition of the island in 1974. It enabled us to immerse ourselves for four weeks to explore resonances between place and memory through our film-making practice in a country impacted by British colonialism – a place we felt an affinity for and to whose histories we were both linked through our fathers' military careers. We had produced work previously during residencies,[11] but the month spent dedicated to our collaborative film-making in Nicosia meant that we were, as Wells puts it, 'out of place' – in a different time zone and an unfamiliar location, thousands of kilometres from our home for an extended period. We felt that the Plymouth-Nicosia Residency programme created the conditions and time for critical reflection necessary for us to focus on creating our first essay film, one in which the 'personal and political' were entwined and that was embedded in the place in which it was made.

We were attracted to the essay film form as it allowed us to interweave personal and social histories with subjective and intellectual perspectives, situated in contemporary experience. The elasticity and self-reflexivity of the essay film enables a creative approach to the dissemination of research findings, which appealed to us. Conceived as a new type of film-making in the 1920s by the German avant-garde film-maker Hans Richter, the 'essay film' combines artistic or experimental film with documentary. In his 1940 essay, 'Der Filmessay, Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms', Richter writes that the essay film allows the film-maker to transgress the rules and parameters of traditional documentary practice:

> The essay film, in its attempt to make the invisible world of the imagina-
> tion, thoughts, and ideas visible, can draw from an incomparably larger
> reservoir of expressive means than can pure documentary film. Since
> in the essay film the filmmaker is not bound by the depiction of exter-
> nal phenomena and the constraints of chronological sequences, but, on
> the contrary, has to enlist material from everywhere, the filmmaker can
> bounce around freely in space and time.[12]

As an audio-visual artwork, the essay film allows a synthesis of imaginative,
reflexive, and critical thinking through moving images and sound that doc-
uments process and integrates critical findings within an accessible, medi-
atised practice-as-research form. For the film-maker and critic Kevin B. Lee,
'an essay film explicitly reflects on the materials it presents, to actualise the
thinking process itself'.[13]

As experimental film-makers whose work evolves through the process
of making, we were drawn to the producer and director Joram ten Brink's
understanding of the essay film as following 'Montaigne's, Vertov's and
Astruc's steps in "writing" fragments as they occur to the writer, or the film
maker. These fragments are in turn edited together associatively, relying on
poetic metaphor and juxtaposition'.[14] The hybridity of the essay film form
blurs traditional boundaries of documentary and fiction, and in Nora Alter's
words, it 'disrespects traditional boundaries, [and] is transgressive both
structurally and conceptually'.[15] The essay film gives us freedom, which, as
Edgar Morin asserts, enables us to 'debate a problem by using all the means
that the cinema affords, all the registers and all the expedients'.[16]

From the outset, we did not know what images we would capture – what
would be said, where, and by whom – nor how we could include spoken
voice within our essay film. However, through our experience on collabo-
rative film-making projects, we felt confident that we could allow the film
and its narration to emerge through the creative and technical procedure of
making *Father-land*. The polysemic form of the essay film allowed us to give
voice to marginalised subjectivities and rupture the dominant discourses
of institutional histories. Official histories come with weight that demands
that one conforms to thinking in a particular way. Our film, with its qui-
et voice, suggests that the personal and individual experience is as valid as
the institutional and 'official' perspective. In *Father-land*, the self-reflective
and self-reflexive hybridity of the essay film enables interlocking identities,

memories, and experiences of individuals and the place to assert themselves and be heard against the discourses of power.

> [M]y connection with Cyprus was quite strange in that it was a kind of an imagined place because when my father came back from one of his visits – and I think he came here several times – and in one of those times, he brought me a red pencil case that was made of, I guess, cardboard and then it was covered with PVC that was bright red and on the front side it was a very simple map of the island of Cyprus. And I had this strange relationship where Cyprus was a place: I knew the name and I knew my father had been there several times, and then there was just this map with the names – I think, remembering back, I think there was Famagusta, you know, on the far right, Nicosia, perhaps Kyrenia, Paphos, and . . .[17]

1.6 The Island of Cyprus: Histories of Conflict and Division

Cyprus is the furthest south-east point of Europe and the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, after Sicily and Sardinia. The coast of Turkey lies around 80 kilometres to the north, Syria and Lebanon to the east, Israel to the south-east and Egypt to the south. At the crossroads of three continents, Cyprus is located in the Middle East, although historically it has well-established ties to Europe and to Greece in particular. Cyprus has a long history of settlement by external peoples. It has been inhabited from around 10,000 B.C.E., firstly by hunters and then as part of a developing Neolithic community in the Levant. After the Mycenaean Greeks in the second millennium B.C.E., Cyprus was subsequently occupied by Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Lusignans, Genoese, Venetians, Ottomans, and the British. Control passed from Turkey to Britain in 1878, and the British Empire formally annexed the island in 1914. Following years of resistance to British rule, the former colony gained its independence in 1960 and became the Republic of Cyprus. As part of the power-sharing agreement between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Britain retained its military bases of Akrotiri and Dhekehlia on the southern coast. These Sovereign Base Areas are designated British overseas territories and enable the United Kingdom to maintain a permanent military presence at a strategic point in the eastern Mediterranean.[18] Britain also continues to operate RAF Station Troödos deep in the central mountain range of Cyprus. Dating to 1878, when Cyprus

was ceded to Britain by the Ottoman Empire to counter Russian expansion into the Near East, RAF Station Troödos is the oldest British military base on the island. It is a remote Signals Station run by twenty-seven personnel from Golf Section, Joint Service Signal Unit (Cyprus), and it also contains the Mount Olympus Radar Station.

Cyprus has been divided along ethnic lines since the Turkish invasion of 1974. An earlier violent confrontation between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, which erupted in Nicosia in December 1963 and then spread to other parts of the island, led to the establishment at the end of that year of a demilitarised security corridor – a Buffer Zone, also known as the 'Green Line' and the 'Dead Zone' – through the centre of Nicosia to separate the opposing factions.[19] The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was set up the following year to prevent a recurrence of intercommunal fighting and to restore law and order. The UNFICYP presence was expanded following the cessation of fighting in August 1974, and the Buffer Zone was extended to approximately 180 kilometres across the island to separate the two sides. The northern edge of the zone marked the southernmost limit of the Turkish armed forces' advance, with a demilitarised area – the Buffer Zone – up to the de facto Greek Cypriot ceasefire line. Since 1974, the island has been separated into the internationally recognised southern part, controlled by the Republic of Cyprus, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which was established in 1983 and is recognised only by Turkey. UNFICYP monitors the Buffer Zone from static observation posts and patrols the demilitarised area in vehicles and on foot and, increasingly, by helicopter, with rapid reaction forces standing by to respond to incidents and emergencies. From 2005 onwards, the downsizing of the UNFICYP forces has resulted in the reduction of peacekeeping personnel, observation posts, and manned patrol bases, in parallel with a growth in surveillance by mobile patrols and technology. Remote monitoring includes the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV), with cameras concentrated in Nicosia's city centre, the narrowest part of the Buffer Zone, where ceasefire violations were most frequent. The ceasefire lines are highly sensitive areas to both the Republic of Cyprus and TRNC authorities:

> While they accept filming in the BZ [Border Zone], they do not tolerate filming with video or still cameras of installations behind their lines or outside the BZ. The borders of the BZ have an abundance of signs for the general public declaring: 'No photos or filming beyond this point'.[20]

Our filming of *Father-land* was performed by 'looking with a camera'. The principal shots from our first residency instil a sense of being separate from the view within the frame, as if looking through a window. There is a degree of separation between the audience and the view on the screen, which is signalled by the venetian blind in the opening sequence to our film. This correlates with the border guards and UNFICYP troops who watch the Buffer Zone and the ceasefire lines on screens from their fixed positions using CCTV cameras. These military personnel see the same view every day; it does not change perceptibly, apart from the sighting of an occasional human incursion beyond the ceasefire lines into the Buffer Zone, including violation due to overflights, provocative acts between the Cypriot National Guard and the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces, or discharge of firearms or explosives. Their surveillance is restrictive in intention – enforcing the stasis. In contrast, our filming creates an opening, a dialogic space in which to tell our story.

The landscape does not move; it is quiet except for the motion of vegetation swayed by a breeze, the flight of a bird or a feral dog breaking cover, or the movement of clouds and the sun moving across the sky. It has been like this for over forty years. The watching guards are waiting for movement, something to alter in the changeless landscape they monitor every day. With our 'slow cinema' style of filming, it was never an option to quickly raise the camera and move away swiftly from unwanted attention, as might be possible as a photojournalist or tourist. A degree of caution was needed in where we positioned ourselves. We were aware of the politicised and militarised situation of 'watching' and the implications of the web of protocols. However, although we did not feel as if we were breaking any laws per se, we did not want to cause an incident through our transgression of the détente, where a challenge might provoke a response.

Cyprus became a full Member State of the European Union on 1 May 2004. The entire island is EU territory despite being a 'de facto divided island'.[21] However, EU law is suspended in the TRNC, and the government of the Greek Cypriot Republic has no effective control north of the Buffer Zone. Since 2003, several crossing points through the UN Buffer Zone have opened to allow people to move between the Republic and the TRNC area. There are two in central Nicosia: Ledra Palace, which opened in 2004 and can be crossed on foot, bicycle, and car, and Ledra Street, a pedestrian crossing in the heart of the old city, which opened in 2008.

1.7 Making the Film: The Artist Residency

After a long journey from our base in Plymouth, UK, we arrived at NiMAC in the heart of the old walled city of Nicosia late one Monday evening in early November 2016. We had picked up a hire car at Larnaca airport on the south coast and followed the Greek road signs north to Lefkosia (Nicosia).[22] But, in our tired state, once in the modern city, we became lost and confused. Google Maps would only read out its directions by spelling out the street names using the Greek alphabet. Repelled by the Venetian walls and bastions, we circled around several times but couldn't find a way through the old city's defences.

We followed our NiMAC contact, Marika Ioannou, through the old city's wall and down narrow, winding streets through traditional Cypriot neighbourhoods and around partly built high-rise construction sites to the arts centre that would be our home for the next four weeks. Once indoors, we unpacked our suitcases and checked through our equipment and set up a production office in the residency flat. We had brought with us a JVC GY-LS300 4K digital cinema camera and a large Manfrotto tripod with a fluid head. This set-up enabled us to adopt a cinematographic strategy of a fixed frame view, 'locked off' on a sturdy support, operating the camera with a remote release to avoid any unwanted camera shake, switching to a different lens as needed. We also had a professional sound-recording kit, batteries and chargers, two large external LaCie hard disks for archiving and backing up footage, electrical extension cables, and two MacBook Pro laptops.

The next day, in the morning twilight shortly before 5AM, we were woken by the adhan, the Islamic call to prayer. Our hosts explained later that this was broadcast several times a day, relayed from Istanbul to loudspeakers fixed to the nearby Selimiye Mosque on the 'other side' of the Buffer Zone. The location of the arts centre was an important element in the evolution of our project. NiMAC, a decommissioned electricity power station, was a hundred metres from the Greek Cypriot ceasefire line along the southern border of the Buffer Zone. The apartment was above the Powerhouse Restaurant and Bar, to the rear of the NiMAC complex on Tempon Street. The situation assumed a key role in shaping our ideas and what we chose to film, although this was not anticipated or planned prior to our stay there. Entry to the flat was across a large, paved courtyard, which also contained an arrangement of metal tables and chairs for customers and led to the rear entrance to the arts centre gallery. Large palm trees and mature orange trees grew in dusty beds of flattened yellowish-brown earth – there was a lengthy dry spell on the island in 2016,

Figure 1.3: *Father-land* film still: view north across the Nicosia Buffer Zone towards the Pentadaktylos Mountains. (© Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, Sundog Media)

which continued until the end of our residency period in December. When the bar was closed, padlocked heavy metal gates secured the entrance to the courtyard. As the resident artists, we had a key to open and close the padlock. When the Powerhouse was shut, we were the only people in this area, which then became our private space. From the apartment on the first floor, we could access the flat roof of the restaurant. From this vantage point, the tops of partly built high-rise buildings and huge tower cranes encroaching from the south were visible behind us. Construction had been halted by the 2012–2013 economic crisis in Cyprus, and some regeneration work had recommenced – during the daytime, we could hear constant building activity and observe the movement of cranes in the sky to the east and west. To the north, we had an extensive view over the abandoned buildings and trees growing in the Buffer Zone, the tops of taller buildings in North Nicosia, and across the expanse of the Mesaoria plain beyond the city to the Kyrenia mountain range.

Over the four weeks of the residency, we attended numerous cultural events – exhibitions, poetry readings, a theatre performance, talks and workshops – and attended symposia and social gatherings. We gave a talk about our project to media and photography students and staff at University of Nicosia, after which we joined the students and their lecturer, along with thousands of people from the north and the south, to congregate in the Buffer Zone at Ledra Palace for the United by Hope United for Peace demonstration for the unification of Cyprus. These interactions enabled us to learn first-hand

Figure 1.4: *Father-land* documentation: filming location, Dionysou Street, Nicosia Buffer Zone. (© Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, Sundog Media)

about the complex cultural and political histories of Nicosia, of Britain's colonial legacies, and the intercommunal violence of the 1950s and 1960s that had led to the displacement of large numbers of the island's population and the partition of Cyprus in 1974. These experiences and the exchange of views and ideas with people who lived in Nicosia or who were temporary residents like us were integral to creating our collaborative film. The conversations directly informed the narratives of memory and conflict we developed in response to the artist residency and were important in understanding the human impacts of these events and the lack of a political solution, embodied by the enduring inertia and emptiness of the Buffer Zone.

Cultural geographer Tim Edensor's essay 'Walking Through Ruins' talks about the failure of linear narratives to adequately convey the experience of walking: 'Stories that are fragmented, non-linear, impressionistic and contingent are better suited than traditional linear narratives to the experience of walking in ruins'.[23] Walking was a key research method and allowed us to connect our lived experiences with the terrain and our subject matter. We walked and talked, encountering the Buffer Zone every day as we explored the walled city and absorbed its topography and the unique atmosphere of

its empty spaces. Setting out from the apartment, we could move east or west but were not able to continue walking down streets to the north, as our way was blocked by old oil drums, metal fences, and razor wire (Figure 1.4). We also learned that where we were staying was close to the original flash-point for the intercommunal violence of the past, which reverberates to this day. Edensor walks around the ruins of abandoned industrial buildings, his feet following a tangled network of irregular paths through a broken-down space that was once highly regulated, seeing plants and animals that have colonised what were once 'places of people'.[24] In his walking, Edensor is forced to improvise a pathway through the rubble as he encounters blocked-off doorways, access to upper floors enabled by fallen beams, and crum-bling walls and broken windows providing entry points into buildings and beyond. Typically, the explorations of our neighbourhood would come to a halt at the Buffer Zone, with our vision north impeded by an impenetrable barrier of ruined buildings, often overgrown with a tangle of trees. Some walls were pockmarked with bullet holes, windows buttressed with collaps-ing sandbags – the scars of the 1974 intercommunal violence, or perhaps of the earlier conflict in 1963–1964. Like Edensor, our 'looking' became multi-sensory as our bodies made their way through the ruined landscape. In our repeated walks along the Buffer Zone, we experienced a sensory onslaught of 'tactile, auditory and olfactory as well as visual sensations, triggering a jumble of alarms and surprises, memories and feelings'.[25] In the more open sections, there were 'No Photography' signs. The blocked sight lines at street level forced us to look upwards above the barricades topped with rusting barbed wire. Here, an assortment of flags claimed this abandoned border-land. Each 'side' displayed its own national flag alongside that of its desired 'motherland': the Cyprus Republic and Greece, the TRNC and Turkey, in-terspersed with the emblem of the United Nations in white on a blue back-ground (Figure 1.5).

We knew that we wanted our film to be infused with our experience and for the film to be in dialogue with the specific location. We had con-ceived *Father-land* as an 'archive film', in which the archive we created was our memories of childhood and place – our aim was to combine autoeth-nography and landscape film-making within the reflexive freedom of the essay film form. We had no desire to 'relive' lost memories by visiting lo-cations of Kayla's childhood when she lived on the island nor to seek out sites where Stuart's father had worked during his RAF postings to the island. When he moved to Nicosia in 2002 after retiring from the London School of

Figure 1.5: *Father-land* film still: view across Nicosia Buffer Zone. (© Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, Sundog Media)

Economics, the anthropologist and documentary film-maker Peter Loizos wrote about how he felt the need to establish a social connection with the place and its community. In his project *Walking Narratives*, Loizos writes about the same walk he took every day through his neighbourhood, ending inside the Buffer Zone:

> We are now entering the ceasefire zone, that's why there is no photography, there is military on both sides, in the middle is the UN we will probably see a UN watch tower in a minute and all these extravagant untamed nature [*sic*] is because nobody has built here since 1974, or even earlier perhaps 1964 […] I don't know the military history of this particular piece of ground; it might have been an earlier point of conflict rather than later point. You've gotta know exactly what you are looking at in Cyprus – because different things destroyed different communities at different times.[26]

Haris Pellapaisiotis, who worked with Loizios on *Walking Narratives*, observes that, 'Loizos's narration does not state but in a measured way draws attention to the signs imbedded in the landscape which direct or challenge the way we may think about place'.[27]

As we worked on ideas for our film, we kept a production journal, which noted our reflections and observations, events of interest and ideas for the

film, perspectives of the city, and our conversations. Soon after our arrival, we wrote to the UN and requested a permit to film in the Buffer Zone at Nicosia International Airport. We read essays and articles, and we researched the histories of the island and the postcolonial impacts. We spent hours in the NiMAC library and pored over maps of the walled city, trying to make sense of the labyrinth of tiny alleys and backstreets, the many throughways that had been arbitrarily curtailed by the imposition of the Buffer Zone. We exchanged memories of our militarised childhood in various RAF camps and shared ideas about 'home', patriarchy, occupation, and displacement. We discussed potential locations for filming and sound recording, and we practised reading Greek and learned Greek phrases. Our research included watching a variety of films about Cyprus that were available online: archival military and newsreel footage, promotional videos to attract tourists, productions uploaded by contemporary videographers, and television documentaries such as Christopher Hitchens's *Cyprus: Stranded in Time*, about the 1974 partition and its after-effects.[28]

From the start, we felt that it was important for the framing to be static so that when the film is projected, the audience becomes immersed in the scenes rather than having their gaze overtly directed by pans, zooms, and 'pull-focuses' – the conventional grammar of film-making. The screen time of the principal shots of *Father-land* is paced to allow contemplation – to pause and to look with a flâneurial gaze, rather than relating to our film as a travelogue or mainstream documentary. The static frame also alludes to the stasis of the Buffer Zone itself. We used long lenses, which compress distance, thus drawing the audience through the contested border.

In parallel to the visual elements of the production, we made a series of audio field recordings so the film would be infused with the ambient soundscape of the place itself: the muezzin's recitation of the adhan, rising and falling on a warm breeze, the chiming of bells from the nearby Archbishop's Palace, a background rattling percussion of pneumatic drills and hammering, a susurration of dry citrus leaves, car tyres rolling across the cobbles and tarmac, the two-stroke engine of a passing moped, the hubbub of the Powerhouse, the noise of UN helicopters patrolling the Buffer Zone, and the swish of dry palm fronds. *Father-land*'s ambient soundscape generates an affective experience for the audience by creating a spatial environment that conveys the presence of the location.

Shortly after our residency began, we began to film the wide views that were accessible to us from the flat roof above the Powerhouse restaurant.

At ground level, there was an ever-present barrier that prevented the physical body from moving northwards, yet sensory data passed across the abandoned border area. Cooking smells seeped through the air. Sounds passed from one side to the other, like the birds and feral animals which had made the zone their home – the adhan regulated each day's passing, and from time to time, there were sounds of music and celebration. A towering eucalyptus tree had grown freely in the Buffer Zone for several decades. Wildlife thrived in this no man's land, a sanctuary largely untouched by human activity where vegetation overflowed the broken, sandbagged buildings and filled the dusty alleys. From our vantage point at dusk, we could see the nationalistic display of a pair of gigantic flags rendered in coloured lights that twinkle and flash on the side of the Pentadaktylos[29] Mountain (Figure 1.3) beyond the city to the north. Each flag the size of four football pitches, a white crescent moon and star on a red ground representing Turkey, and a red crescent and star on a white ground, the TRNC.

> One thing that you're always reminded of is, the conflict – the conflict that happened many decades ago, but the remnants are still here today [. . .] They haven't been removed. They're just here. Though you don't really notice them when you're walking around. You learn to either ignore them or you just don't notice them. And there are the obvious reminders that when you want to pass from one part of a city to another, you have to produce your passport: which is one thing that I really dislike very much.[30]

Encountering the Buffer Zone every day during our residency reminded us of the paradox of domestic and militarised spaces coexisting. A visible aspect of the border is that the southern side in the walled city remains temporary in form – stacked, rusty oil drums filled with concrete – despite remaining in place for over four decades or more. The Buffer Zone in Nicosia recalled the places where we'd played as children, creating dens in the disused defensive structures of World War II which were part of the RAF camps that were our temporary homes. These decommissioned runways and collections of now purposeless buildings, with their crumbling bricks, rotten wood, smashed panes of reinforced glass, scattered with debris and colonised by weeds, became places of imagination and possibility.

Towards the end of our residency, we received permission to film in Nicosia International Airport (Figure 1.6), which was entirely within the Buffer Zone

Figure 1.6: *Father-land* film still: runway, Nicosia International Airport, abandoned in 1974, Nicosia Buffer Zone. (© Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, Sundog Media)

under UN control in west Nicosia. The weather during our residency period was unusually warm and sunny, with temperatures in the mid-30s or high 20s Centigrade until our final week, when the skies began to cloud. At 9:30AM we were issued with passes at Foxtrot Gate and then escorted by Major Szakszon to the disused airport control tower and the abandoned airport complex. We had one hour to film as the first light drops of rain fell.

Once the site of an RAF Station, the airfield was transferred to the Cyprus government in 1960 after independence, with the British continuing to occupy part of the site. Within the space of a month in the summer of 1974, Nicosia International Airport was transformed from a thriving commercial airport catering for thousands of tourists to an abandoned zone occupied by United Nations troops. On 20 July 1974, in response to the Greek military coup five days earlier, Turkish forces invaded the island. Turkish paratroopers dropped into northern Nicosia to reinforce the Turkish Cypriot enclave, and fighting was particularly intense around Nicosia International Airport. Turkey's aerial forces bombed and strafed the runway until the United Nations intervened and, with the agreement of military commanders in the area, occupied the airport to separate the opposing forces. Ceasefire lines were drawn up on 16 August 1974 with the proviso that neither side would approach within 500 metres of the Buffer Zone perimeter. We filmed in the vicinity of the now derelict terminal building, which has become a well-known ruin, featured in magazines around the world, and through which

our fathers may have passed decades earlier. This was our final filming location of the residency.

We returned to Cyprus for a week in spring 2018, a little over a year after our initial filming. During this short visit, we returned to our filming locations and noticed the changes that had occurred since 2016, shooting additional 'subjective' footage with a small handheld camera. To create the narration, we recorded our unscripted memories: these included the times when our fathers served in Cyprus during the Cold War, before the fracturing of the island in 1974, of our residency in 2016, and of our memories of the footage we had recorded. The temporal discontinuity between the 'formal' filming during the original residency period in late 2016 and the handheld shots and sound recordings we made on location in the Buffer Zone on our return trip functioned as a practical film-making strategy. This gap allowed time for us to reflect on our experience and incorporate this reflexivity in our film-making before embarking on the post-production phase in the summer of 2018. Subjective camera places the person who looks at the film in the same relation with the screen as that of the cinematographer with their subjects. In her 1977 film, *The Camera: Je, La Caméra: I*, Mangolte uses moving image to examine still photography, and she makes the viewer aware of the difference between motion and stillness. Her strategy makes the viewer understand and perceive the relation between a photographer and their subjects and is also a metaphor for the disengagement of the photographer and the desire to be included 'within', to 'be inside it' – a participant. Mangolte says that her film 'offers a reflection on ways of seeing, and the interpersonal and power dynamics involved in producing images'.[31]

We used a digital camera, rather than shooting on celluloid as Mangolte did, for practical and financial reasons during the residency. Shooting digitally allowed us to view and reflect on the images we had filmed – and our experience of filming – earlier that day, to relate them to previous days' footage, and to plan what we would record the next day. This smooth transition between filming and reviewing enabled us to evolve the ideas for *Father-land* through the iterative and reflective process of film-making itself. It would not have been possible with photosensitive celluloid, which requires processing by chemical means in a laboratory after exposure to create a visible image.

When observing photographic prints filmed on celluloid using a rostrum camera, the spectator perceives medium-specific qualia on the screen, alerting them to the passage of film through the apparatus, and consequently the passage of time. Using digital video with a locked-off camera brings

the work closer to still photography, as the audience perceives the profilmic – what is happening in front of the camera – in a perfectly stable frame, unlike the dancing and weaving grain of celluloid.

> A photograph displayed in a digital static film does undergo continual change, but in a sense it remains still. It neither relies on movement for its existence (as does the celluloid film, which must constantly move through the projector), nor does it produce the perception of movement.[32]

The locked-off shots of the Buffer Zone and the mountains beyond appear to be still, with minimal movement occurring within the framed view – a passer-by walks slowly across the frame, a border guard attends to his duties from his watch post on the ceasefire line, flags flutter. *Father-land* exists in the temporal space created by the interplay of moving image and narration. Our essay film choreographs the audience's experience as a dance between the reflexive commentary and the flow of images. Unlike the American documentary film-maker Ken Burns's technique of montage editing still photographs, where individual shot duration was chosen for rhythmic or narrative impact, our 'stills' signal to the audience that time for them is passing at the same speed as it was for the film-makers and anchors a shared experience.

We chose not to review and familiarise ourselves with our filming from the initial residency period before we returned to the island, and we did not bring the footage with us. This effectively established a 'distance' to the original moving image and our camera's steady gaze and enabled us to consider what we had filmed within the context of our memories of filming on location in Nicosia.

Although the Buffer Zone signs didn't proscribe making audio recordings per se, we had attracted the unwanted attention of a group of Greek Cypriot border guards on an earlier field trip to record the ambient soundscape of the Buffer Zone close to the old city wall. We were attuned to the sensitivities of the site and its histories of trauma, and we were aware that the area was monitored closely by the border guards. The act of commentating also felt somehow transgressive. Ermou Street, a few metres from NiMAC, was one of the sites of our recorded conversations. Once a busy multi-ethnic commercial area, the road, now overgrown with vegetation and the façades of its shops collapsed, formed part of the Buffer Zone. Access was blocked by a large metal gate chained shut, blocked with piles of rubble and coils

Figure 1.7: *Father-land* film still: Ermou Street, Nicosia Buffer Zone. (© Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker, Sundog Media)

of razor wire (Figure 1.7). In the two years since we first visited, the guard hut by the gate was now unmanned – suggesting some change in the status quo – so we were free to record some narration.

The sound design of *Father-land* comprises audio recorded with the pictures, field recordings that underscore certain visual sequences, and the voices of two narrators, who are never seen by the audience. Robert Bresson tells us that 'the ear goes towards the within, the eye towards the outer: Image and sound must not support each other, but must work each in turn through a sort of relay'.[33] The dialogic exchanges add a reflexive dimension to the film, recording our voices without 'seeing' the filming allowed us to 'be in the zone', rather than describing the camera's view. As Mangolte advises, 'Once your mind is solely focused on sounds, you are much freer to find associative moments and interactions with the image than if you are recording image and sound together'.[34]

It's quite a strange feeling, with the Buffer Zone [. . .] and thinking about my father coming here several times with the RAF, back in the 1970s, and thinking what was going on then. And then coming myself and living next to the Buffer Zone. Something which feels [. . .] quite strange in a way, quite interesting. But something which you're not really experiencing – you're just beside it, so you're 'without experience'.[35]

1.8 The Exhibition: Layers of Visibility

We edited *Father-land* over the summer of 2018 and prepared for its exhibition at NiMAC. The *Layers of Visibility* exhibition from 19 October 2018 to 12 January 2019, curated by Liz Wells and Yiannis Toumazis, presented *Father-land* as a large-scale gallery projection in the arts centre auditorium, close to where it was made.[36] Filming in this politically charged location and exhibiting the work there collapsed the profilmic space and the afilmic reality. The sound design of the film blended with the city soundscape beyond the gallery. Audience members would have passed through the landscape on their way to NiMAC that they were now watching on the screen. In fact, the screen was in a sense a window to the cityscape beyond (Figure 1.8). The three-month exhibition enabled Cypriot and other audiences to engage with the film, which was also part of the 5th International Conference of Photography and Theory held from the 22 to 24 November 2018.[37]

Father-land was made over an almost two-year period and actively engaged with different registers of memory: childhood, (post)colonial archive, and intra-production,[38] among others. An innovative methodology evolved
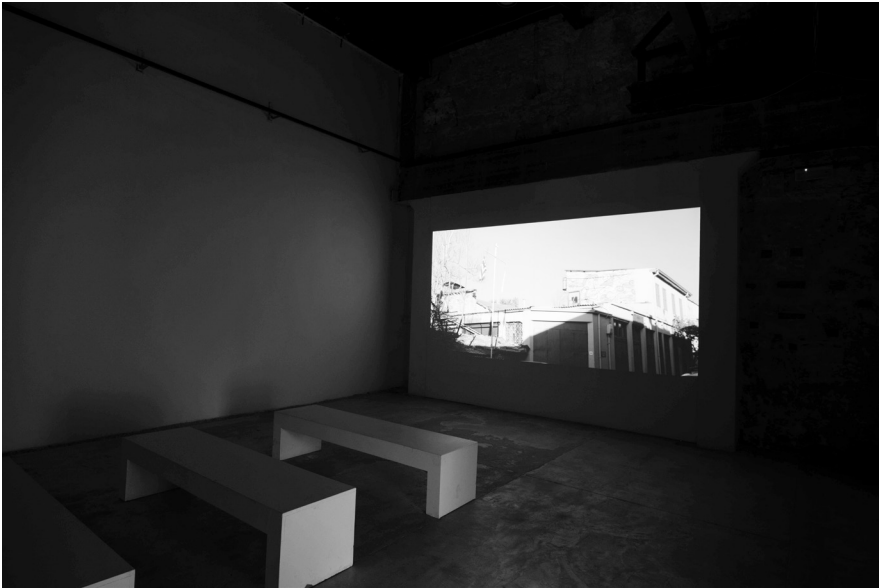
Figure 1.8: *Father-land* gallery installation: Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre, HD projection with amplified stereo sound in cinema space. *Layers of Visibility* exhibition, 19 October 2018 to 12 January 2019. (© Louca Studios)

through the processes of film-making: during our initial residency period, we generated our practical film-making strategy 'on location' and allowed our experience of exploring the landscape of the Nicosia Buffer Zone – both on foot and using the camera as a research tool – to became interwoven with recollections of our nomadic, militarised childhoods. During the second visit over a year later, we drew on the 'archive' of these combined memories to evolve a series of improvised conversational exchanges on location inside the Buffer Zone itself. The narration that emerged was intentionally created apart from the original filming but recorded in the locus of its recollections. This separation created a reflective 'buffering' that freed the film to develop away from the documentary tendency to polemic. The innovative dialogical methodology centred on the ways in which talk between collaborators is produced and performed interactively as narrative. Close reading of the UN Buffer Zone's urban landscape in Nicosia inflected the development of the 'screen play', the evolution of the audio-visual narratives and the interplay between image and sound. In the dialogic approach, the researcher is an active presence, and the resulting material is regarded as being co-produced.[39] Through *Father-land*, we moved into a previously unexplored territory for us as practice researchers and film-makers, where the dialogic exchanges between us – which have always played a key part in our collaborative ventures – are embedded within the film itself. Rigour in the research was augmented through the conference papers and artists' talks we gave during the production process, which enabled peer review to shape and inform our ideas about the project.

Our memories 'spoken in place' are entanglements caught between the multi-layered facets of political and social histories, the legacies of colonialism, occupation, and the Cold War. The cinema theorist Raymond Bellour refers to the 'floating logic' of the essay film, an 'indefinable genre […] of essay as cinema',[40] which, for film scholar Scott MacDonald, occupies 'the liminal zone between documentary and avant-garde'.[41] The narrative gaps in the film *Father-land* allow the audience some thinking space and are redolent of the ruptured temporalities of the abandoned centre of the old city, lost in time as life goes on to the north and south of the Buffer Zone. The film-makers' voices drift outwards across the landscape as the call to prayer permeates the city's consciousness. Through the essay film, we bring together our past and present, inviting the audience to share our exploration of memory and place.

Is it possible, or even desirable, to return to a remembered past? In revisiting the sites of memory, we re-experience the dislocation of exile, feeling uprooted from home, family, ourselves – baggage that has gone astray in transit, lost and not to be reclaimed. The residency apartment and its neighbourhood in Nicosia echoed our earlier temporary homes located close to military action. Here it was the Buffer Zone; decades earlier, it was in Germany facing the rolling tanks of the Soviet Union. We hope our film will provide a contextualisation of the effects of postcolonialism, mediated through our experiences as children and as film-makers whose histories have brushed against this divided island, and that this chapter gives an interesting insight into 'screenwriting' an essay film through a process-based film-making collaboration.

A year after the exhibition at NiMAC closed in January 2019, the opening shot of *Father-land* – a view through the frame of a window and a partially open venetian blind – took on additional resonance. As the Covid pandemic swept the world in 2020, the UK government imposed a lockdown. Everyone, apart from 'key workers', such as nurses and the police, were confined to their homes, only permitted to enter the outside world for an hour each day. The fear of the new virus spread anxiety through the populace, and people kept themselves separate to avoid infection. Like the partition of Cyprus in 1974, this happened suddenly, with no way of knowing how long the isolation would last. Nations closed their borders, and freedom of movement was curtailed internationally – and often within countries. The internal space of 'home' became both a refuge and a prison. As in Nicosia, where the Buffer Zone and beyond was visible but out of reach, so the window pane at home in Plymouth formed a border which demarcated the enforced interiority of our existence from the environment outside.

This common experience of 'looking out' while being 'locked in' was formalised by the online project *WindowSwap*, where people shared a ten-minute video recording of a static view through the window of their home on a website set up by two artists in Singapore, Sonali Ranjit and Vaishnav Balasubramaniam.[42] We contributed the filming of the Nicosia apartment window to this project, having been struck by the correspondence between the themes of *Father-land* and *WindowSwap* relating to the precarity of our existence, the loss of agency due to external forces, and a shared longing for a place and the past that remain out of reach.

Notes

1. This research was made possible through an artist residency hosted by Nicosia Municipal Arts Center (NiMAC, associated with the Pierides Foundation) and supported by grants from the School of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Plymouth, UK. The film won the BAFTSS Practice Research Award, in the category Essay/Experimental Film (British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies Best Practice Research Portfolio 2020).
2. *Father-land* can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/301493003.
3. The demilitarised Buffer Zone that partitions Cyprus is abbreviated to 'BZ' or 'DMZ' (Demilitarised Zone) by some commentators.
4. *Father-land*, narration spoken by Kayla Parker. The carob (Ceratonia siliqua), a flowering evergreen tree of the legume family, has been cultivated in Cyprus and the Mediterranean for many centuries. The ripe, dried pods are ground and boiled to produce a thick, sweet syrup.
5. *Father-land*, narration spoken by Kayla Parker.
6. *Father-land*, narration spoken by Kayla Parker.
7. Written, produced, edited, and directed by the Greek Cypriot Michael Cacoyannis, the 1964 feature film *Zorba the Greek* (Αλέξης Ζορμπάς, Alexis Zorbas) starred Anthony Quin, Alan Bates, and Lila Kedrova, who won Best Supporting Actress at the 37th Academy Awards. Adapted from Nikos Kazantzakis's 1946 novel, *The Life and Times of Alexis Zorba*, and shot in black and white on the island of Crete, the film's musical score was composed by Mikis Theodorakis. The film also won Best Cinematography (Walter Lassally) and Best Art direction (Dionysis Fotopoulos), and it was nominated for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Leading Actor (Male), and Best Adapted Screenplay.
8. Risto Pekka Pennanen, 'The Organological Development and Performance Practice of the Greek Bouzouki', in *Westernisation and Modernisation in Greek Popular Music* (Tampere: University of Tampere, 1999): 119–203.
9. Yiannis Toumazis, 'NiMAC: The Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre', in *Layers of Visibility: NiMAC/University of Plymouth Artist Residencies 2013–2017*, ed. Liz Wells (Plymouth: University of Plymouth Press, 2018): 4.
10. Liz Wells, 'On Being Out of Place', in *Layers of Visibility: NiMAC/University of Plymouth Artist Residencies 2013–2017*, ed. Liz Wells (Plymouth: University of Plymouth Press, 2018): 32.
11. For example, we made the 2009 film *Teign Spirit*, commissioned by Animate Projects, via a residency at Teignmouth and Shaldon Museum on the south coast of Devon. The film can be seen, along with a selection of stills, online here: https://animateprojectsarchive.org/films/by_date/2009/teign_spirit.
12. Hans Richter, 'The Film Essay: A New Form of Documentary Film', trans. Maria P. Alter, in *Essays on the Essay Film*, eds. Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017): 91.
13. Kevin B. Lee, 'Video Essay/The Essay Film: Some Thoughts of Discontent', in 'META-', special issue, *Otherzine* (10 December 2016), http://www.othercinema.com/otherzine/2940-2/.
14. Joram ten Brink, 'The Essay Film' (PhD diss., Middlesex University, 1999): 9.
15. Nora M. Alter, 'The Political Im/Perceptible in the Essay Film', *New German Critique* 68 (1996): 171.

16. Morin in Laura Rascaroli, 'The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments', *Framework* 49, no. 2 (2008): 39. Translated by Laura Rascaroli from the original Italian in Giovanni Maderna, 'Film saggio: Intervista a Edgar Morin', in *Filmmaker 5 Doc*, ed. Silvano Cavatorta and Luca Mosso (Milan: Edizioni A&M, 1996): 4.

17. *Father-land*, narration by Stuart Moore.

18. Although British soldiers serve with UNFICYP, there is no operational link to British soldiers serving in the Sovereign Base Areas.

19. See 'UNFICYP United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus' at United Nations (2023): https://unficyp.unmissions.org.

20. Walter A. Dorn, 'Electronic Eyes on the Green Line: Surveillance by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus', *Intelligence and National Security* 29, no. 2 (2014): 14, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02684527.2013.834216.

21. European Union, 'Cyprus', European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, accessed 23 March 2022, https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/cyprus_en.

22. *Λευκωσία* in Greek, *Lefkoşa* in Turkish.

23. Tim Edensor, 'Walking Through Ruins', in *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, eds. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (Abingdon and New York: Ashgate, 2008): 137.

24. Edensor, 'Walking Through Ruins': 129. Edensor writes about how plants and animals colonise ruins and displace what was once a place built for and occupied by human beings: 'Plants grow in profusion and animals move into spaces that were formerly delineated as interior. ... The ruined world is alive with moving non-human life forms that are usually consigned to marginal spaces.'

25. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, 'Introduction', in *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, eds. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (Abingdon and New York: Ashgate, 2008): 10.

26. Peter Loizos quoted in Haris Pellapaisiotis, 'The Art of the Buffer Zone', in *Photography and Cyprus*, eds. Nicos Philippou, Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert, and Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2014): 145.

27. Pellapaisiotis, 'The Art of the Buffer Zone': 146.

28. Hitchens's 49-minute programme was produced by Michael Waldman for the BBC Worldwide series *Frontiers*. The YouTube link we used in 2016 is now unavailable, but at the time of writing, the documentary can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNOxVFpRMik.
     Hitchens's essay can be found here: 'The Island Stranded in Time: Cyprus', in *Frontiers: The Book of the TV Series* (London: BBC Books, 1990): 116–141.

29. Πενταδάκτυλος in Greek, *Beşparmaklar* in Turkish. Pentadaktylos is the name for the western section of the Kyrenia range. It means 'five-fingered' in both Greek and Turkish, in reference to the mountain's appearance.

30. *Father-land*, narration by Kayla Parker.

31. Mangolte in *Essay Film Festival*, programme notes, 'Session #3: *The Camera: Je, or La Caméra: I*, in the presence of Babette Mangolte', 25 March 2017 (London: Birkbeck University of London, 2017), http://www.essayfilmfestival.com.

32. Justin Remes, *Motion*(*less*) *Pictures: The Cinema of* Stasis (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015): 140.

33. Robert Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: Urizen Books, 1977): 62.

34. Babette Mangolte, 'Afterward: A Matter of Time', in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson*, eds. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003): 271.

35. *Father-land*, narration by Stuart Moore.

36. Subsequently, the film was screened in the Jill Craigie Cinema at University of Plymouth as part of the institution's 2019 Festival of Research. In 2020, it featured in film festivals in Greece and Cyprus and was screened at the start of *Discovering Dalmatia VI: Watching, Waiting – Empty Spaces and the Representation of Isolation*. In 2021, *Father-land* was part of the group exhibition, *Loss*, at artP.kunstverein, Vienna, Austria.

37. Organised by the International Association of Photography and Theory, the biennial conference brings together researchers and practitioners from various fields of study related to photography: https://www.photographyandtheory.com.

38. Intra-production memory refers to our lived experience on location in Cyprus and our memories of making the film. The term 'intra-production memory' recognises that our subjectivities are enfolded within the essay film, *Father-land*.

39. Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA, and London: Sage, 2007).

40. Raymond Bellour, 'The Cinema and the Essay as a Way of Thinking', in *Essays on the Essay Film*, eds. Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017): 232–233.

41. Scott MacDonald, 'Introduction', in *Avant-Doc: Intersections of Documentary and Avant-Garde Cinema*, ed. Scott MacDonald (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015): 16.

42. All the 10-minute window views uploaded to *WindowSwap* can be watched here: https://www.window-swap.com.

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Chapter 2
The Empty Plinth and the Politics of Emptiness

Bec Rengel

2.1 Introduction

> The statue of Edward Colston was removed from his throne and tossed into the Bristol harborside; a triumph for the descendants whose ancestors had historically fallen into slavery at the hands of this man who had been deemed a 'hero'. As we made headlines around the world, I never felt more proud to be a Bristol native. It was at this point that the veil was lifted, and I had elevated to a new level of consciousness.[1]

When a statue of the seventeenth-century slave trader Edward Colston was toppled in Bristol during a Black Lives Matter protest on 7 June 2020, images of the event swept across the world and triggered a storm of debates about memorialisation and glorification of those deemed 'heroes'. In multiple cities around the world, 'the veil was lifted' and communities re-examined the validity of the statues they protected. More than a year on from these events, Colston's empty plinth still stands in Bristol's city centre. In a time of isolation and crisis, the images of the protests and plinth serve as an important reminder of the action that is still needed to address inequalities, both in the city of Bristol and beyond.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 Edward Colston

The subject of the statue in question is Edward Colston (1636–1721), a Bristolian merchant and the only surviving son of William Colston, a man

who lived through (and benefited from) a period of considerable upheaval
and political change. William was a Royalist supporter during the English
Civil War (1642–1651) who was financially compensated by the reinstated
King Charles II for his loyalty to the monarchy. William further benefited
from the politics of the era; as Ann Mumford notes, Charles needed signif-
icant funds to finance a lavish lifestyle and to address issues of homeless-
ness and overcrowding.[2] However, the King shied away from heavily taxing
landowners like William. As a result, Edward Colston was able to inherit a
significant fortune which allowed him to adopt the role of philanthropist.
The political and religious upheaval of his upbringing likely also shaped his
conservative views favouring monarchy and High Anglicanism.[3] Colston be-
came involved in the slave trade with the Royal African Company, which
held the monopoly on British slave trading in Africa, acting as an investor,
official, and later deputy governor of the company between 1680 and 1692.
During his tenure, an estimated 84,500 enslaved Africans were transported,
with at least 19,300 dying en route.[4] Despite this, Colston is regularly referred
to as a generous and pious philanthropist, founder of almshouses and a ben-
efactor to the city.[5]

According to Philip Kuhn, the veneration of Colston began shortly af-
ter his death, and a movement to commemorate Colston's birthday on
2 November manifested in the 1726 founding of the Colston Society. This
sparked three more politically motivated charitable societies founded in
Colston's name: the Dolphin Society (largely Tory and conservative mem-
bers), the Anchor Society (primarily Whig and liberal supporters), and the
Grateful Society (no obvious political leanings). Together, the efforts of
these four societies, including their charitable fundraising, annual dinners,
and attempts to commemorate Colston, drove an adulatory 'cult of Colston',
which saw him only as a philanthropist. His connections to slavery, mean-
while, vanished from the narratives of the day.[6] However, this version of
Colston as an icon of Bristol whose generosity built the city is in fact a myth
manufactured by Bristol's Victorian business elite to further their bourgeois
agenda, which sought to promote elite economic individualism and moral
superiority. In this invented tradition, they painted Colston as a merchant
prince (due to his fortune) and a moral superior (due to his charity).[7] In
fact, Colston (formerly a Tory MP), was selective with his generosity, reg-
ularly excluding Whigs and liberals, non-Anglican Christians, and ordi-
nary lower-class Bristolians from his philanthropy;[8] moreover, the majority
of Colston's charitable efforts and the efforts of charitable organisations

established in his name were performed in this manner. The unpalatable parts of Colston's history, including his involvement in the slave trade and his religious and political bigotry, were conveniently forgotten.

2.2.2 Colston's Statue

John Cassidy's 1895 bronze statue of Colston (Figure 2.1) was erected almost two centuries after Colston's death in an area of Bristol now called The Centre, facing Bristol's Harbourside and along one of the major traffic routes into the city centre. It was designed to celebrate Colston as a wise and virtuous benefactor to the city. However, as Hannah Rose Woods notes, it was created during a time of increasing labour unrest and challenges to the established Tory elite, and therefore 'its original creation was a piece of historical revisionism that sought to bolster British confidence and supremacy'.[9] Interestingly, the inscription on the plinth states that it was erected 'by the citizens of Bristol' (Figure 2.3). However, the original idea for the statue came from just one man, James Arrowsmith, president of the Anchor Society. Arrowsmith attempted to gain cross-party support from the four Colston societies, calling upon the combined membership of all four (around 1,550 people) to fund the statue. However, this raised less than a quarter of the total amount required. Subsequent appeals to both the general public and to the city's elite to fund the statue were poor, and even after unveiling the

Figure 2.1: John Cassidy, statue of Edward Colston, 1895. (© Simon Cobb, 24 June 2019, Wikimedia Commons, reproduced under license CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) Public Domain Dedication)

statue, there still was not enough money to pay for it – Kuhn and Ball both speculate that Arrowsmith made up the shortfall from his own pocket.[10] The plaque was originally designed to list the names of the Colston societies but instead references only the 'citizens of Bristol', demonstrating the failure of the four Colston societies to work together.[11]

Since at least the 1990s, there have been numerous appeals, petitions, artistic installations, and vandalism pushing to have the statue removed, or at least recontextualised.[12] There has never been a satisfactory answer to these appeals; not even an additional plaque has been placed to recontextualise the statue. I have felt it is particularly important to stress the background surrounding the Colston statue. To those unaware of the context, the toppling of the Colston statue could be seen as an act of criminal damage, as inexcusable vandalism of public property. However, for many in Bristol, the toppling brought relief and joy rather than anger, and it symbolised the liberation of the city from the shadow of Colston. Furthermore, around the world, the act left many wondering how and why a statue of a man who engaged in such an abhorrent profession remained on public display for so long.

2.3 The Empty Plinth: Absence

Viewing the plinth today, the most striking feature is a sense of absence. An empty plinth, the inscription pointing to a non-existent sculpture, the chunk of stone broken off in the corner, and the outlines of graffiti that have been washed off numerous times leave us wondering what used to stand here (Figure 2.2). Before it was toppled, Bristolians walking through the city centre probably never gave it a second glance, but now the statue is conspicuous by its absence.

Many of the harshest critics of the statue's toppling argued that its removal demonstrated the destruction of history. Since the 1990s, debates have been raging about Colston's statue, with calls for its removal, recontextualisation, or subversion. For example, when in 1998 Ray Sefia (then Bristol's only Black councillor) stated that honouring Colston was as inappropriate as honouring Hitler, local media, including BBC Radio Bristol, mounted a strong defence of Colston.[13] In 1999, the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery opened the *Bristol and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* exhibition, which acknowledged Colston's role in the trade. Subsequently, a placard

Figure 2.2: Colston's empty plinth with detail of broken top and outlines of past graffiti.
(© Bec Rengel, 26 November 2020)

appeared by the 1726 bust of Colston sculpted by John Michael Rysbrack in All Saints' Church addressing his involvement in the trade and the Royal African Company. Other protests have included the words 'Fuck Off Slave Trader' daubed in red paint on the statue (1998), drops of blood painted on the plinth attributed to Banksy (2007), and an art installation of a slave ship at the statue's feet (2018).[14] During the twenty-first century, this debate has continued, with the pro-Colston camp constantly referencing his endowment of schools, churches, and charities to paint him as an intrinsic part of the city's identity; an interesting argument for a man whose legacy as a paragon of civic pride was only really established over a century after his death. Olivette Otele, Bristol University's first professor of slavery, notes that the 'collective amnesia' of the pro-Colston camp demonstrates a wider national desire to glorify the abolitionist movement and forget the horrors of Britain's involvement in the slave trade. Furthermore, Richard Stone, a professor of history at Bristol University, notes that large areas of Bristol including the cobble-lined streets of the historic Queen Square were financed

through profits gained from the slave trade: "'What does slavery look like in Bristol?" asks Mr Stone, pointing at the tree-lined cobbled streets. "It looks like this. Look at a lot of the city and that's what you'll be seeing'".[15]

It is interesting to note that

> the removal of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol did anything but erase history. Colston's statue is an important historical artifact, and its meaning over time has and will change. It offers a valuable learning opportunity to reflect on how difficult pasts are negotiated. Statues, after all, do not reflect history – they reflect historical memory, which is contingent, temporally remote, and subject to contestation.[16]

Previously a debate largely confined to Bristol, councils worldwide are now reflecting on the statues they protect, whether they be of slave traders in the UK or confederate generals in the United States.[17] Furthermore, a re-examination of Colston's history has been aired around the world, with more people learning the favourable and unfavourable legacy of the man. More importantly, these debates and stories are being lived through social media, blog posts, and news articles, making them accessible and not only available within the paywall-blocked preserve of ivory towers. I would argue that, if anything, the removal of Colston is enriching history.

2.3.1 Emptiness in Images

Several scholars have noted that the empty plinth recalls the ancient Roman practice of damnatio memoriae.[18] This practice was the harsh punishment of condemning someone's memory, removing them from all official records, memorials, and any other physical remnants of their existence. Because they are effectively deleted from existence, this can be seen as the destruction of history, leaving us wondering who this person was and why they suffered this fate. However, as Richard Nevell and Virginia Campbell note, often those who were subject to damnatio memoriae in the ancient world leave a gap which can speak louder than their presence.[19] As Nevell states:

> Had an earlier petition to remove the statue succeeded, it would have left a much smaller impression on the memory. The method of removal is also important in how an event is remembered. In an age where everyone carries a camera in their pocket, there will be countless photos and

videos of events. The memory of Colston and the slave trade has been brought to the fore rather than erased, and the event has made history and Britain's role in the slave trade is being discussed more publicly than it has been in decades.[20]

Colston's name was removed from the plinth when the statue fell, as the stone pedestal that bore his name was attached to the statue's feet (Figure 2.1). Furthermore, the nameless plinth's plaque was altered to now read 'Rejected by the citizens of Bristol', with the ghost of the previous words 'Erected by the citizens of Bristol' just visible beneath (Figure 2.3). Just as the ancient Romans re-carved statue heads, crossed out inscriptions, or rubbed faces off coins, the plaque clearly exemplifies the damnatio memoriae of Colston. To date, Colston's name has been officially removed from a tower block, a nearby pub, a concert hall, and a secondary school. The empty plinth represents an epicentre from which the revolution is coming and the absence of Colston is spreading.

Images of absence tell a story, and photographs of the empty plinth of Colston recall the events of 7 June, including the joy, triumph, and justification of the protesters' actions in toppling the statue. Lara Choksey highlights that '[the statue of] Colston faced the harbour, surveying cargo routes, commemorating the city's passage of wealth. Those watery routes bore the wakes of unmarked mass graves [of transported slaves]'.[21] The empty plinth still stands facing the harbour, surveying some of the main bus routes through the city centre, commemorating Bristol's commitment to create a balanced image of the city's history. Photographs of the plinth show Bristolians going about their everyday lives in a space that was created by and for Bristol's elite. The plinth now stands near St Augustine's Parade and Colston Avenue in central Bristol. This part of Bristol was taken over, repurposed, and redesigned in the nineteenth century in an attempt to build the space into the crown jewel of a revitalised city. At the time, Bristol was a city conspicuous for its lack of public art, and Kuhn notes that in a short period, three statues quickly arose in this newly designed area: one of the abolitionist and liberal MP 1868–1885 Samuel Morley (erected 1887), one of Bristolian MP 1774–1780 Edward Burke (unveiled 1897), and one of Colston (1895). They were carefully chosen by leading members of Bristol's Liberal Association to stave off a growing unease among upper and middle classes of the rising militancy of the working classes and the threat of socialism. These men were chosen for their statesmanship and philanthropy, glossing over less savoury aspects

Figure 2.3: Detail of the plaque on the empty plinth showing new epithet 'Rejected by the citizens of Bristol'. (© Bec Rengel 26 November 2020)

of their histories, including Burke's deep moral conservatism and Colston's slave trading.[22] Literally placed on a pedestal in a brand new Bristolian centre, these statues physically asserted the power that the liberal elite exercised with their ability to take over and carve out public space as they wished. As Toni Morrison notes, the manipulation of public space 'sculpts the rhythms of the everyday in saying who and what is significant to gazes that sweep up and down [during] both routine and irregular journeys through public space'.[23] The concept of 'public space' in itself is fictional because, despite the association of 'public' as inclusive of all, in reality public space functions to exclude minorities and those on the fringes of society.[24]

Images of the empty plinth now combat the intended veneration of Colston and by association the statues of Morley and Burke. Where previously the statue of Colston towered over people going about their everyday lives, physically demonstrating the superiority and magnificence that the statue was originally intended to convey, the plinth now stands only slightly above average adult height, no longer physically dominating the space it occupies. Furthermore, the empty plinth containing the absence of Colston recalls images of the protest, with protesters reclaiming the streets of Bristol that were once taken over and manipulated by the city's Victorian elite to further an agenda that necessarily excluded the working classes and Black Bristolians. The absence of Colston on the plinth is in itself 'place-making', and where Colston's statue used to be the 'person of significance' gazing down on Bristol's citizens, now the *plinth* 'shapes the routine and irregular journeys' of the everyday. The public space and materiality of the plaza has been reconfigured, and thus the plinth – once a monument memorialising the actions of a single man – itself becomes a platform of resistance and a monument of collective action.[25]

2.3.2 Protest Photography in a Pandemic

As the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world and populations went into protracted periods of lockdown, isolating themselves from others to curb the effects of a deadly virus, the world became increasingly reliant on digital connections. Images became more important than ever – we could only see other people through a screen. Moreover, photographs of empty streets enhanced these feelings of isolation, showing ordinarily busy metropolises devoid of people. Thus, images of Black Lives Matter protests captured around the world, including the protest in Bristol on 7 June, have strong resonance. Previously empty and emotionless streets were suddenly filled with people, displaying frustration, sadness, and passion to enact change. Images of protests during the pandemic allowed us not only to understand newsworthy events but also to connect with the outside world and remind us that the pandemic did not halt the marginalisation and racism experienced by communities of colour.

Furthermore, photographs of empty streets during the pandemic are demonstrative of the experience of marginalised individuals. As discussed above, public spaces can be exclusive in their very construction, history, and nature, designed by and for elites to project a particular historical narrative.

Figure 2.4: Filling the streets with protesters and protest signs. (© Caitlin Hobbs, 7 June 2020, Wikimedia Commons, reproduced under licence CC Attribution 3.0 Unported (CC BY 3.0), https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en. No changes were made to the image)

This exclusion can be visually embodied in photographs of Bristol's empty streets, as marginalised communities are excluded from the privilege of engaging in and being represented in public spaces. Juxtaposed with images of the protest on 7 June, where previously empty streets were filled with demonstrators, this exclusion begins to feel negated (Figure 2.4). Francesca Sobande reflects on similar protests in Cardiff, where several protest signs lay around Cardiff's city centre on the day following the protests: 'such signs and their placement at the heart of the city centre, symbolize how typically populated marketplace and public space contexts may be strategically used to distribute Black and racial justice activist signage and messages of solidarity'.[26] Sobande goes on to discuss how decades of architecture and aesthetics of public space can be co-opted to communicate a message of liberation and disrupt the dominant and exclusionary white-centred narrative of history.[27] Similarly, images of the protest and subsequent toppling of Colston both visually and physically disrupted the historic public space, creating a permanent piece of 'activist signage and message of solidarity' in the empty plinth. In a time of isolation photographs of the protest therefore offer us a double meaning. Not only do they attempt to negate the isolation and exclusion of marginalised communities from historic public spaces, but they also demonstrate the vital nature of the protest: it was necessary to fill the streets and break isolation for the cause.

2.4 The Empty Plinth: Revolution

The toppling of a statue is a revolutionary, radical act – consider any moment in history that monuments of oppression fell. Yet for those primarily on the political right and those in the pro-Colston camp, the empty plinth as it stands today in Bristol's city centre represents loss, criminal damage, and the scars of violence. For example, commentators such as Edward Chancellor decried the toppling of Colston as an act of 'cultural imperialism', and newspapers such as *The Economist* declared that 'great figures should have a place in public spaces, even when their record is tarnished'.[28] Furthermore, the toppling of Colston triggered retaliation acts, such as a gravestone of enslaved African Scipio Africanus in St Mary's Churchyard in Bristol being smashed in two.[29] On the day of the removal of the Colston statue, there was no police intervention during the protest, as police later stated they were not prepared and did not have the capacity to intervene; indeed, Police Superintendent for Bristol Andy Bennet stated that although he was disappointed in the methods by which the statue was removed, he could understand the symbolism and reason behind it.[30] However, the UK's Home Secretary Priti Patel, who was highly critical of the statue's toppling, as well as the national press, put pressure on police to launch a full investigation, seek prosecution, and explain why they did not stop the protesters.

W.J.T. Mitchell notes that much of public art both references violence (for instance commemorating wars or slave traders) and represses violence (monumentalising and pacifying destructive actions of an individual). Thus, public art can be inherently destructive, and it can even exist as a provocation to violence, regardless of the intentions of the people who originally commissioned and created the art.[31] By sanitising Colston's history and venerating him without balancing his narrative and acknowledging his actions as a slave trader, the existence of his statue was always in itself an act of violence. The statue's continued existence juxtaposed with the ongoing inequality suffered by the city's Black communities strongly demonstrated historic and contemporary marginalisation and exclusion of people deemed to be 'lesser'.[32] It is bizarre that certain groups see the loss of Colston's statue as criminal damage and as bearing the scars of violence when his actions as a slave trader left these scars on the thousands of bodies of Africans he enslaved and transported. Colston was complicit in killing and profiting off the sale of Black bodies, and white-run governments for generations have distanced themselves from such acts, as his actions primarily killed people

many miles away rather than those on home soil. In many ways, Colston was far more the extremist than the protesters who tore down his statue.

Kehinde Andrews provides an excellent analysis of the difference between radicalism and extremism in his book *Back to Black*, which explores the concept of Black radicalism with particular emphasis on the radicalism espoused by notable civil rights activist Malcolm X. For Andrews, extremism involves taking an idea to the extreme, pushing ideas to absolutes with no room for flexibility.[33] This applies to Colston; in his eyes, Black Africans were not granted humanity and were treated as property – he took what we would now call racism to an extreme where Black bodies were sold and traded for profit in the same way that inanimate objects were traded. Conversely, radicalism rejects 'the fundamental principles that govern society and [works to create] a new paradigm'.[34] Radicalism and extremism are often confused because people equate violence with radicalism; however, as Andrews clarifies: 'Radicalism is confused with extremism because we incorrectly conflate what is radical with what is violent [. . .] Radicalism is not about the means (violence/non-violence) but the ends (reform/revolution)'.[35] Malcolm X is regularly contrasted with Martin Luther King in Andrews's book, and he compares the liberal (King) to the radical (Malcolm X) tradition of civil rights activism. Where the liberal tradition aims to integrate into a system, placating those in power to gain equality, radicalism knows that the system is broken and looks to overthrow and reform it. Andrews sums this up as such: 'So the battle is not to get good jobs or be elected, but to end the system of oppression and create the world in a new image'.[36]

Colston and his statue represent the embodiment of a racist and violent system, one in which Black lives are dehumanised continuously throughout history – in Colston's time, Black Africans were treated as property; today, Black Britons are consistently discriminated against in the judicial system, education, employment, and everyday life. For example, the statue's toppling coincided with the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the UK's communities of colour, particularly its Black communities, were more impacted than any other.[37] The act of toppling Colston's statue is a radical revolution and a challenge to institutional 'anti-Blackness' and against a rhetoric that continues to glorify a man like Colston.[38] Had the protesters chosen to instead leave the statue, they would have been following an activist tradition that tries to create change within a broken system – however, institutional change cannot happen when we pander to those in power.

For almost thirty years, there have been countless petitions and demonstrations to remove the statue – it has a uniquely Bristolian context that critics like Priti Patel would do well to remember. Now, the empty plinth will always be a reminder of a radical act that saw Bristol protesters tired of trying to follow the rules of a broken system to enact change. Following the statue's removal, protesters occupied that space, gave speeches, and displayed protest signs (Figure 2.4). The plinth became a monument not to Colston but to a city that refuses to glorify a racist any longer – consider the fact that numerous institutions have been renamed and even Bristol's mayor voiced his approval that the statue has been removed, although not the methods by which it was achieved. In this case, the 'scars of violence' on the empty plinth represent a radical revolution that is tired of being palatable to those in power to gain scraps of equality.

2.4.1 Photography and Social Media in a Time of Change

Tamar Carroll notes that protest photography

> centers the experience of marginalized groups and individuals allow[ing] for the presentation of more inclusive historical narratives. Similarly, social protest photography's focus on the agency of their subjects [concentrates] on the ways in which non-elites enact change, including through protest.[39]

In times of crisis, protest, and change, photography allows us to constantly reflect on important moments and ensure that the objectives of a protest are not forgotten. For example, photographs from the protest capture the joy, shock, and elation as the statue came down; they capture protest signs calling for change; they capture covered faces, normally associated with deceit, now associated with personal and collective safety as wearing face coverings protects yourself and others from the effects of a deadly virus. Images of the protest thus allow us to recall a specific moment in time, where issues of inequality were exacerbated by the pandemic and the suffering of Black communities at the hands of authority figures such as police sparked worldwide protests. Furthermore, the proliferation of social media allows movements such as Black Lives Matter to become truly global and images showing the symbolic overthrowing of oppression, such as the toppling of Colston's statue, to be widely and rapidly shared around the world.

The accessibility of smartphone photography and social media has allowed ordinary people to capture and document collective history as it happens. As Faheem Haider states, 'Images of abuse, coercion, resistance, and love are being documented independently, by everyone'.[40] Everyone can thus contribute their own thoughts to the collective narrative of an event and share their own forms of protest through social media. Hasfa Kanjwal agrees, stating, 'The act of photography and the reasons why one would take up the camera are not separate from the reasons why the subjects of their photographs take up theatre or street protest'.[41] When photographers take photos of protests, those images can become protest in themselves, whether in their reproduction, their depiction of marginalised communities occupying normally exclusionary public space, the expression of solidarity with a particular movement, or in the contribution to collective memory-making. Indeed, Susan Sontag notes that collective memory is in fact 'not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds'.[42] Photographs of protest, particularly those created and shared on social media with an individual's personal experiences in the caption, can thus contribute to the 'stipulating' and the story. Aleida Assmann distinguishes between two types of collective memory: archive and canon. Archive refers to narratives that have been neglected, forgotten, or discarded but are still preserved in a material way, whereas canon refers more to collective memory as it becomes dominant historical narrative: the memories and events a culture has deemed worthy to preserve and remember.[43] Collective memory thus exists in the commonalities of individual memories, and through both personal memory and historical events, collective memory can both create and challenge dominant historical narratives.[44] The act of engaging in collective memory-making by photographing and sharing the fall of Colston's statue can therefore transform archival collective memory (such as Colston's slave trading) into a more balanced canon (Colston's recontextualisation and the reframing of his history).

These images can also help challenge mainstream media's portrayal of an event. For example, Antigoni Memou discusses the way mainstream media manipulated images in the death of Carlo Giuliani, a protester at the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001. Where American media chose to include photos of Giuliani aiming a fire extinguisher at a police car to accompany the story, European and Italian media chose images of his dead body. Memou notes that images of Giuliani's dead body provoked sentimental responses, and

although images of violence were published, the majority of protesters were peaceful. Indeed, 'spectacular images of violent confrontation between protesters and the police, or images of destroyed property, are valued as newsworthy by the mainstream media', even in cases where violence was minimal or non-existent.[45] Similarly, much reporting of the toppling of the Colston statue favoured close-up images of the statue with protesters kneeling on his neck to recall the murder of George Floyd, whose death sparked similar protests across the world, or pictures focusing on the statue being rolled to and dumped in the harbour. Conversely, a search of #EdwardColston on Instagram brings up a greater variety of images, including artworks and protest signs, images of protesters such as Jen Reid occupying the plinth following its removal, and wider shots demonstrating the passion of the protesting crowd. Instead of a focus on violence being done to an anthropomorphic statue which positions the statue as a victim, these images instead focus on collective action to address the wrongs of the past. In this way, photography becomes more than just a way of recording or reporting on an event; it instead captures the collective movement to address inequality and create a call to action. As Choksey says when reflecting on the protest: in the moment, 'I am not thinking about the making of public memory, but it is happening'.[46]

2.4.2 The Empty Plinth as Liberation

The statue of Colston was a site of protest for decades, with acts of subversion such as a spray-painted slave collar on the statue's neck or a slave ship art installation at his feet (see p. 67) aimed to undermine the nationalistic narrative of Colston as a benevolent city benefactor. These protests constitute a type of guerrilla memorialisation, a term defined by Alan Rice as a type of memorialisation which works to challenge dominant historical narratives and rewrite civic or national histories.[47] Rice discusses the work of Black British artist Lubaina Himid's 2009 performance piece *What Are Monuments for?*, a piece that undermines conventional guidebooks by reimagining what the memorial landscape of London and Paris would have looked like if they had honoured the role played by people of African origin. Himid imagines a new cityscape for these major cities constituting a type of 'guerrilla memorialization [that] negotiates new meanings out of the interaction between what is there and what is missing', and thus Himid causes the landscape to speak forgotten and hidden histories, revelling in Black agency and undermining the power of slavers.[48] Furthermore, Rice

also discusses a monument unveiled in the former slaving port of Lancaster in 2005 by artist Kevin Dalton Johnson, whose monument displays names of slavers, names many people in the city might still share. Rice notes that slavers are often remembered as citizens of note, and a guerrilla memorialisation like Johnson's instead works against this traditional historiography.[49]

This example is particularly apt in comparison to the plinth of Colston. Previous protests highlighted a level of absence, noting the vital missing context of the statue (Colston's slave trading) and mourning the countless lives lost because of his trade. However, the empty plinth takes this concept further. With Colston removed both from the plinth and from nearby buildings and roads, the plinth subverts the previous idealisation of Colston, and (like Himid's 2009 performance piece) the landscape becomes reimagined. No longer does Colston gaze down on passers-by, visually demonstrating the elite superiority he possessed. Instead, the much shorter plinth occupies the space, undermining his previous domination of the plaza.

Empty plinths and the toppling of statues are strongly associated in history with a regime change: examples include the toppling of statues of Saddam Hussein in Iraq following the invasion by United States forces or the destruction of monuments to Tsar Nicholas II after the communist revolution in Russia in 1918. Perhaps because of this association with rapid political change and because this event happened in the United Kingdom, which tends to associate such images with historical events outside the 'West', the toppling of Colston resonated so powerfully throughout the world. Monuments are by their nature and construction rigid and have a limited capacity to represent change and the values of societies, particularly when those societies have changed considerably in their perceptions of right and wrong.[50] The empty plinth is able to demonstrate a sense of freedom, change, and liberation from the shadow of Colston and the veneration of his legacy that would gloss over less palatable aspects of his history. Kim Gurney provides a comparable example following the removal of slaver and colonialist Cecil Rhodes from the University of Cape Town campus in 2015. Gurney discusses a visit to Iziko's South African National Gallery and the 2016 exhibition of photography of performance artist Sethembile Msezane's *Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell*. The photographs depict Msezane in a black leotard with arms raised standing on a plinth with wings braided in animal hair suspended from her arms. Msezane is surrounded by an audience immersed in watching the removal of the statue, with wings raised at the moment of the statue's removal. The positioning of one of the wings looks as if the wing is lifting the statue off its pedestal.

Msezane's artist's statement is that the work celebrates the disruption of a legacy of white supremacy, capturing a moment of identity construction, self-assertion, and reclamation of a space.[51] Similarly, photographs of the fall of Colston and subsequent protests on and around the plinth demonstrate the moment that Bristol's citizens, the people who supposedly erected the statue, according to the plaque on the plinth, chose to challenge patriarchal and colonialist rhetoric that created the 'cult of Colston' in the first place.

The reclamation of the space previously occupied by the statue also became evident, particularly as questions arose considering what to do with the empty plinth. In the days following the toppling of Colston, the plinth's continual history as a vehicle of protest remained, hosting artistic works protesting Jimmy Saville (a notable philanthropist, posthumously convicted of child sex offences; his philanthropy was subsequently tarnished), as well as protesting English nationalism. Thirty-eight days after the Colston statue fell, London artist Marc Quinn created a resin sculpture of protester Jen Reid. Reid was one of the first people to stand on the empty plinth after Colston fell, raising her fist in a symbol of Black power. The sculpture, titled *A Surge of Power*, was a demonstration of liberation. The plinth that was once occupied by the slaver Colston was subverted and instead celebrated a Black Bristolian woman in a position of power. Although the council removed this statue the next day and emphasised that a democratic process was necessary to decide the fate of the plinth, again the image of Jen Reid atop what was formerly Colston's plinth was seen around the world, and the plinth's history and future as a beacon of protest was cemented.

2.5 Conclusion

Effectively, this landscape is now given back to the people of Bristol and instead of representing division (in the form of Colston's statue), it can now represent progress and the hope of unity. The plinth is no longer the firm glorification of a slave trader but instead becomes a stage now occupied by Black bodies, by art, and by demonstrations. This allows us to keep questioning the world around us and challenging a powerful elite. Instead of protests directed at an existing sculpture, in the same way that a building can be a canvas for protest street art, the empty plinth instead is an empty stage waiting to be filled. Several months after the events of 7 June, I took a photograph (Figure 2.5) to capture this effect: the plinth is empty, central in the photograph, curtained by

Figure 2.5: The empty plinth as a stage, framed by street lights and curtains of trees evoking a proscenium arch. (© Bec Rengel, 26 November 2020)

leaves of trees on either side, and framed by streetlights on either side. Empty of the statue's shadow, the plinth is also more clearly illuminated than before. This is in some way an eerie and melancholy image. It lacks the dynamic nature of the protest and toppling of the statue, when the plaza space was filled with bodies calling for action. This is the day-to-day plinth when it is not directly being used as a vehicle for protest, surrounded with action. It is watching and waiting, reminding us that toppling Colston is only the beginning of a long journey to right the wrongs of the past.

Notes

1.   Anonymous, '7th June 2020', *No More Silence*! (2021): 26. This anonymous article formed part of a zine created by, contributed to, and produced by University of the West of England Bristol students and staff.
2.   Ann Mumford, 'Edward Colston and the Coronavirus: A Reflection on Narratives of Taxation in Taxing Times', *King's Law Journal* 32, no. 1 (2021): 162–164.

3. Mumford, 'Edward Colston and the Coronavirus: A Reflection on Narratives of Taxation in Taxing Times': 162–164; Samuel J. Richardson, 'Historical Revision in Church: Reexamining the "Saint" Edward Colston', *Anglican and Episcopal History* 89, no. 3 (2021): 232.

4. Roger Ball, 'Calculating the Number of Enslaved Africans Transported by the Royal African Company during Edward Colston's Involvement (1680–92)', *Bristol Radical History Group* (2020); Angela H. Hobbs, 'In Memoriam: The Who, How, Where and When of Statues', *Journal of Philosophy Education* 55 (2021): 434.

5. Richardson, 'Historical Revision in Church: Reexamining the "Saint" Edward Colston': 229–230, 237.

6. Philip Kuhn, 'Who Owns Colston?', *Bristol Radical History Group* (2020).

7. Spencer Jordan, 'The Development and Implementation of Authority in a Regional Capital: A Study of Bristol's Elites' (PhD diss., University of the West of England Bristol, 1999): 299; Roger Ball, 'Myths within Myths . . . Edward Colston and that Statue', *Bristol Radical History Group* (2020); Kuhn, 'Who Owns Colston?'

8. Madge Dresser, 'Obliteration, Contextualisation or "Guerrilla Memorialisation"? Edward Colston's Statue Reconsidered', *Open Democracy*, 29 August 2016, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/obliteration-contextualisation-or-guerrilla-memorialisation-edward-colst/; Richardson, 'Historical Revision in Church: Reexamining the "Saint" Edward Colston': 242–243.

9. Hannah Rose Woods, 'An Act of History: The Toppling of Edward Colston's Statue', *The New Statesman*, 12–18 June 2020: 18.

10. Kuhn, 'Who Owns Colston?'; Ball, 'Myths within Myths . . . Edward Colston and that Statue'.

11. Kuhn, 'Who Owns Colston?'

12. Richardson, 'Historical Revision in Church: Reexamining the "Saint" Edward Colston': 248; Dresser, 'Obliteration, Contextualisation or "Guerrilla Memorialisation"? Edward Colston's Statue Reconsidered': 1–2.

13. Richardson, 'Historical Revision in Church: Reexamining the "Saint" Edward Colston': 248.

14. Dresser, 'Obliteration, Contextualisation or "Guerrilla Memorialisation"? Edward Colston's Statue Reconsidered': 1–2.

15. 'The Colston Statue and Britain's Legacy of Slavery', *The Economist*, 13 June 2020, https://www-economist-com.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk/britain/2020/06/11/the-colston-statue-and-britains-legacy-of-slavery. See also Saima Nasar, 'Remembering Edward Colston: Histories of Slavery, Memory, and Black Globality', *Women's History Review* 29, no. 7 (2020): 1221–1223, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1812815.

16. Nasar, 'Remembering Edward Colston: Histories of Slavery, Memory, and Black Globality': 1224.

17. Hobbs, 'In Memoriam: The Who, How, Where and When of Statues': 431; Ana Christina Mendes, 'From "Crisis" to Imagination: Putting White Heroes Under Erasure Post-George Floyd', *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 21, no. 5 (2021): 394–395, 397, https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086211028677; 'How to Handle Racists' Statues: Should They Stay or Should They Go?', *The Economist*, 13 June 2020, https://www-economist-com.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk/leaders/2020/06/11/how-to-handle-racists-statues.

18. Virginia L. Campbell, 'Remembering to Forget', 8 June 2020, https://pompeiinetworks.wordpress.com/2020/06/08/remembering-to-forget/; Richard Nevell, 'What Does the Removal of a Historic Object Mean?', 8 June 2020, https://richardthecastellan.wordpress.com/2020/06/08/what-does-the-removal-of-a-historic-object-mean/; Erik Thorstensen, 'The Places of Memory in a Square of Monuments: Conceptions of Past, Freedom and History at Szabadság Tér', *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 5 (2012): 97, https://doi.org/10.5195/ahea.2012.71.

19. Campbell, 'Remembering to Forget'; Nevell, 'What Does the Removal of a Historic Object Mean?'

20. Nevell, 'What Does the Removal of a Historic Object Mean?'

21. Lara Choksey, 'Colston Falling', *Journal of Historical Geography* (2020): 5, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2020.07.007.

22. Nasar, 'Remembering Edward Colston: Histories of Slavery, Memory, and Black Globality': 1220; Kuhn, 'Who Owns Colston?'

23. Toni Morrison, 'The Site of Memory', in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995): 87.

24. W.J.T. Mitchell, 'The Violence of Public Art: "Do the Right Thing"', *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (1990): 886–887, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343773. Mitchell also notes that the term 'public' comes from the Latin *populus* ('the people') and *pubes* ('adult men'), recalling that for much of human history, adult citizen men were the elite.

25. See also Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015): 30–31.

26. Layla-Roxanne Hill and Francesca Sobande, '(Re)viewing Race, the Marketplace, and Public Space through the Lens of Photography', *Journal of Marketing Management* 36, no. 13–14 (2020): 1176, https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1850076.

27. Hill and Sobande, '(Re)viewing Race, the Marketplace, and Public Space through the Lens of Photography': 1176.

28. Edward Chancellor, 'In Defence of Statues', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 109, no. 6 (2020): 745. https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2020.184950 5; 'How to Handle Racists' Statues: Should They Stay or Should They Go?' *The Economist*, 13 June 2020, https://www-economist-com.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk/leaders/2020/06/11/how-to-handle-racists-statues.

29. 'Enslaved African Man's Headstone in Bristol Vandalised', *BBC*, 18 June 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-53089528.

30. Richard Bolden, 'The Fall of Edward Colston and the Rise of Inclusive Place-Based Leadership', 15 June 2020, https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/6053767.

31. Mitchell, 'The Violence of Public Art: "Do the Right Thing"': 885–886, 888–890.

32. Richardson notes that according to the 2017 Runnymede Report, ethnic minorities in Bristol were at a greater disadvantage than in any other region of England or Wales. Richardson, 'Historical Revision in Church: Reexamining the "Saint" Edward Colston': 239.

33. Kehinde Andrews, *Back to Black* (London: Zed Books, 2018): xviii.

34. Andrews, *Back to Black*: xviii.

35. Andrews, *Back to Black*: xix–xxii.

36. Andrews, *Back to Black*: xvii.

37. Bolden, 'The Fall of Edward Colston and the Rise of Inclusive Place-Based Leadership'; Mumford, 'Edward Colston and the Coronavirus: A Reflection on Narratives of Taxation in Taxing Times': 157, 164.

38. Hill and Sobande, '(Re)viewing Race, the Marketplace, and Public Space through the Lens of Photography': 1174–1176.

39. Tamar W. Carroll, 'Social Protest Photography and Public History: "Whose Streets? Our Streets!": New York City, 1980–2000', *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences* 57, no. 1 (2021): 36, https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk/10.1002/jhbs.22082.

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Chapter 3
Occupying Empty Places: Political Protest and Solidarity Among Strangers in Times of Social Distancing

Anna Schober

3.1 The Mimetism of Action and Image-Making

In March 2021, empty streets and squares dominated photographs circulating in relation to life under conditions of the spread of the Covid-19 virus. These images are the result of a 'logic of the outbreak',[1] according to which a strategy of 'de-densification'[2] in the form of the enforcement of new rules of 'social', or more precisely 'physical', distancing was pursued wherever there were gatherings. This approach marked a 'systemic break' insofar as, according to sociologist Hartmut Rosa,[3] for the first time in human history, something happened that had hitherto seemed purely utopian or dystopian – namely, that through conscious political action within the framework of largely democratically elected states, there was a partial stilling of human flows as well as a slowing down of the profile of physical movements on a global scale.[4] At the political level, decisions were made in the name of the 'systemic relevance' of biological and social life and enforced against the interests of economic sector and financial market rationale. Through the drastic measures introduced in spring 2020, such as curfews and sealed-off individual areas, community life and capitalism were put under severe tension, and visionary blueprints for overcoming the pandemic crisis were offered.[5]

This paper explores how the systemic break triggered by the spread of the Covid-19 virus has given rise to a particular collective processing mode characterised by a pronounced mimetism. This line of action responds to an increased uncertainty and a lack of reliable, actionable knowledge that

characterises the 'new normality' in the age of the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus is on the performative creation of the public sphere and the emergence of solidarity during the pandemic, which was fundamentally characterised by a tension between restrictions and a lack of spaces where people can meet and an increased need to debate the new rules or an increased reliance on collective action. Different types of protest and solidarity will be depicted and discussed. Art, culture, and photographic practices in particular will be examined as media interventions that – in sometimes surprising ways – lead to the new reality and can deepen the sense of people living in it but can also have a polarising effect.

This systemic breakdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic was reflected in a photographic view of what has been greatly diminished by state intervention in places that we usually know as lively and bustling with activity. Almost all major international newspapers published in March or April 2020 series of photos of largely or even completely depopulated urban areas. The *New York Times*, for example, published *The Great Empty*.[6] A photograph from this series, a street shot of the well-known Las Ramblas promenade in Barcelona by Maria Contreras Coll (March 2020, for the *New York Times*), makes the emptying of public transit sites at the beginning of the pandemic particularly physically tangible, by showing how pigeons, searching undisturbed for food, replace the crowds that would otherwise occupy this street (Figure 3.1). The viewer of such images compares the pedestrian zone that becomes visible here, emptied of people, on which a host of pigeons has settled and which is lined with stalls that are all closed, with memories of conventional situations in such places, filled with an experience of physical proximity, movement, jostling, or shoving. As a result, such photographs make the places that are shown tangible as spaces of experience and memory.[7]

In the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic, alongside photos of people wearing masks, such images of emptiness, taken in different places but resembling each other, were constitutive of the narratives of the crisis and systemic break that began to take hold in connection with the pandemic. The vivid repetition of the pictorial motif of emptied, formerly lively urban spaces also testifies to a mimetic behaviour that was a kind of response to the situation of enormous uncertainty that accompanied the pandemic,[8] because a detailed and nuanced knowledge of the specifics of the Covid-19 pandemic only gradually became available from January and February 2021 onwards. Initially, there seemed to be no models that could predict[9] how it

Figure 3.1: Barcelona pigeons had Las Ramblas to themselves, Barcelona, 2020.
(© Maria Contreras Coll, *New York Times*)

would develop. The pandemic thus intensified the experience of multiple uncertainties that already characterised late modernity. The constant and transient change inherent in modernity and driven by such varied factors as education, culture, economics, and the reorientation of belief has, since around the 1990s, been causing people to lose faith in a purposeful conclusion to developments – in a telos – and the tasks and obligations from which one expected renewal had been emphatically deregulated and privatised.[10] In the new normality associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, such uncertainties, a lack of reliable and especially actionable knowledge, and a new meaning of the idea of urgency or timeliness were even more noticeable. This affected today's 'non-bureaucratic state', a state that has been partly ideologically discredited and materially dismantled since the late 1980s and the end of the welfare state, and its critics – civil society activists, journalists, constitutional experts and judges, economists, social organisations, artists, and cultural workers.[11]

Accordingly, knowledge regarding the handling of the pandemic, which has only become available gradually, was always subject to the interpretations by these various social and political actors (virologists, mathematical

modellers, public health experts, sociologists, economists and politicians, cultural practitioners, etc.) and has also been and continues to be repeatedly subjected to scientific and political revisions. Some tactics were put into practice more often than others in dealing with the pandemic and thus became more visible to society, which gradually resulted in a convergence of measures. According to Ivan Krastev, 'Doing as others do' became 'critically important in reassuring the public that the situation is under control'.[12]

Such general uncertainties regarding an appropriate way of dealing with the pandemic, as well as concrete fears about it, were to some extent absorbed and held in check by the great similarity of the above-mentioned images of depopulated transit places. At times, however, other images emerged that kept such insecurities and feelings of fear in a condensed and displaced form present in the public discourse. An example of this was a frequently reproduced mobile-phone photo that the amateur photographer Emanuele di Terlizzi took from his balcony in Bergamo on 18 April 2020, documenting the night-time transport of corpses by a convoy of military trucks moving through a deserted residential area.[13]

Photographs lend durability[14] to the pandemic situation and open up a space for a more or less situated reflection on the constitution of the world in the pandemic. Through social media, such images repeatedly penetrate new contexts and are perceived there in their own way as testimonies of facts and situations or as triggers of emotions. In this way, they achieve resonance independently of the people or institutions that fed them into these networks and the intentions of those people or institutions.

In February and March 2020, a mode of collective processing began to take shape in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic, which was disseminated globally primarily through image media and the associated appropriation processes. This is evidenced by a photograph of a square next to a supermarket in Prato, Italy, which was also taken with a mobile phone on 21 March 2020 and published in several Italian newspapers (Figure 3.2). It was shot by the architect Sandro Veronesi and shows people ordered as if on a chessboard waiting in front of a supermarket. They form a pattern of human figures that has similarities to the surrealist painting *Golconda* by René Magritte (1953).[15] This photo leads us to a transnational, even transcontinental mimetism that was symptomatic of the early days of the pandemic: the chessboard-like order that becomes visible here was based on a cultural appropriation in the course of which the Chinese, Prato's dominant demographic, some of whom had

Figure 3.2: People queuing in front of an Italian supermarket, Prato, 21 March 2020. (© Sandro Veronesi)

become acquainted with China's way of dealing with the pandemic during the Christmas and New Year period in 2019/2020, imported this way of standing in front of shops into their Italian hometown by training the local population accordingly. This photo thereby also points to the fact that the political response strategies developed to deal with the pandemic were based on imaginaries, scenarios, routines, infrastructures, techniques, institutions, and social power relations that had been tested in other places and against the background of other epidemics and disasters.[16]

The similarity of this photo with Magritte's painting, however, also leads to another dimension of meaning – that of the surreal, dreamlike character that the pandemic situation took on for many people. The reservoir of experiential values, knowledge content, and images from which the cultural and social memory[17] is fed and which is activated in such situations of crisis thus contained not only elements that arose in earlier pandemics and epidemics such as those of the Spanish flu, the Black Death, or the Ebola virus, but also images provided by art, literature or film. In this context, 'mimetic appropriation' did not mean superficial imitation but, as the snapshot taken by Veronesi shows, a situation-specific adaptation of models that seemed appropriate and were momentarily convincing or touching, in which dream and reality intertwine. A mimetism of strategies and tactics was thus joined by one of staging and image-making – whereby iconic creations today are available to viewers quickly via social media, in real time as it were, and stimulate follow-up communication.

3.2 Mediatised Practices of Protest in Times of Heightened Insecurity

With regard to the patterns of action that emerged at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the following tension can be identified: especially since autumn 2020, the mostly nationally limited but transnationally mimetically interrelated strategies of security policy and crisis interventions produced one lockdown after another. The resulting extensive depopulation and emptying of urban spaces led to a situation in which the political public sphere could only appear in a highly transformed form. For the emergence of a lively public sphere,[18] an experience of density and intensity[19] is a pre-requisite, generated by various activities – for example, of commercial, educational-cultural, or political nature – overlapping in a social space.[20] At the same time, the public sphere is also created by a meeting between strangers, with everyone having the opportunity to be part of it, to make themselves visible and audible.[21] Finally, the public sphere is also charac-terised by being exposed to the unexpected, the unplanned, and even the unwanted.[22] However, it is precisely such interaction between strangers and unexpected and unplanned encounters that the Covid-19 pandemic has made more difficult and in some cases entirely impossible to experience. Since March 2020, curfews and the associated immediate and radical sus-pension of most economic, social, and cultural activities as well as physical distancing measures have led to a situation in which there has been a lack of spaces and situations in which and through which people could meet. At the same time, people were to a large extent cut off from the reality of those they would have to meet to form an opinion and make judgements. Community, a political public sphere, and solidarity could only emerge at a distance.[23] In addition, mistrust of one another has increased because people did not know whether others are infected, or even because they did not know whether they themselves are infected. Some parts of society – for example, the health sector – was highly mobilised, while most of society experienced an enormous demobilisation.[24]

In this context, social media in particular offered public forums to give presence to perspectives and attitudes, to stage views, and to disseminate and consume information. This included the fact that with the aid of the media, it was possible to document local events using mobile-phone camer-as and through new social networks to turn them into testimonies of public relevance.[25] It was important that soon after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, new platforms such as Zoom began to establish themselves by

providing stages for discussion and the transfer of public discourse into virtual space. However, as was already apparent before the Covid-19 pandemic, social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, or Internet forums often offer echo chambers, in particular as they lead to sharp polarisation because radical opinions receive greater attention than more nuanced ones, and dissenters are silenced by proponents of said radical opinions.[26] Much of what constitutes a lively public sphere – the overlapping of diverse functions and activities in a social space, the encounter between people who are not a priori like-minded or at least similar-minded and the presence of the unexpected, unplanned, or even unwanted – could hardly be gained through these media channels. There were, however, exceptions – for example, protest movements that had a certain communicative 'density' both online and offline.[27]

At the same time – and this was the particular tension with regard to the public sphere during the pandemic crisis – the handling of such a 'state of emergency' and the corresponding security regulations within democracies were subject to the obligation that political decisions as well as political measures must follow the jointly established rules of the game. This included the fact that regulations and measures such as those taken in the face of the pandemic were the subject of political debate. Since the pandemic was accompanied in part by severe restrictions of freedoms and rights, the disputes and conflicts triggered by it were many and varied, and they have been fiercely debated. Owing to the new regime of social distancing, the widespread absence of 'people of the squares' – activists occupying public spaces to make their position known[28] – and policies that forced people to stay at home and switch many previously face-to-face activities to online communication, such disputes have often manifested themselves in sometimes very unusual stagings of public appearances or expressions of protest. Today, these are basically characterised by a multimedia system composed of mobile phones, live performances carried out in parallel in urban space and on social media.[29] This led to a practice in which photos or videos produced on smartphones transferred stagings and physical performances to social media and to traditional media such as television or print media. Some of these media stagings and self-portrayals were particularly convincing and captivating and are accordingly translated back into life, which was then in turn captured in other images so that here, too, a mimetism, this time of protesting and performing oneself in public, could be observed. Such communication processes were accompanied by a pronounced practice of observation carried out by journalists but later on also

increasingly by so-called citizen journalists – in other words, attentive citizens – as well as by academic commentators, art and culture professionals – including many photographers – and legal authorities.[30] These citizen journalists also included Sandro Veronesi and Emanuele di Terlizzi, who posted the above-mentioned mobile-phone photos on social media of the people waiting in a chessboard-like pattern in front of the supermarket in Prato and the convoy of trucks transporting corpses in Bergamo.

Among the types of protest staging that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, the first to stand out were collective public performances or 'happenings' manifesting themselves in form of artistic-creative interventions in public space, where activists exposed themselves in a physical, bodily way. They go back to the student movement of 1968 and were characterised by a combination of art and political action. An example of this is an installation of empty, variously coloured and designed chairs in conjunction with theatrically presented decrees and statements in a square near the Arco della Pace in Milan on 6 May 2020, with which 'shopkeepers' protested against the government's Covid-19 measures and inadequate offers of help.[31] Another example is a flash mob in Toulouse with which 'non-essential businesses against Covid-19 measures' were publicly presented, using the chessboard-like pattern of people lining up in public space, already familiar to us from the above-mentioned snapshot in a square in front of a supermarket in Prato (Figure 3.3). The surreal character of the staging, reminiscent of Magritte's *Golconda*, was accentuated by the participants' black clothing and the black umbrellas they carried, on which the individual figures of the chessboard leaned.

A second type of manifestation of protest was oriented towards historically older forms of public collective political presence, such as marches, parades, processions and, above all, demonstrations. Thus demonstrations, for which attempts have been made to observe the rules of physical distancing and in which a public space has been occupied by bodies, sometimes waving flags or holding posters, only at greater distances from each other, have invoked a performance mode of bodies familiar from Olympiads or other celebratory sporting events. However, this type of appearance is more characteristic of political celebrations in totalitarian political systems than of political activities in democracies, which tend to thrive on density and gathering. They were therefore presented as rather strange occurrences, especially at the beginning of the pandemic. Whereas artistic-political activism seemed to fit well with the new public regime under Covid-19

Figure 3.3: Flash mob of non-existent traders against Covid-19 measures, Toulouse, 2020.
(© Lionel Bonaventure, Getty Images)

conditions, which could be seen from the fact that such events were widely and favourably reported in the media, political behaviour adopting physical distancing as used, for example, in protests against Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel in April 2020, was initially accompanied by some irritation in some Central European newspaper reports.[32]

Perhaps for this reason other, historically older traditions of political revolt have often been revived for political protest. Examples of this third type of protest practice are the anti-government protests on bicycles in Slovenia, which took place in Ljubljana in early May 2020.[33] They took up styles of protest of the early socialists of the 1910s, which developed from funeral processions and where workers also demonstrated pushing or riding bicycles as status symbols. Such examples not only once again demonstrate that the collective imagination associated with practices responding to the Covid-19 pandemic was informed and triggered by images stored in the memory but also that the photographs of such contemporary protest events invoke an experiential, sensory memory.

In addition to those already mentioned, another, more novel, fourth type of protest characterised by agitation and rioting, spread in the wake of the pandemic. Examples of this were activities by opponents of Covid-19 measures and anti-mask demonstrations, in which families participated alongside

right-wing extremists and supporters of conspiracy theories. Since none of these groups clearly dominated these protests, they did not fit ideologically into established categories such as left-right or bourgeois-extremist, even if right-wing parties tried to exploit them.[34] These movements claimed that they and they alone represent 'the people'[35] as directly as possible. In demonstrations against Covid-19 measures and by other anti-mask activists, participants turned against the state, the government, and the prominent scientific community (such as virologists) by staging and also seeking a collective bodily experience, usually without observing distance rules or other hygienic measures. Here, expectations with regard to collective and individual purification as well as scapegoat fantasies were expressed.

This activism showed features of a political culture that has emerged since around the 1990s and which Pierre Rosanvallon calls 'apolitical political culture' or 'negative politics'.[36] By this, he means an emphatic participation in public life, sustained by active citizens, which is essentially committed to rejection and mistrust – of the state and the elites in general but also of each other – and often expresses itself in the truncated form of slogans and denunciations. At the same time, the civil society thus created was characterised by an increasing distance from existing political and public institutions. Examples of this kind of political agitation were contemporary manifestations of populism as well as the citizenism of the 'movements of the plazas'.[37]

Agitation and acts of indignation and rejection as well as the sometimes flamboyant disguises and pointed stagings that appeared at these events also seemed to be reactions to the changed circumstances of life in times of the pandemic. These were characterised by the above-mentioned increased insecurity but also a suspension of core rules and values of everyday life and a crumbling of established social hierarchies – for example, by the fact that the virus affected everyone regardless of social class. The crowds at these demonstrations were thus related to the ordered emptiness in public space as well as the likewise ordered retreat into the private sphere through curfews. Similar to the flagellation processions organised during the Black Death in the Middle Ages,[38] demonstrations by opponents of Covid-19 measures were also based on comparable collective transnational performance practices of the self, in the course of which people exposed themselves publicly in a physical, bodily, and ritualised way. Through a theatricalisation of existence that was always also staged for the cameras, activists made themselves physically visible to everyone, often in spectacular form, to break away from the usual course of events and modes of appearance in public

and to help something new and different prevail over the experiences of frustration and inadequacy associated with everyday life in the pandemic.

What is important in all these types of protest performance is the occupation of urban space and its transformation into a stage. The formation of these markedly different types of protest was moreover strongly supported by photographs, videos, and memes produced from them and the adherence and transmission they found on social networks. Certain styles and patterns of self-performance were thus transmitted across borders, even on a global scale, and adapted to specific milieus.

Body images and the facial expressions and gestures that become visible on them gained a prominent position[39] in reporting on social media channels, as they facilitated the communication of emotion in a special way and were widely shared and acquired greater visibility than other images. In particular, the face transformed with or without a mask promised to help overcome the distance associated with the prescribed distance-keeping under the pandemic. Often, such demonstrations were accompanied by powerful images of the past, such as depictions of flagellants wearing hooded caps or the slave Anastácia wearing an iron mask of the kind used in the Portuguese slave trade (Figure 3.4).[40] Through such pictorial quotations – which also included the Star of David combined with the words 'unvaccinated' – the present was momentarily experienced as an event of (self-)subjugation, (self-)marking as victim, or cathartic self-purification, and the 'elite' that

Figure 3.4: Demonstration against Covid-19 measures, Berlin, 29 August 2020.
(© Sean Gallup, Getty Images)

enacted measures to contain the pandemic was equated with colonisers, Nazis, or the official clergy that persecutes dissenters. In connection with such stagings and their photographic documentation, an 'affective relationality'[41] may come to light that temporarily made those who are present and those who were viewing the photographs online into 'co-witnesses' and thus connects them to communities sustained by emotions. This could also be accompanied by a temporary experience of the dissolution of limitations of the self as well as excess, in the course of which the crowd gathered around such images experienced itself as a community of victims in an environment of perpetrators – in other words, the dynamics that arose at such demonstrations usually promoted affect-based polarisations.

3.3 Masks in Action: Polarisations

Disease-prevention tools in the form of masks, as used during the Covid-19 pandemic, were developed by Wu Liande in response to the Manchurian plague of 1910–1911. Through them, a sharp contrast was introduced into the public sphere: these clinical white masks allow one to distinguish between the hygienic model of a 'task force' and the social background, as well as between medical information and social responsibility on the one hand and backwardness, social ignorance, or uninformedness of victims and contacts on the other. They signified 'state-organized medical rationality' and 'hygienic modernity'.[42] In the course of their application, anti-epidemic masks thus assumed a transformative role through which the field of vision is organised and society was divided:

> Designed to bring about a transformation, not simply in the individuals wearing it but also in the society embracing it and its principle as a whole, the personal protection apparatus would then be properly speaking a mask: it did not only block germs but catalysed a passage from one mode of being into another, from unreason to reason.[43]

In photographs of opponents of Covid-19 measures and anti-mask demonstrations, it is conspicuous that bodies and faces are often particularly emphasised and staged in an animated way by neglecting the new rules of social distancing and practising the wearing of protective masks in a modified way, which had the potential of making this itself an issue. As Wolfgang

Figure 3.5: Protest against the use of protective masks in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Madrid, 16 August 2020. (© Juan Medina, Reuters)

Ulrich has pointed out, masks do not serve to conceal faces, as is commonly assumed, but to amplify and schematise their expressions.[44] Accordingly, they are fundamentally always used where more 'face' is needed than the body is capable of providing. This is evident in many photo reports of protest scenes insofar as masks – after being reactivated as a central means of social distancing and division of society – have also been clearly emphasised as central bearers of protest messages and as a means of contention. In the photographs of these protests, one sees close-ups of masks that are completely perforated, made of fishing nets, or cut out over the mouth area so that it becomes visible. In one of these photos, taken by Juan Medina in summer 2020 in Madrid, a young man is wearing a mask over his eyes instead of his mouth, and he is enjoying smoking a cigarette (Figure 3.5). In this way, the function of the mask as a 'tool of reason' is reduced ad absurdum and parodied. At the same time, the face in these photographs is both obscured and emphasised in different ways, which reinforced the expressive impact of the performers during the protest. The design of the masks and the way they were worn also became a kind of commentary on society in the pandemic. The repeatedly similar ironising or parodic uses of the mask culminated in a series that seems horizontally connected in a transnational way.

Figure 3.6: European Council, Robert Abela (Malta), Janez Janša (Slovenia), Nicos Anastiades (Cyprus), Emmanuel Macron (France), Brussels, 15/16 October 2020. (© Thierry Monasse, Getty Images)

With such self-dramatisations and the photographs documenting them, the activists disseminating these images competed with other photographic testimonies in which the mask became the protagonist and the badge of reasonable, responsible action during the pandemic. The latter can be seen in a photo documenting an EU Council meeting in October 2020, in which all five of the EU Council members pictured wore correctly fitting white or black masks with what looked like appropriate dark blue suits against an EU-blue background (Figure 3.6).

Such images also reveal a gender-specific dimension of mask-wearing. In photos documenting routine activities in intensive care units or in other situations of medical care in connection with Covid-19, the bodies of the nurses are usually so heavily covered by protective suits and masks that their gender can no longer be clearly identified. In contrast, in the pictures of the EU Council meeting, the social and political responsibility and medical rationality communicated in connection with mask-wearing is clearly and consistently connoted as 'male'. At the same time, however, the photographs documenting opponents of Covid-19 measures and anti-mask

demonstrations frequently show men heightening their own expressivity through an ironic or parodic use of the mask and at the same time profaning the epidemic protection agent that the mask is. The pronounced irony or parody that they communicated in connection with the mask-wearing produced or strengthened in-groups that could follow and agree with such use of the mask, but also out-groups that were unsympathetic to it.

By connoting the raising of oneself above the rules on these events as 'agitationally masculine' and mocking the mask itself, the male – and sometimes also female – of such parodically transformed masks positioned themselves on one side of the discourse as invulnerable, immortal masters (and mistresses) of the crisis, as it were. Opposed to them were public figures who, like the EU Council members in the above-mentioned photo, turned the mask into an ordering sign and monument as evidence of reason and medical enlightenment. In this way, the mask was exposed from various sides as a proof of the difference in perspectives and thereby charged as a 'signifier of an absent fullness'[45] of the political debate during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.4 (Photographic) Images as Acts of Solidarity

As Hanna Arendt[46] has pointed out, art and culture can deepen the sense of community and the sense of reality lived in each moment. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, in spring 2020, an attempt was made to achieve this in a popular way through music played on balconies for the hospital staff and doctors. A few weeks later, however, the situation had completely changed: rumours spread about empty hospitals and ambulances that were only pretending to transport sick people. People working in the health sector, such as virologists, doctors, and hospital staff in general, became objects of the expression of hatred and resentment. This escalated in later waves of the 2021 pandemic to the point where demonstrators from the movement of opponents of Covid-19 measures attempted to gain forcible access to intensive care units to conduct a 'local inspection'.[47]

A mural in Milan dedicated to the doctors, nurses, and victims of the Covid-19 pandemic at the Sacco Hospital bears witness to this ambivalence. The mural was created at the end of July 2020 as an act of solidarity to commemorate the elusive but persistent commitment of the hospital staff, to honour this commitment with a lasting permanence and aesthetic

Figure 3.7 Vandalised mural showing the 'heroes' of the pandemic, Milan, 2020. (© Milano Today)

presence. However, at the beginning of November 2020, this mural was defaced in an act of vandalism (Figure 3.7).[48]

'Solidarity' comes from *solidus*, meaning density and solidity. As a legal term, it derives from *in solidum*, which refers to an obligation to the whole: everyone stands up for one who cannot pay a debt, and conversely, this person then stands up for all the others. Alongside this civic understanding solidarity, however, Christian concepts of charity and brotherhood are also part of the genealogy of solidarity. In the French Revolution, these concepts and the associated practices were then adapted and transformed into the secular political triad of 'liberty, equality, fraternity', which came to be understood as egalitarian as well as solidarity among strangers.[49] Solidarity is thus no longer necessarily associated with a willingness to sacrifice for a self-assertion system and the coercion that goes with it. It arises rather in the course of performances of images and narratives that appeal 'to objectivity, conveying facts "without deformation"' and make proposals of emotion, rendering publics "sufficiently affected", that may lead to action'.[50] Nevertheless, solidarity, including solidarity among individuals, is still often thought of in national terms today because it presupposes an identity context[51] that must be demarcated in one way or another and to which one can feel a sense of belonging.

Studies of collective action patterns in times of crisis show that in today's society, initiatives, gestures, and actions that show solidarity are often abandoned after a short time.[52] In the above-mentioned mural in Milan, however,

the act of solidarity is still present after it fell victim to an act of vandalism – although it now bears witness to a solidarity that is constantly under threat.

In the course of the measures against the Covid-19 pandemic, solidarity has been greatly enhanced, since success against the pandemic depended on solidarity action in the collective – for example, in connection with the wearing of masks, the willingness to vaccinate, and keeping one's distance in general. The fact that solidarity – similar to what can be said for the public sphere – is to be understood as a process among strangers is thus underlined in the context of the pandemic. In a society which, like the present one, is marked by the current multiple lines of conflict and polarisation, one can conclude – as for instance Hauke Brunkhorst[53] did – that solidarity can be effectively exercised in a form similar to the behaviour of doctors towards their patients: based on an emotionally neutral and at the same time collective, universalistic, performance-oriented, and specialised behaviour.

As the above-mentioned protest events full of self-victimisation and scapegoat fantasies or the vandalised mural in Milan show, solidarity turns particularly easily and quickly into expressions of resentment and hatred in times of crisis. This is because the specific combination of promises and claims of equality and actual inequalities – for example, in the pandemic in connection with 'smart working' or state benefits – in combination with an increased consciousness of comparison and related ongoing processes of evaluating and judging, which have also been shown to be particularly pronounced in the pandemic, fuel the emergence of social resentment.[54] In this context, it is often former role models or social actors who are usually presented as particularly honourable – such as the hospital staff or virologists – against whom hatred and resentment were then discharged in a particularly pronounced form.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the state has not been understood by the majority as an adversary, but it has rather been addressed as an entity that is supposed to 'fix it'; in other words, it was ascribed the role of managing the crisis. However, as was shown at the beginning of this article, if knowledge about the pandemic was generally only gradually available and subject to multiple interpretations, the power to act and mastery could not be attributed solely to state actors and those from the scientific field who advise them. Rather, it was up to all citizens to develop a tentative, creative approach to the challenges of the pandemic.

Initiatives by artists who as commentators also dealt with the question of how to properly understand and interpret the crisis associated with

Covid-19 also thrived on such an undertaking. One of them is the Italian pho-
tographer Fabio Bucciarelli, who, in the context of the particularly severe
Covid-19 waves in Bergamo in March as well as in July and November 2020,
in collaboration with his partner, the filmmaker Francesca Tosarelli, set out
to redefine photography as an act of solidarity. Their aim was to offer new
aesthetic and content perspectives beyond what the mainstream mass me-
dia situation offered.[55] They set out to create images that were different from
those showing spaces devoid of people and people wearing masks.[56]

   The approach that Bucciarelli and Tosarelli offered consisted of narrative
experiments situated between photojournalism and art. Through the crea-
tion of 'indelible images', the conscience is to be moved and resonance gener-
ated.[57] The path the two took was to work with the Italian Red Cross, accom-
panying their ambulances on their journeys to the homes of the infected, and
to be present at the transport and deliveries of the sick to the hospitals. Such
a collaborative way of working was already familiar to Bucciarelli from his
work as a war photographer. In the course of his activity as a photographer in
Libya during the war against Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, he had already used
ambulances to make trips to the front and back to Misrata, where he was sta-
tioned.[58] By 2020, however, the 'front' had moved to the country where he had
been born and which had been particularly hard hit by the Covid-19 pandem-
ic. This collaboration with the Red Cross resulted in three series produced by
Bucciarelli: *Covid-19: The European Epicenter* (March 2020), *Covid-19 2nd Wave
Coverage Italy* (June and November 2020) and *Covid-19: Left Behind* (2020).

   What is striking about these series is that they highlight how the pan-
demic affected people and their relationships to each other. Even if some of
the photos show spaces devoid of people, their narrative is determined by
individual figures sitting, for example, in the glow of a spotlight during twi-
light, surfing the web on their smartphones, the only vehicle through which
they can make contact with their fellow human beings (Figure 3.8). Many of
the photos document powerful emotions that occured between those hit by
the pandemic and their relatives but also within groups of relatives.

   This is particularly evident in farewell scenes and their inherent ges-
tures of intense pain, fear of what is to come, and helplessness in the face of
the possible death of a close family member. An example of this is a photo
showing the son of an elderly Covid-19 patient in Ponte San Pietro, with his
arm outstretched stiffly in pain, tenderly touching his father's cheek with
his gloved hand as he is being taken away by doctors and nurses to be ex-
amined at the hospital.[59] In another, related photo, we see Antonio Amato

Figure 3.8: A man sits on a bench near Castel San Vigilio, Bergamo, 29 October 2020. (© Fabio Bucciarelli)

saying goodbye to his children as he is pushed to the ambulance by Red Cross volunteers (Figure 3.9). Many small details – the father's right hand, whose fingers try to form a greeting despite the immobilised position on the stretcher; the constricted posture of the two younger children, who stand frozen in the scene; the outstretched arm of the sister, trying to pull the youngest of the brothers away; the eye contact that the father maintains with his children – express the uncontrollability of a future for this small community in the face of a possible serious course of their father's illness.

These photographs document an empathy for which Bucciarelli explicitly states that he wants to create time and space in the act of photographing, defying the hectic and hurried pace that the contemporary system of mass information imposes on photography.[60] This emphatic character of the photographs is underlined by the rather dark and warm colours of the images – something that is particularly evident in the photograph showing the farewell scene between Antonio Amato and his children. At the same time, detailed captions to the pictures that act as authenticating and reflexive voices flesh out what they show and situate their content in locally specific contexts. The pictures thus form a network of decentred narratives

Figure 3.9: Antonio Amato's children greet their father before the Italian Red Cross volunteers take him to the hospital, Dalmine (Bergamo), 17 March 2020. (© Fabio Bucciarelli)

about a collective that has been severely affected by the virus and the emotional journeys triggered by it. They highlight the vulnerability not only of the immediate victims of the pandemic but also of their relatives and invite the viewer to play the role of witness to a situated and open engagement with the current pandemic and to one's own finiteness and the unpredictability of the future in general.

It is therefore also fitting that death is frequently invoked and often made visible in Bucciarelli's photographs – mainly, however, through absences. This becomes particularly clear in a photograph of a bed parked in the corridor of a hospital in front of a wall emblazoned with a large mural of the Virgin Mary (Figure 3.10). The sheet is rumpled, as if someone has just been lifted out of bed – either to be transferred to another ward, possibly the intensive care unit, or because the person has died and has therefore been taken out of the hospital by other means. This image thus plays with the unpredictable, unexpected nature of illness, recovery, and death, and it shifts this into a contrast of elements such as emptiness and fullness – for example, the fullness of faith visually expressed in the huge mural in front of which the bed happens to be located and the bed's emptiness, desolation.

Figure 3.10: A stretcher under a fresco in the courtyard of the Pesanti Fenaroli hospital of Alzano Lombardo, 16 March 2020. (© Fabio Bucciarelli)

This precariousness and uncertainty, which is heightened and to a certain extent radicalised during the Covid-19 pandemic, is staged negatively here, turned into an absence, which is not empty but evoked by various image details pointing to more universal questions in relation to life and death.

In Bucciarelli's photographs, empathy, powerful emotions, the focus on the relationship structures in which the photographed are situated, and the collaborative mode in which they are made set them apart from the more or less playful mimetism of images and practices with which attempts were made to keep the pandemic at bay, especially at the beginning. Solidarity is also understood here as one among strangers – strangers with whom the photographer entered, like the doctors, nurses, and volunteers, into a relationship of specialised but also emotional discourse. The notion of solidarity, quoted above as a certain way of acting among strangers, is here transformed in a way that it is not only specific and concrete, but can be guided by mindsets that include emotions. With these series, Bucciarelli offers a net of narratives that can take on a therapeutic function – for example, in connection with grief. At the same time, he also wants to use these photographs to disseminate concrete information about a devastating situation created

by the virus and the procedures it produced.[61] Since Bergamo was pandemically 'ahead' of other regions in Italy, Europe, and globally – his aim was also to point out facts and possibilities of handling the situation and to advance the work of dealing with the virus through his specifically empathy-laden photographic knowledge. Hence solidarity here also becomes tangible as a set of practices of living the pandemic and of taking part in societal change in the process.

Notes

1.   Henning Füller and Iris Dzoudzek, 'Die Logik des Ausbruchs', *s u b \ u r b a n. zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung* 8 (2020): 169.
2.   Louisa Hutton, *Lockdown Architecture*, ed. Nina Bassoli (Schio: Lotus Booklet Extra, 2020): 90.
3.   Hartmut Rosa, 'Pfadabhängigkeit, Bifurkationspunkte und die Rolle der Soziologie: Ein soziologischer Deutungsversuch der Corona-Krise', *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 30 (2020): 194, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11609-020-00418-2.
4.   Rosa, 'Pfadabhängigkeit, Bifurkationspunkte und die Rolle der Soziologie': 195.
5.   Hutton, *Lockdown Architecture*: 91; Frank André Meyer, 'Die Welt nach der Corona-Krise? Kehrt sich jetzt die Globalisierung um?', *Focus Online* (2021), https://www.focus.de/politik/experten/gastbeitrag-von-frank-a-meyer-kehrt-sich-jetzt-die-globalisierung-um-corona-pandemie-erzwingt-umdenken_id_11894724.html.
6.   'The Great Empty', *The New York Times*, accessed 9 November 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/23/world/coronavirus-great-empty.html.
7.   On the relation between photography, place, and memory, see Donna West Brett, *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany after 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2016): 6.
8.   Peter Wagner, 'Wissen, um rechtzeitig angemessen zu handeln, Betrachtungen zu COVID-19', *Soziopolis. Gesellschaft beobachten* (2020): 5–10.
9.   Rosa, 'Pfadabhängigkeit, Bifurkationspunkte und die Rolle der Soziologie': 204.
10. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000): 29.
11. Wagner, 'Wissen, um rechtzeitig angemessen zu handeln': 7–8.
12. Igor Krastev, *Is It Tomorrow Yet? Paradoxes of the Pandemic* (London: Penguin Random House, 2020): 53.
13. Julie Metzdorf, 'Wie eine Foto-Legende entsteht', 26 October 2021, https://www.br.de/kultur/wieso-das-foto-des-militaerkonvois-in-bergamo-fuer-corona-steht-100.html#footer_list_pkt1; according to Metzdorf, the thirteen-truck convoy transported corpses that had to be cremated to surrounding crematoria at the beginning of the pandemic, as the capacity of the crematorium in Bergamo was exhausted.
14. Hannah Arendt, 'Kultur und Politik', in *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft: Übungen im politischen Denken I*, ed. Hannah Arendt (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1994): 189f.
15. Sandro Veronesi, 'La foto della spesa a Prato: quella fila bene ordinata che sembra un quadro di Magritte', accessed 5 December 2021, https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_marzo_21/foto-che-gia-storia-fila-ordinata-che-ci-ha-reso-po-cinesi-053d27d0-6baf-11ea-8bdc-8d7efa0d8720.shtml.

16. Füller and Dzoudzek, 'Die Logik des Ausbruchs': 165.

17. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 39.

18. 'On the public sphere as a civil interaction between strangers, based on making different points of view visible and disputes about what constitutes a shared world'. Anna Schober, *The Cinema Makers: Public Life and the Exhibition of Difference in South-Eastern and Central Europe since the 1960s* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2013): 9–43.

19. José María Ezquiaga, *Lockdown Architecture*, ed. Nina Bassoli (Schio: Lotus Booklet Extra, 2020): 79–80.

20. Richard Sennett, *Verfall und Ende des öffentlichen Lebens: Die Tyrannei der Intimität* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986): 375.

21. Miriam Hansen, *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1991): 90.

22. Cass Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0. Revenge of the Blogs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007): 40.

23. Hartmut Rosa and Jonas Zipf, 'Das hängt jetzt von uns ab, was wir daraus machen: Ein virtueller Osterspaziergang', in *Inne halten. Chronik einer Krise*, eds. Birgit Liebold and Jonas Zipf (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2020): 14–37.

24. Wagner, 'Wissen, um rechtzeitig angemessen zu handeln': 6, 10.

25. Kerstin Schankweiler, *Bildproteste. Widerstand im Netz* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2019): 13. This sometimes resulted in the use and circulation of memes, which is not investigated in this paper.

26. Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0. Revenge of the Blogs*: 61.

27. Examples are the uprising in the Middle East, from Egypt to Syria in 2011; see Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator. Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013): 198.

28. Paolo Gerbaudo, *The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenism, Global Protest* (London: Hurst, 2017).

29. Anna Schober, *Ironie, Montage, Verfremdung: Ästhetische Taktiken und die politische Gestalt der Demokratie* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009): 97.

30. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 64.

31. 'Protesta dei ristoratori, sedie vuote all'Arco della Pace', *Corriere della Sera* (Milano, IT), accessed 5 December 2021, https://milano.corriere.it/foto-gallery/cronaca/20_maggio_06/ protesta-ristoratori-sedie-vuote-all-arco-pace-5829eae6-8f8b-11ea-bb7f-d3d655d2211a. shtml."

32. 'Geordnet gegen die Regierung', *Tagesspiegel*, 20 April 2020, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/ politik/proteste-in-israel-geordnet-gegen-die-regierung/25757172.html.

33. 'Slovenia cyclists hold anti-government protest', *BBC*, 9 May 2020. https://www.bbc.com/ news/world-europe-52597748.

34. On contemporary right-wing activism, see Nicole Doerr, 'The Visual Politics of the Alternative for Germany (AfD): Anti-Islam, Ethno-Nationalism, and Gendered Images', *Social Sciences* 10, no. 1: 20. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10010020.

35. Since the revolutions of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, the myth of the sovereign people was performed through a staging of bodies and faces that had a certain ordinariness and at the same time referred to representations of redemptive myths. It consisted of a collection of concrete, mortal individuals engaged in political mobilisation and was at the same time presented as a timeless abstraction. Margareth Canovan, *The People* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2005): 120–121; Anna Schober, 'Particular

Faces with Universal Appeal: A Genealogy and Typology of Everybodies', in *Popularisation and Populism in the Visual Arts: Attraction Images*, ed. Anna Schober (London and New York: Routledge, 2019): 59–79.

36. Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy*: 22, 186.
37. Gerbaudo, *The Mask and the Flag*.
38. Nikolaus Largier, *Lob der Peitsche. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Erregung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001): 98; cf. Jan Söffner, 'Auch das Mittelalter kannte Querdenker', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 November 2020, https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/coronavirus-auch-das-mittelalter-kannte-querdenker-bewegungen-ld.1588464?reduced=true.
39. Wolfgang Ulrich, *Selfies: die Rückkehr des öffentlichen Lebens* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2019): 62.
40. This picture comes from the sketchbook of the Frenchman Jacques Arago and was first exhibited in 1968 in the Museu do Negro in Rio de Janeiro. It shows the slave Anastáçia, whose origin is entwined in many legends, a figure who has been accorded religious cult status since the 1980s and 1990s, first in Brazil and soon also globally. Marcus Wood, 'The Museu do Negro in Rio and the Cult of Anastácia as a New Model for the Memory of Slavery', *Representations* 113, no. 1: 111–149. Later, a mini-television series portrayed her as an African Yoruba princess who was sold as a slave to Brazil, which disseminated this myth worldwide.
41. Jan Slaby, Rainer Mühlhof, and Philipp Wüschner, 'Affektive Relationalität: Umrisse eines philosophischen Forschungsprogramms', in *Zwischenleiblichkeit und bewegtes Verstehen – Intercorporeity, Movement and Tacit Knowledge*, ed. Undine Eberlein (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016).
42. Christos Lynteris, 'Plague Masks: The Visual Emergence of Anti-Epidemic Personal Protection Equipment', *Medical Anthropology* (2018): 447.
43. Lynteris, 'Plague Masks: The Visual Emergence of Anti-Epidemic Personal Protection Equipment': 451.
44. Ulrich, *Selfies. Die Rückkehr des öffentlichen Lebens*: 20.
45. Ernesto Laclau, 'Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?', in *Emancipation(s)*, ed. Ernesto Laclau (London: Verso, 1996): 36–37.
46. Arendt, 'Kultur und Politik': 300; Kimberley Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real. Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999): 38.
47. For example, in the East Surrey hospital in Britain; see 'Corona-Leugner stürmen Intensivstation und wollen Covid-Patienten mitnehme', *Stern*, 26 January 2021, https://www.stern.de/gesundheit/corona-leugner-wollen-covid-patienten-von-intensivstation-mitnehmen-30207490.html.
48. Carmine Ranieri Guarino, 'Milano, lo "sfregio" agli eroi del coronavirus: vandalizzato il murals per medici e infermieri', 3 November 2020, https://www.milanotoday.it/attualita/coronavirus/murales-medici-infermieri-vandali.html.
49. This implies that those who practise solidarity form a secular legal community, not a holy covenant of friendship or a community of believers. Today, they also no longer have to perform a service to the people, as was customary in nationalism; Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarität: Von der Bürgerfreundschaft zur globalen Rechtsgenossenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002): 12, 110.
50. Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator*: 150.
51. Monika Mokre, 'Ausgegrenzte haben es jetzt noch schwerer', *Der Standard* (Vienna, Austria), 7 February 2021.
52. Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator*: 55.
53. Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarität unter Fremden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997): 81.

54. Joseph Vogl, *Kapital und Ressentiment: Eine kurze Theorie der Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2021): 163–164.

55. Maria Camilla Brunetti, 'Voglio avere un'immagine di quello che è l'Italia prima di ciò che diventerà. L'intervista a Fabio Bucciarelli', *Reportage* no. 38 (2019): 7.

56. Lucy Fulford, 'Krise in Italien: Dokumentation über Coronavirus', accessed 24 October 2021, https://www.canon.at/pro/stories/documenting-coronavirus-italy/.

57. Brunetti, 'Voglio avere un'immagine di quello che è l'Italia prima di ciò che diventerà': 6. On Fabio Bucciarelli's approach, see also Anna Schober, 'Fotografie als Akt der Solidarität unter Fremden: Die Covid-19-Serien von Fabio Bucciarelli', *Bilder der Pandemie*, eds. Simone Abendschön, Claudia Hattendorff, and Ansgar Schnurr (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 2023): 43-57.

58. Fabio Bucciarelli and Stefano Citati, *L'Odore della Guerra. Inviati al fronte* (Rome: Aliberti editore, 2012): 114.

59. See Fabio Bucciarelli, 'Covid-19: The European Epicenter', March 2020, https://www.fabiobucciarelli.com/portfolio-item/we-take-the-dead-from-morning-till-night/.

60. Brunetti, 'Voglio avere un'immagine di quello che è l'Italia prima di ciò che diventerà': 11; Fabio Bucciarelli, *The Dream* (New York: FotoEvidence, 2016).

61. Fulford, 'Krise in Italien': 18, 25.

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Revisiting Emptiness

Chapter 4
Staging Isolation: Images of Seclusion and Separation

Catlin Langford

The technique of staging, or the staged photograph, has been employed by artists and photographers throughout the history of the photographic medium. Academic Maribel Castro Díaz defines staged photographs as 'intellectually constructed images and can convey contents and meanings that exceed the literal depiction of physical elements, including metaphorical approaches and narratives'.[1] Within this tradition, a selection of contemporary artists have sought to construct and create photographs that depict figures in isolation, both physically and symbolically. Through presenting scenes focusing on moments of waiting, despair, and aloneness, these artists seek to express unseen, inner mental states and provoke reflection on the human experience – a point of relevance given recent, global upheavals.

Staging was used in photography soon after the medium's announcement in 1839 and includes the creation of staged tableaux featuring scenes drawn from literary and biblical sources, among others. In the 1970s, there was a revival in the practice of staging. Largely based in North America, photographers like Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall, and Philip-Lorca diCorcia began producing and exhibiting consciously staged and theatrical photographs. This aligned with the then emerging theoretical discussions debating the truthful nature of photography and examining the documentary tradition.[2] Contemporary artists today employ staging to produce photographs which communicate a specific aesthetic or concept, particularly when their artistic vision could not be produced otherwise.

Contemporary artists Frances Kearney, Gregory Crewdson, and diCorcia all use staging to create works which explore and reflect the human condition. Their photographs are routinely compared to nineteenth-century narrative paintings through their arrangement of space, light, and action.[3] Kearney's, Crewdson's, and diCorcia's artistic production and aesthetic is

further comparable through their shared presentation of empty spaces. The desolate spaces shape the action and influence the atmosphere of their works. But each artist is drawn to distinct locations: the rural countryside features in Kearney's photographs, Crewdson frames scenes in nondescript, eerie suburbia, and diCorcia focuses on the urban metropolis. Their works intentionally blend fact and fiction to immerse the viewer in seemingly familiar worlds and communicate the physical and emotional experience of being isolated, alone, and separated from society. Their works are also highly enigmatic. Viewers are audience to an unexplained drama they can only make sense of based on lived experiences and learned perceptions, something which becomes apparent when considering the shifting readings and recontextualisation of these works based on the recent experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.1 Staging in the Nineteenth Century

The technological limitations of early photographic processes forced the employment of staging to achieve specific visual images. One of the earliest photographs produced demonstrates this need. *Boulevard du Temple* by French photographer and inventor Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre depicts what could be perceived as an empty street (Figure 4.1). Taken in 1838, a year before the formal announcement of photography's invention through Daguerre's daguerreotype process, the photograph depicts what appears to be a boulevard devoid of people. On closer inspection, two figures can be seen in the lower left corner. One of the figures, a man, has one leg slightly raised. The other figure crouches before him. This has inspired the belief that the figures shown in the photograph are a man having his shoes shined by a bootblack, or shoeshine. Such a process would require their relative stillness. But there is likely to have been other people present on the then usually busy boulevard, especially given that the photograph is believed to have been taken during the morning rush.[4] The isolation of the two figures framed by an empty street was not intentional nor, by extension, a truthful representation. Instead, it is the result of the technological restrictions of the period.[5] The slow exposure period of the available photographic processes, sometimes up to ten minutes, limited the capacity for the camera to capture those moving figures or transport which were

Figure 4.1: Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, *Boulevard du Temple*, c. 1838, daguerreotype. (*The Photography Book*, London: Phaidon, 1997)

likely present on the boulevard. Only because the two figures remained still were they captured. Owing to the depiction of these figures, *Boulevard du Temple* is often declared to be the first photograph to capture and show humans.[6] This example forms a distinct contrast to the purposeful creation of images through use of staging, producing, and framing scenes with conscious intent.[7]

One of the earliest examples of a staged photograph directly relates to Daguerre's invention. Hippolyte Bayard was working on a photographic process in the same period as Daguerre. Following Daguerre's presentation of his process on 19 August 1839, Bayard's direct positive process was largely ignored in the celebrations which surrounded the announcement of the daguerreotype.[8] Angered, Bayard used his direct positive process to produce a photograph staging his suicide. The self-portrait, *Le Noyé* (1840), depicts a deceased Bayard, killed via self-inflicted drowning. Bayard is shown shirtless, with his lower body covered by drapery. His eyes are closed, and he has positioned himself on a chair, his head resting on the side. An accompanying

statement penned by Bayard on 18 October 1840 points to the photograph's location in a morgue and reasons his suicide:

> The corpse which you see here is that of M. Bayard, inventor of the process that you have just seen, the marvellous results of which you are soon going to see. To my knowledge, this ingenious and indefatigable researcher has been working for about three years to perfect his invention. The Academy, the King and all those who have seen his pictures, that he himself found imperfect, have admired them as you do this moment. This has brought him much honour but has not yielded him a single farthing. The government, having given too much to M. Daguerre, said it could do nothing for M. Bayard and the unhappy man drowned himself. Oh! The fickleness of human affairs! Artists, scholars, journalists were occupied with him for a long time, but here he has been the morgue for several days, and no one has recognized or claimed him.[9]

The photograph and accompanying statement communicate Bayard's separation from the celebrations around photography, and his own feelings of personal isolation. The photograph is considered one of the first instances of staging, and its performative nature plays with the perception of photography's inherent truth, something that would come to dominate many of the later debates around the medium.

Staging was widely used by photographers in the mid-nineteenth century. One reason was driven by practicality: staging helped negotiate the long exposure periods. But there were other reasons. In the mid-nineteenth century, discussions on the validity and status of photography as an art were common. Consider the famous 1857 essay 'Photography', published anonymously by Lady Elizabeth Eastlake in *The London Quarterly Review*. In this essay, among other concepts, Eastlake remarked that photography was merely the action of the sun, producing pure facts.[10] Of photography, Eastlake wrote: 'here, therefore, the much-lauded and much-abused agent called Photography takes her legitimate stand. Her business is to give evidence of facts, as minutely and as impartially as, to our shame, only an unreasoning machine can give'.[11] The mechanical foundation of photography was a clear disadvantage in asserting the artistic basis of the medium.

In response to these perceptions, photographers turned to creating consciously artistic photographs through methods like staging, as well as editing or combining negatives, to demonstrate unique artistic thought and skill

and, by association, assert the artistic quality of photography. The technique of staging has its origins in the popular format of *tableau vivant*, translating to 'living picture'. *Tableau* was initially performed by actors as a spectacle, or by amateurs at home for amusement. Individuals would hold a pose for a matter of minutes, sometimes wearing costumes and employing props, to mimic the appearance of paintings or depict scenes from theatre, literature, and other sources. The method was later adopted by photographers, often with the intent of copying or mimicking existing artworks or artistic styles and concepts to affirm the artistic capacity and potential of photography and appeal to tastes of the period.[12] Often highly theatrical, there was no possibility of the works being confused as depicting 'real life'.[13] Through using staging and working with negatives, the artist's hand, concept, and creativity was communicated in the work, while simultaneously challenging the accepted veracity of the photographic medium.

   A noted example is the 1858 work *Fading Away* by British photographer Henry Peach Robinson (Figure 4.2). The work was produced through using

Figure 4.2: Henry Peach Robinson, *Fading Away*, 1858, albumen print. (Victoria and Albert Museum, RPS.2314-2017)

models and was printed from five separate negatives to achieve Robinson's artistic vision. The combination print depicts a woman in her sick bed, taking her final breaths in the company of her family. Her mother and sister, positioned on either side of the work, watch over the feeble young woman with concern. A man, either the father or perhaps the woman's fiancé, turns his back.[14] With hunched shoulders, he stares out of the window in frustration and despair. The photograph reflects on the tuberculosis epidemic which enveloped Britain in the nineteenth century.[15] Women suffering with consumption was a popular motif in Victorian art, inspiring paintings such as William Lindsay Windus's *Too Late*, from the same year.[16] However, Robinson's work proved controversial as it was seen to go against the accepted 'factual' quality of photography.[17] Furthermore, the subject was considered too sensitive and morbid to be depicted photographically.[18]

Some photographers sought inspiration from literary sources, staging works to illustrate scenes from poems, plays, and novels. Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs often depicted staged scenes of female figures from historical, literary, or biblical origins. Her photograph *Mariana* (Figure 4.3) depicts the central figure of Lord Alfred Tennyson's poem 'Mariana', drawing inspiration from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure,* in which Mariana's fiancé, Angelo, refuses to marry her. She spends five years alone and isolated, awaiting her suitor. Tennyson's poem focuses on Mariana's 'isolation and despair, watching and waiting and

Figure 4.3: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Mariana*, c. 1874–1875, albumen print. (Victoria and Albert Museum, 42-1939)

longing for death'.[19] This is the vision embodied in Cameron's photograph. The composition is sparse, typical of Cameron's photographs, which focus directly on the subject through close framing. This serves to heighten the emotional intensity of the image. The central female figure of Mariana, here depicted by the model Agnes Mangles, is shown in a three-quarter-length portrait and is posed leaning on a wooden, carved piece of furniture.[20] Her body is slumped over, and she cradles her head in her hand, signalling her lethargy. She gazes outwards, her face communicating her frustration and fatigue.

Cameron's contemporary Lady Clementina Hawarden similarly employed staging, but unlike Cameron, Hawarden's photographs have a more ambiguous origin with a less direct or apparent source of inspiration. The photographs depict Hawarden's family members, mainly her eight daughters, acting out scenarios in the rooms and balcony of their apartment in South Kensington, at 5 Princes Gardens.[21] As a further contrast to Cameron, Hawarden's photographs present far more contextual information, often showing elements like furniture, making clear the photographs' location within an interior setting. In the photographs, Hawarden's daughters wear costumes, sometimes taking on the role of male characters. A selection of Hawarden's photographs depict young women gazing at mirrors, trapped in the reflection, or looking through windows, similarly communicating a sense of confinement. One photograph shows Hawarden's daughter Clementina Maude by a window, bathed in light (Figure 4.4). She is shown standing, leaning against the wall, and holding her hands up in a state of

Figure 4.4: Lady Clementina Hawarden, *Clementina Maude, 5 Princes Garden*, c. 1862–1863. (Victoria and Albert Museum, 457:344-1968)

desperation. These works appear to communicate inner emotional states – longing, desire, isolation, and seclusion – and could be read as a reflection of Hawarden's insular existence: as a wife and mother of ten, confined within her home, as dictated by the societal restrictions of the period.[22] The work of Cameron and Hawarden often depicted women or female adolescents, which can be connected to the work of contemporary artist Frances Kearney, whose recent work focuses on prepubescent girls.

4.2 Frances Kearney

British artist Frances Kearney has used staging throughout her practice, reproducing carefully considered, 'real world' scenes showing people alone in domestic or natural environments. The presentation of images which communicate separation and loneliness is a noted aspect of Kearney's practice. In 2001, her photographs were part of an exhibition at the then National Media Museum, Bradford, entitled *A Lonely Place*.[23] The exhibition sought to examine ideas of 'loss, melancholy, loneliness and isolation [. . .] present[ing] unsettling and sometimes stark mediations on the ambiguous definitions of what is means of be lonely'.[24] While her works are all staged, the construction feels unforced, as if capturing a natural occurrence. As suggested by writer Adam Philips, the photographs feel 'unstaged': 'Whilst minutely constructing her images, Kearney's art relies on the appearance of naturalness, even happenstance'.[25]

Many of Kearney's early work transforms the prosaic into the poetic, where seemingly everyday tasks take on new meaning. Kearney's 1998 series *Five People Thinking the Same Thing* featured in the exhibition *A Lonely Place* (Figure 4.5). The series depicts individuals alone, preoccupied within their thoughts as they engage with basic activities, like smoking or cleaning. We never see their faces, and we can therefore only imagine what they are thinking. In one photograph, a woman is seated on the ground in a bathroom, the walls painted canary yellow. Her back facing the viewer, she leans against the bathtub, which features a pink exterior. She rests her head in her hand, holding a cigarette between her fingers. Despite the bright colour scheme, the work is overwhelmingly bleak. Kearney's later, 1999 series, entitled *Seven Year Olds Still at Play* depicts children playing alone in domestic settings. Their constriction within these environments is heightened by the tight framing, centring on the child and enclosing them within the bare

Figure 4.5: *Five People Thinking the Same Thing III*, 1998, C-type print. (© Frances Kearney)

interiors. Similar to *Five People Thinking the Same Thing*, we do not see the subjects' faces, in this case, children, but we gain a sense that they are absorbed in their games, using their imagination to transport them from their stark and joyless surroundings. The ideas present within these two series can be felt in Kearney's later works, specifically ideas of isolation and the worlds inhabited by children. In Kearney's later series, however, the action is transplanted from the domestic to the rural countryside.

Kearney's 2009 series *Fishing for Trout* and 2013 series *Running Wild* depict young girls, often prepubescent, in deserted, rural locations. The young girls are framed and isolated in the bare, empty, desolate, and expansive settings (Figures 4.6–4.7). This is heightened by the sheer scale of the works, approximately 4 by 5 feet (122 cm x 152 cm). Viewing the works, it can be difficult to locate the individual within the landscape. This is exacerbated by the subject's dress which often blends or melds into the landscape depicted, conveying a sense that the individual has become one with the landscape they inhabit. Referring to a specific work in *Fishing for Trout,* Sarah Kent comments, 'with her red hair and maroon jump suit, the girl seems to have adapted,

Figure 4.6: *Untitled IX*, from the series *Running Wild*, 2013, digital C-type print mounted on aluminium. (© Frances Kearney)

chameleon-like, to her mellow environment'.[26] Some of the photographs include abandoned structures or machinery, the remnants of previous inhabitation and commercial activity. The sparse, empty environments and sense of abandonment, both of the structures and related equipment as well as the children, communicate a feeling that something has gone terribly wrong.

Despite this, the children are presented as at ease with their situation. They are shown engaging in a range of activities, including foraging for food, fishing, and hunting. These activities are beyond what we would perceive as suitable for their age, cementing the idea that some tragedy has forced this behaviour. Yet there are no answers present; the works are purposefully ambiguous. Nevertheless, there is something calming about the works. Kearney's photographs present slow, still, and harmonious scenes. The young girls are seemingly disassociated from reality but at the same time are content in their application of skills and knowledge, and they are comfortable with the activity and their situation in nature. The photographs' balance of colour, tone, and

Figure 4.7: *Untitled IV*, from the series *Running Wild*, 2013, digital C-type print mounted on aluminium. (© Frances Kearney)

light and the way in which the children seem to blend seamlessly into their surroundings suggest a return to and embrace of nature.

Kearney often expresses her sorrow at children's lack of engagement with nature. Of her series *Running Wild*, Kearney stated:

> recently I have felt the desire to question how we survive the sonic and sensory overload of modern life. I am fascinated by ideas of escape; the need to pause, the importance of time spent alone, of vanishing and quietude, and of the magic found within the sublime possibilities of the natural world.[27]

Through her recent work, she returns the children to nature, showing the calm, solitude, and escape enabled via nature as possible and positive. Yet she acknowledges her purposeful creation of a sense of anxiety through her works, stating, 'it is important that there is a tension in the images between

the promise of stillness and sanctuary and the ever-present possibility of danger'.[28]

4.3 Gregory Crewdson

The possibility of danger, an unseen threat, is echoed in the work of American Gregory Crewdson. Among the best-known contemporary photographers, he is credited with changing the language of contemporary photography.[29] Over the course of his prolific career, Crewdson has created series of haunting photographs which present elaborate, almost cinematic, staged scenes of individuals in states of isolation and contemplation, played out against a setting of a cold, stark, American archetypical suburbia, largely devoid of people. Crewdson's father was a psychoanalyst, and as a young boy, Crewdson would secretly listen in on therapy sessions, trying to piece together and imagine the stories being told.[30] He clearly developed a vivid imagination that now informs his construction of staged scenes that present a whole, imaginary, and at times disturbing world. His photographs are often compared to the works of American artist Edward Hopper or films by English director Alfred Hitchcock; as curator Marta Weiss writes, 'Crewdson draws on the mythology of small-town America to evoke the loneliness of an Edward Hopper painting and the foreboding of a Hitchcock film'.[31]

Framed by domestic or suburban spaces, Crewdson's photographs often centre on individual figures who appear uncomfortable, uneasy, tense, and unable to connect. Unlike Kearney's independent, assured, and goal-oriented prepubescent girls, the adult figures in Crewdson's photographs appear powerless, purposeless, and unfulfilled. The spaces they inhabit are expansive, cold, and remote. Many of his works feature a white, cold light that immerses the scene with a sense of foreboding. Despite the recognisable suburban setting, through Crewdson's unique aesthetic vision, once familiar streets, homes, and schools become uncanny and eerie. The distinction between reality and fantasy also becomes blurred: we are presented with a whole world, seemingly drawn from reality, while not being real.

Crewdson's 2013 series *Cathedral of the Pines* features individuals sharing the same domestic space or the same piece of furniture, but while they may be connected physically or spatially, they appear mentally distant from their companions. In one work, simply entitled *Mother and Daughter*, two women share the same couch. The older woman lays her head on her

daughter's lap, yet there is no sense of connection. They both look outwards, their eyes glazed and faces expressionless. Like many of Crewdson's subjects, the women are shown in states of solitude and longing, their profiles illuminated by cold light. The outside spaces, either the setting of action, or more precisely inaction, can commonly be glimpsed through windows. They are another important presence in Crewdson's photographs and seem to reflect the subject's inner thoughts. For instance, in *Mother and Daughter*, the large windows in the living room reveal an outside view of a neighbourhood blanketed in thick, white snow. The door of the women's living room is open, the snow edging into the domestic space, threatening to consume the two women.

Crewdson is renowned for his meticulous working methods, where every detail is carefully considered to produce a specific vision and effect. Crewdson and his team scout for locations, often in Massachusetts, US. His shoots are commonly compared to Hollywood filmsets: he employs a team of over two hundred people, including a professional lighting crew and film technicians, and use of devices like rain and fog machines to achieve the desired aesthetic.[32] The theatricality is sometimes clearly signalled by the presence of actors, including Tilda Swinton (appearing twice in the series *Dream House*, 2002) and Julianne Moore (also in *Dream House*, 2002).[33] More recently, Crewdson has returned to using unknown models, engaging and directing individuals he personally knows. This increases the sense of dislocation and haunting quality of the works, as the viewer's experience is not disrupted by their recognition of a famous figure. Instead, the figures are, in author Jorg Colberg's words, 'ominous depictions of anonymous, downtrodden people in the US'.[34]

Despite the team of people he works with, Crewdson often speaks of the isolation inherent to the practice of photography. In a 2016 interview to promote the exhibition of *Cathedral of the Pines* in Europe, Crewdson stated:

Photography is a lonely endeavour, and I think all photographers are in one way or another drawn to the medium by kind of an alienated viewpoint. Just the act of looking through a lens, a view-finder, is an act of separation. It's an attempt to try to find the connection outside of yourself.[35]

This sense of separation has seeped into his creative works, which Crewdson acknowledges. In a later 2017 interview, Crewdson discussed this point

further, noting '[separation is a] theme [that] runs throughout my pictures, but I do also think photographers want some sense of connection. Those two things come together in this series [*Cathedral of the Pines*]: a sense of being alone, while also wanting to feel connected'.[36] In an interview published a few weeks later, Crewdson stated:

> If I were to attempt to suggest a larger meaning of all my pictures, it is this dual thing of feeling slightly detached from the world but also wanting to make some kind of connection at the same time. My hope is that there is a sense of loneliness but that it's almost contradicted by the formal beauty of the pictures, like the light, the colors and the atmosphere.[37]

4.4 Philip-Lorca diCorcia

The longing for connection can also be read in the works of American artist Philip-Lorca diCorcia, who is renowned for his staged works which question the medium of photography. DiCorcia has been practising photography since the 1970s and is credited as a seminal influence on artists like Crewdson through his work which 'establish[ed] the staged or "fictional" approach to creating photographs'.[38] Like Kearney and Crewdson, there is an ambiguity about diCorcia's works, despite a clear debt to the documentary tradition. DiCorcia intentionally plays with the documentary tradition and the perception of photography's inherent truth, creating staged scenes that mimic reality, arguably more closely than Kearney or Crewdson. He works to blur the boundaries between the staged and 'unstaged'. As diCorcia states:

> I think it's a sense of disappointment after realizing that most of the time they're being lied to – and what medium has a stronger relationship to people's idea of the truth than one that is supposed to be an accurate representation of reality?[39]

Many of his works are united in their presentation of the personal experience of living and moving around the city and the anonymity and related loneliness of an urban existence.

In 1978, diCorcia photographed his brother Mario in the kitchen, absent-mindedly gazing into a fridge during the Christmas holidays. The photograph has the aesthetic of a casual, 'in-the-moment' photograph, but as

writer and curator Peter Galassi notes, the photograph was carefully composed and planned: 'the camera was on a tripod and the lighting was supplemented by an electronic flash hidden in the refrigerator and triggered at the moment of exposure'.[40] This encapsulates diCorcia's working method, and it remains a constant throughout his practice: the use of staging and lighting, and diCorcia's attention to preparation and visual impact.

The photograph of Mario was part of diCorcia's series *Family and Friends*, which depicts a series of staged scenes showing individuals alone, devoid of human connection, despite their existence in the bustling metropolis. As viewers, we identify diCorcia's characters' location in a city based on common, universal motifs – road signs, traffic, urban public transport, and lack of greenery. Similar to Kearney's works, the figures in diCorcia's series are absorbed in their activities or inner mental thoughts. While diCorcia gives names to the individuals depicted – Igor, Fred, Max – the individuals are largely anonymous and alone, despite their locations in the busy city. Moreover, they tend to inhabit largely empty spaces, demonstrated through the photograph *Fred*. The man, presumably Fred, has fallen on a city street, his belongings scattered on the ground around him. Fred desperately searches for his eyeglasses, his hand fuzzy, out of focus because of its movement, while his newspaper flies away in the wind. But no one helps him: he is alone. Other works signal the photograph's location in the city through the title. *Kansas City* depicts a figure alone in what appears to be a hotel room.[41] The individual can be seen in the reflection of the small hotel mirror. They are shown lying in bed watching television, the remnants of a takeaway sitting on the side table. These obviously staged works, featuring models and constructed events and scenes, form a contrast to diCorcia's later practice.

In diCorcia's later work, he uses the setting of the city to produce photographs which blur the boundary between staged and documentary works. In his 2000 series *Heads*, the works are staged in a different way. Individuals were photographed as they walked through Times Square in New York. A strobe light would flash onto the individual, triggered by a radio signal, which would cause diCorcia's camera to release the shutter, much like the trigger in the fridge door in his 1978 work *Mario*. Owing to the bright daylight, the individual photographed was unaware they were being photographed. There was careful staging involved, but is this a staged image? In viewing these works, we are encouraged to consider what is a staged work and what is a documentary work. The practice relates to diCorcia's perception that people in public, urban environments are always posing and presenting, to

quote the artist, 'themselves as cliches of what they should be'.[42] The figures often appear alone and isolated despite the large number of people around them in the hectic Times Square. This is a result of the strobe lighting that isolates and focuses on the individual figure, a clear, purposeful decision by diCorcia. But the isolation and separation that can be felt in diCorcia's work is not overtly deliberate. DiCorcia reflects:

> the feeling of loneliness that my characters communicate is not necessarily intentional, rather it is a consequence of how I work: I absolutely do not want the model or anybody else in the picture to look directly at the camera because this would lead to the recognition of a relationship with the photographer.[43]

Undoubtedly, staging also plays a role in producing a compositionally and conceptually effective study in urban environments when conditions can be outside of the photographer's control. When photographing a street scene without applying the trickery of hidden cameras or other such techniques (consider Paul Strand's studies using a trick, double lens or Walker Evan's subway portraits, using a hidden camera), there is often an individual who stares directly down the lens.[44] Staging removes this possibility. By the subjects acknowledging the photographer, the suspension of disbelief would be broken, and by extension, this would break the sense of isolation that permeates the works, especially given the understanding that a photographer, and in Crewdson's case, a whole team of people, were present in the creation of the work. Even though we may understand the work is staged, through the photographer's craft, we view these works as glimpses into reality, giving viewers a 'sustained look at what ordinarily passes us by'.[45]

4.5 Recontextualisation of Works

As a viewer, my response to these works altered during the Covid-19 pandemic, a time when experiences and things that previously seemed ordinary – a busy street, for instance – shifted and changed to become extraordinary, or even dangerous. Photographs, like any art, can be read differently depending on the period it is viewed, and the individual who views it, bringing both the collective atmosphere and individual reading and experiences to a work. From a personal perspective, works by Kearney, Crewdson, and

diCorcia have taken on new meaning in the wake of the pandemic and its effects, including lockdown. But this recontextualisation and rereading of artworks did seem to occur on a wider, international level during the pandemic. The works simultaneously reflect and question the collective and diverse experience of enforced isolation. Kearney's and diCorcia's photographs speak to those times: the loneliness of the urban, the empty streets, the strong desire to return to nature and the need to escape and make new connections were all largely commented on during the lockdown periods.[46]

But the work of Crewdson undoubtedly had the most resonant and powerful effect on people during the pandemic. Throughout the first part of the pandemic, Crewdson was highly present online, participating in a range of interviews with other cultural figures, including actors and other artists.[47] In an interview with actor Cate Blanchett, the two reflected on the significance of his works in the current situation. Blanchett stated:

> In some of your earlier work, the figures somehow seem to be experiencing entrapment. But there's a slightly different quality here: they're at bus stops, they're on doorsteps, they're on stoops. It's not being trapped, it's a profound sense of waiting. Maybe I feel that acutely because of the state we're finding ourselves in globally, but I found that really resonant in the images.[48]

There was widespread recognition of Crewdson's photographs reflecting the time, with many drawing parallels between the largely universal experience of lockdown – with its anxieties and sense of isolation – and the scenes presented in his photographs. Anecdotally, during lockdown, I received numerous emails from arts organisations discussing the work of Crewdson. His works also regularly appeared on Twitter with individuals remarking that his works reflected their current experience of lockdown or the 'lockdown aesthetic'. User Lee Aaron Rosen commented that 'Gregory Crewdson photographs have never felt more poignant to me than they do right now', while user Michael Haffner stated: 'In this time of isolation, the work of photographer Gregory Crewdson seems even more haunting and prophetic'.[49] Further to this, Tom Dingley commented that 'his work is even more appealing during this isolation. He's been photographing it for years', while user @MiloLethorn noted 'in no particular order, the three biggest beneficiaries of this pandemic so far seem to be Zoom, toilet roll companies and Gregory Crewdson's twitter mentions'.[50] The photographs transformed to become a reflection of the present

times. Crewdson himself recognised this. In an interview in September 2020, he noted: 'as it turns out, they're weirdly relevant to the moment we're in [. . .] No one could have guessed that'.[51] His recognition of this may have also prompted his October 2021 release of *Alone Street*.[52]

The themes of isolation and loneliness were present in these works before lockdown, but this reading became more apparent and relevant in the wake of the pandemic and its social impositions. Will themes of seclusion, separation, and empty spaces become more visible in creative production in the future, given that they have become so widely embedded in contemporary culture and understanding? Will such themes hold the same appeal to artists and audiences? Will people want to revisit these experiences? It would be worth exploring how the effects and experience of the pandemic filter into the output of artists and creative practitioners over the coming months and years, either blatantly or through more nuanced approaches. It is already possible to gain some sense of the impact on the pandemic on photographic production through the work of a range of contemporary artists.

Initially, many photographers sought to capture the scenes and mood of this unique period in history in documentary tradition. There was a large output of images showing figures staring through windows, looking outwards, in addition to a number of images depicting empty spaces drawn from life. For example, British photographer Hannah Starkey's *Empty City* depicts the streets and sites of London during the pandemic and related lockdowns. Starkey often works in the tradition of staged imagery, focusing on women in urban environments.[53] Starkey adopts a documentary approach for *Empty City*. Of the experience, she wrote:

> Lockdown was rapid and ruthless. It's as if a spell has been cast on the kingdom. Everyone has left this place [. . .] just gone [. . .] I realize I photograph the way I do because it's not buildings but people that make up my landscapes.[54]

The series of images depicts a hauntingly empty Bankside in London devoid of the morning commuter rush, views of unoccupied office blocks and the usually busy Fenchurch Avenue barren, bar a Deliveroo rider.

These documentary projects were common, but there was also significant use of staging to communicate and capture a sense of the pandemic, especially when people were not necessarily documenting the events

Figure 4.8: Hayleigh Longman, 'The Covid-19 Anxiety Project'. (© Wellcome)

in real time. As previously discussed, in the nineteenth century, staging was employed to navigate the technological limitations of the then available photographic processes. The contemporary pandemic forced limitations through social distancing and safety measures, including wearing masks.[55] Staging was therefore employed to enable the production and photography of aesthetic scenes which spoke to the experience and understandings in safe and controlled conditions.

One example derives from a project commissioned by the Wellcome foundation, which tasked five international photographers with producing works reflecting the mental toll of Covid-19, noting its capacity to exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions. The five photographers were given the question: 'How are you, your family and your friends coping with anxiety related to Covid-19?'[56] British photographer Hayleigh Longman's work combines staging with the documentary tradition and was taken around her mother's home in Harlow, Essex, in May and June 2020 (Figure 4.8). In a simple but poignant self-portrait, Longman poses in her mother's bedroom. In the white interior, Longman is seated on the ground, her face illuminated by light from a window facing her, situated behind the camera. Her eyes are closed, and she places her hand to her face, in a gesture of both comfort and exhaustion. Created two months into lockdown, Longman recalls that she felt deflated at the time – even washing her hair felt like a huge task. She stated:

> Turning the camera onto myself allowed me to represent the sense of the isolation I felt in the confined spaces of my home. The portrait of myself feels timeless as did lockdown and the days merging into one.

> Not knowing where the time had gone but not being able to recall what
> you had been up to.[57]

The photograph presents a deeply intimate moment which reflects the iso-
lation and confinement of the pandemic – at once a personal experience
but also a largely universal one.

Similarly drawn to the mixture of staging and documentary is the
German artist Julia Fullerton-Batten's series *Looking Out from Within*.
The photographs reflect on the sights she witnessed in her home city of
London during the lockdown. During her daily, allocated walk, Fullerton-
Batten noticed people gazing from their windows. Her series was inspired
by this experience; she reflected: 'as a photographer I felt I couldn't just
stand around and do nothing. I knew I had to record this odd and surre-
al time'.[58] She sourced models based on an open call using advertisements
and flyers. Collaborating with the sitters on costumes and sets, the results
are wide-ranging, but are united in their cool tone and surreal effect. All
the works depict people gazing from windows. These are either contextual-
ised, a lifeless street, city lights beaming in the distance as in *Ann, Lockdown
Day 74*, or cropped to focus on the individual figure as witnessed in *Suzie,
Lockdown Day 329*. Each work is accompanied by the name of the individ-
ual captured and the day of lockdown on which the photograph was taken,
giving a sense of the timescale in addition to the overwhelming length of
the lockdown. For instance, the photograph *Vanessa, Zenobia and Zuleika,
Lockdown Day 364* shows three women, a mother and two daughters, in
matching nightgowns, gazing outwards from their large glass doors.[59] A lake
and forest is reflected on the glass, layered on the women's image. The forms
of the women are reflected in a mirror behind, cementing their entrapment
and recalling photographs by Hawarden. Like Crewdson's photographs, the
scene seems to be on the precipice, some action about to unfurl: What or
who is approaching the window? Knowing the context of the pandemic, the
viewer understands that no action is likely to take place.

Artist Victoria Sorochinski was inspired by the experience of lockdown
in Berlin to stage a series of self-portraits imagining her inner mental state.
The project, entitled *INsideOUTside*, was photographed entirely in her apart-
ment. In some photographs, Sorochinski is posed with natural motifs found
on her daily, allocated walks, alongside symbols of the pandemic – notably,
toilet paper. In other photographs, she gazes out of windows, to the exterior
world. The series can also be linked to Hawarden's photographs, reflecting

the confines imposed by society through the staging of scenes in confined spaces. Of the series, Sorochinski stated: 'During the lockdown, we are all forced to spend a lot of time at home, which in fact makes us turn our gazes inwards, and connect more with the inner-self'.[60]

Art will always, inevitably, reflect the time and space it was created in, and our reading of works is also framed by the period in which we view and receive works. Staging was a necessary technique in the nineteenth century to mitigate the technological limitations of the period. Revived in the 1970s, the technique of staging continues through the work of contemporary artists like Kearney, Crewdson, and diCorcia, and it has been used to produce photographs which reflect on and communicate the human condition, including the darker experiences of loneliness and despair. Today, artists and photographers are using staging as a necessary tool for creative expression, enabling the presentation of scenes which reflect on the ongoing mental and physical impact of the pandemic.

Notes

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5. Steven Jacobs, '*Amor Vacui*: Photography and the image of the empty city', *History of Photography* 30, no. 2 (2006): 108–109.

6. Adam Withnall, 'This Is the First Ever Photograph of a Human – And How the Scene It Was Taken in Looks Today', *The Independent,* 5 November 2014, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/world-history/this-is-the-first-ever-photograph-of-a-human-and-how-the-scene-it-was-taken-in-looks-today-9841706.html.

7. In a similar vein, the works of French photographer Eugene Atget are marked by their depiction of ghostly streets, depicting the loneliness and solitude of the urban. His photographs date to the turn of the twentieth century, when camera technologies had significantly developed since the origins of photography in the 1830s. However, Atget did not adopt the new technologies, sticking to his older photographic apparatus to document the streets of Paris. He used a wooden camera and continued to use

the slow dry plates. As a result, the images are often void of people, or where they appear, they are present as if ghostly apparitions; see Dan Cox, 'The Empty Streets (and Parks) of Eugène Atget', 17 April 2020, https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/museum-life/the-empty-streets-and-parks-of-eugene-atget%E2%80%8B.

8.   See Jillian Lerner, 'The Drowned Inventor: Bayard, Daguerre, and the Curious Attractions of Early Photography', *History of Photography* 38, no. 3 (2014): 218–232.

9.   Effie Komninou, 'Hippolyte Bayard's Le Noyé: A Little Meditation on Death', *Third Text* 17, no. 2 (2003): 164.

10.   While *Le Noyé* was produced over seventeen years prior, disrupting this fact, Hippolyte Bayard's work was barely known. It is only relatively recently that his work and significance to the history of photography has been acknowledged.

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18.   'Fading Away', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed 13 November 2021, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/302289.

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20.   Wolf, *Julia Margaret Cameron's Women*: 66.

21.   'Lady Clementina Hawarden – An Introduction', *V&A*, accessed 13 November 2021, https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/lady-clementina-hawarden-an-introduction.

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23.   The museum is now the National Science and Media Museum.

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26.   Sarah Kent, 'Fishing For Trout', *Frances Kearney*, accessed 2 December 2021 http://www.franceskearney.com/fishing-for-trout-text.

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29. Irene Gonzalez, 'Fact, Fiction & the Mise-en-Scène in Contemporary Photography', 2 May 2019, https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/the-mise-en-scene-in-contemporary-photography.

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Chapter 5

Milovan Gavazzi and Ethnographic Photography: Practices and Policies of Croatian Field Research and Archiving in the First Half of the Twentieth Century[1]

Tihana Rubić

5.1 Introduction

Surprisingly, the place of ethnographic photography within the framework of a discipline (and broader areas) is frequently 'an empty space' – in other words, insufficiently analytically examined and pronounced – although 'the relationship between anthropology and photography is as old as the discipline'.[2] It was in the beginning of the twentieth century that the first film and photographic archive in Paris was established, 'to capture, once and for always, ways and models of human activity whose disappearance is only a question of time'.[3] But for this and many other archives, a lot of archived photographic material from the pioneering times, often staged as a 'time capsule', has been insufficiently – if ever – researched, (re-)evaluated, and deconstructed, once it was created and stored in archival drawers. This fact does not reflect, in any case, an archive's 'rich' or 'poor' scholarly and documentary significance but indicates the need for greater scholarly attention and a proactive approach towards the neglected yet immense amount of scientific material.[4]

This analysis is a contribution to the discussion on concepts and practices of (in)visibility, (under-)representation, and knowledge production

through heretofore rarely analysed ethnographic photographs and archives. The fierce critique of 'old' photographic material and its 'scientific-realistic approaches to ethnography, later criticized with a reflective attitude'[5] discouraged visual research and methodologies, and withdrew from visual interrogations. At the same time, paradoxically, ethnologies and cultural anthropologies have not restrained from photographic practice in the context of ethnographic field research: 'old' cameras were just replaced with mobile phones and digital cameras. Dislike and epistemological and ethical discomfort with visual content from the field is then usually 'resolved' by not displaying visual content in published written works. Still, ethnographic field research practice does not always lack photography. The issues of visibility and invisibility, power relations, documentation, and critical thinking in the field, related to both 'old' and contemporary ethnographic photography, are proving to be continuously relevant and vital for potential deeper understanding, deconstructing, and lighting of the 'blind spots' of history, epistemology, and methods of the discipline itself.

5.2 Ethnographic Photography

The written paper is a conventional medium of ethnological and cultural anthropological scholarly communication, an 'activity upon which [. . .] professional evaluation ultimately rests'.[6] If they are to be published, ethnographic photographs are most often the written text's accompanying part. Anthropologist Sarah Pink depicts the long history and paradigm of photography both in the ethnographic field and published text: 'seen as an objective recording device, flourished as a method for the "scientific" documentation of cultural and physical difference'.[7]

From the end of the nineteenth century, positivist representations of reality ('neutral witness', 'authentic revealer')[8] correlated with the premise that ethnology was a historical discipline and both written ethnography and visual ethnography (e.g. photographs) were a material emanation of a lived experience and *reality*. From the 1980s, the subjectivist turn inaugurated 'partial truths' debates in anthropology, representational debates (of a photographing subject), and a problematisation of the photographer's gaze.

> With photographs, memory is both fixed and fluid: social and personal. There is nothing neutral here. As sites of memory, photographic images

(whether digital or analogue) offer not a view on history but, as mnemonic devices, are perceptual phenomena.[9]

Croatian ethnographic photography, produced in the course of ethnographic field research, has been discussed most often with an emphasis on the rich documentary and archival value of the material and less frequently with stress on its epistemological aspects. Ethnologist Milana Černelić, in the analysis of ethnological cartography as a specific qualitative research method used until the last third of the twentieth century, and on the basis of her own cartographic and ethnographic research into the lighting of yearly fires in the Bačka region, discussed the advantages and disadvantages represented by data collected through the questionnaires and related photographs of the 1960s. The questionnaires and photographs were part of an ambitious ethnological and cartographic research project *Etnološki atlas Jugoslavije* (*Ethnological Atlas of Yugoslavia*), run by Croatian ethnologist and university professor Branimir Bratanić, organised by Etnološki zavod Filozofskog fakulteta (Ethnological Bureau of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) and Etnološko društvo Jugoslavije, Komisija za Etnološki atlas (Ethnological Society of Yugoslavia, Commission for the Ethnological Atlas). Černelić addressed the fact that rich archival manuscript material (consisting of thousands of text card files and photographs!) is nowadays 'forgotten' and insufficiently used and (re-)examined in Croatian ethnology.[10]

The reasons ranged from merely practical to epistemological ones. Reviewing visual and written handwritten material carries its own long-term technical, organisational, methodological, epistemological, and interpretative challenges and issues. In technical terms, the state of preservation of manuscript archival material ranges from difficult-to-read to legible documents.[11] Regarding its (re)valorisation, the affirmative view emphasises their documentary and ethnographic value and calls for the photographs to be contextualised and seen within the practice, politics, and poetics of the time and place in which the photographs were produced, maintained, and archived. The postmodernist, constructivist, and postcolonial view, and a thoughtful consideration of the power relations and the existence of constructed and often disputed realities of the researched and researchers, as well as recognised 'discursive regimes' that operate within scholarship, became the epistemological standard only decades later.

The fiercest criticism points to the fact that in the first half of the twentieth century, in the beginnings of the professionalisation of Croatian

ethnology, ethnographic photography was a practice that used modern technology, but through an outdated or positivist view. As expressed similarly for one archival ethnomusicological Irish visual and audio corpus, the prominent paradigm was salvation ethnology, the traditional (positivist) approach, and new technologies such as photography were used 'to capture the antimodernity [. . .] within a thoroughly modern medium'.[12]

The idea of photography as a memory device is Bourdieuan and implies that historical representation may be constructed. Did photography then serve anthropological discourse or act as a support, or was it the other way around?[14] What role did or do archives play in that process, because research photography always implies some archiving and typology?

Writing on the connection between anthropology, photography, and archives, Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes[15] note that an explosion in anthropological interest in archived ethnographic photography and related practices tied to the discipline and concept of anthropological field research appeared only in the 1990s.[16] Until this point, photographs had been devalued

> by their artificiality (for example, posed shots) [. . .], by their overtones of scientific racism [. . .] or simply by their presumed lack of relevance to the post-war anthropological project, anxious as it was to avoid being seen as the discipline that studied primitive peoples.[17]

The authors also note that 'no matter how staged or seemingly artificial, these images recorded points in individual and collective lives in which the subjects were sutured into the anthropological project',[18] so they need contemporary interpretations and (re-)evaluations through awareness of various forces (generational, class, gender, disciplinary, etc.) and relationships of power in the selection and presentation of visual content and for the interactions between those behind the camera, those in front of it, and those (individuals, communities, institutions) who these photographs were intended for. As Ariella Aïsha Azoulay argues: 'looted objects did not just happen into cultural institutions but are constitutive of the various scholarly, curatorial, and professional procedures (of which collecting is but one example)'.[19]

The lack of interest in ethnographic photography from anthropologists themselves lies in a few aspects of anthropological disciplines worldwide and a 'discomfort with photographs in contemporary social anthropology'. As Sasanka Perera highlighted in her paper in 2019, colonial photography

and colonial visual practice heritage, as well as anthropological practices of visually documenting the human body and affirming race types,[20] was certainly one of them.

Ethnologist Melanija Belaj notes that the

history of anthropological science has been marked by an understanding of the visual media, and above all photography, as documents that testify to the veracity of the anthropologist's report on the culture visited and met. It was not until the late 1960s, driven primarily by structuralism, that anthropology recognised the interpretive potential of photography.[21]

Within the past few years, 'photographic "repatriation" projects'[22] have been on the rise; photographs that received 'only patchy anthropological attention before'[23] are now taking on new life: (a) in museums, which are opening photographic collections to visitors and approaching old photographs interactively and through workshops, and (b) on the Internet, where profiles and albums on social networks, for example, form a self-presentation, even as concerns emotional trauma.[24] Modern science carries discomfort and numerous epistemological and methodological issues in relation to themes of imperialism and photography and emptiness and gaps in science and archives. Azoulay initiated the concept of 'potential histories' as a way of lateral thinking about archives – as selective places and spaces where some practices and narratives happened, while others did not.[25]

5.3 Archive of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Zagreb

Banks and Vokes, in their paper on the relationship between anthropology, photography, and the archive, define the photographic archive as 'a concept which refers to any set or collection of historical photographs, brought together with some purposeful intent (if only for storage)'.[26]

The material at hand is university professor Milovan Gavazzi's ethnographic photography production of the archive of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University in Zagreb. The archive is an analogue manuscript archive protected in 1993 as cultural heritage by the Croatian State

Archives and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. It contains various materials, including the following:

- audio and visual material, such as ethnographic films made from the 1930s to the 1970s, negatives of photographic films, slides, numerous photographs (analogue and digital), and recent documentaries and ethnographic films;
- manuscripts, such as ethnographic maps, ethnographic questionnaires, student theses and seminar papers, ethnographic material, transcripts and syntheses of field conversations research within scientific projects, and lists of graduate students; and
- a collection of ethnographic material, founded by Gavazzi, collected in the course of his field research and used as teaching aids. A particularly valuable and specific part of the archive are the ethnological questionnaires of the *Ethnological Atlas Questionnaires* created during the 1960s, which the Croatian State Archives rightfully included as an exceptional cultural and scientific asset.[27]

In the first half of the twentieth century, when the archive was created and enriched, the encyclopaedic approach was a research standard. Many world-known and influential social sciences and humanities projects of the time illustrate that the catalogue-oriented, encyclopaedic, classificatory system was the way to do research. There were unique ideas and types of material classification (the so-called Murdock system), and a card method of data collection, cross-cultural comparison, and systematisation,

> such as one about the need for the extensive collection and systematisation of ethnographic and folkloristic material – ideas ubiquitous in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; or the idea of recording material that was perishing – an idea that is an ethnographic 'encyclopaedic project' of sorts, driven by the desire to save. The encyclopaedic project is motivated by the idea of the last moment – in which one is witness to the uninterrupted continuity of manifestations of national spirit, of a moment in human history in which surviving manifestations of rudimentary forms of customs are written down and saved from oblivion.[28]

The archival material has been collected through substantial fieldwork from scientific projects on a wide range of topics in tangible and intangible traditional culture, from the 1930s until today. Both photographs and written field

data were collected mostly at locations in Croatia and the former Socialist Federal Republic Yugoslavia. The archive was formally established in the academic year 1927/1928, when Gavazzi joined the Faculty of Ethnology and began collecting various archival material as part of ethnographic field research. The archive of 'old photographs', taken between the late 1920s and 1970s, contains in total nearly 3,700 black-and-white photographs. The photographs taken by Gavazzi comprise a significant part of the archive's photo collection – nearly one thousand were taken by Gavazzi himself and as part of Gavazzi's field research, in collaboration with numerous university professors, museologists, and research associates.[29] The photographs were made in the photo lab at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, created mostly as accompanying visual content for ethnological research, both manuscripts and published texts. An additional 3,055 black-and-white photographs were taken in the second half of the twentieth century as a visual addendum to data from *Etnološki atlas Jugoslavije* and the accompanied *upitnice* ('questionnaires'). Photographs represent a significant addition, providing visual elaboration on topics covered in the questionnaires. Each photograph is accompanied by a card containing data on the location where the photograph was taken, its signature, volume number, the number of the questionnaire the photograph relates to, the name of the recorder, and a brief description of the photograph.[30]

An impulse present in photographs and research from the interwar period, was a visual (re)presentation and visual preservation of peasant life and culture as national treasures, in the spirit of national ideology and Romanticism of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. It was a period when new visual media were being developed intensively. Local intellectual circles followed international and European trends in the development of photography; many examples of ethnographic and documentary filmography from this period show that film production, in the case of Croatian ethnology (due to M. Gavazzi) began quite early in parallel to photography, as attested by awards won by Croatian authors at international film festivals. One example of this is the well-known film opus of *Škola narodnog zdravlja* (*School of Public Health*), in whose creation ethnologists were involved and consulted. The assistance of Gavazzi is especially noteworthy in this respect. The use of ethnological film in addition to photography developed simultaneously within Croatian ethnology and Gavazzi's ethnographic practice.

5.4 Milovan Gavazzi's Ethnographic Photography Practice in Dalmatia

Considered one of the founders of the field, Milovan Gavazzi (1895–1992) was a long-time professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities in Zagreb and the pioneer of its Department of Ethnology (the oldest ethnological university department in Croatia, established nearly a century ago). From the late 1920s to the 1970s, photography was a ubiquitous aspect of Gavazzi's field research and documentary work.[31] Gavazzi developed photographs himself in a photo lab he set up at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Beginning in the 1920s, aside from photography, Gavazzi simultaneously introduced the use of film recording into his research.[32] He was a pioneer in the use of the film camera and new audio-visual media in Croatian ethnology. He recorded folk music with famous Croatian musicologist Božidar Širola, and he was also accompanied in field research by famous Croatian photographer and a prominent actor on the cultural scene of the 1920s Croatia, Vladimir Tkalčić, with whom he recorded films and took photographs. Croatian historian Miho Barada, from the Faculty of Theology in Zagreb, collaborated with Gavazzi at the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences as an external associate in the auxiliary historical sciences from 1933. In 1940, Barada was permanently employed as a teacher of national history. Gavazzi's and Barada's preserved correspondence was conducted from 1929 to 1932, during Barada's studies in Rome, his return to Split, and the period of his expected employment in Zagreb.[33] Barada assisted Gavazzi in the field in 1929 in Trogir, placing him with his brother's family (whom Gavazzi was especially grateful to; he sent toys for the children and photos of the people he photographed in the field).[34]

Based on the photographs as visual records taken in the field, Gavazzi's written texts were published from the early 1930s onwards. His texts display his continual interest in the spatial disposition and prevalence of ethnographic objects in south-eastern Europe, as well as in the geographic and cultural historical origins (Slavic, Balkan, proto-Slavic) of traditional objects that served in the cultural and historic reconstruction and research of the Slavic peoples. Photography was the largely used material for the illustration of what has been written. In the field, outdoors, in rural areas of Croatia and Yugoslavia, Gavazzi's apparent impulse, seen from the selected motives and pronounce in the written texts, was to document elements of traditional peasant culture before it disappeared (Figure 5.1).
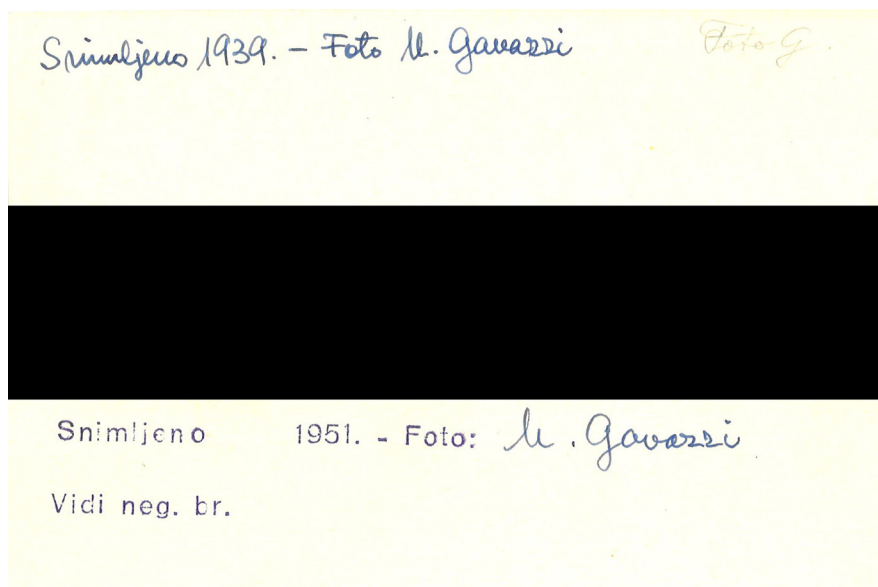
Figure 5.1: Milovan Gavazzi's handwritten signature and the year of field research; the paper card's backside. (Archive of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University in Zagreb)

Gavazzi's photographs present ethnographic, material objects: clothing, household items, tools, ploughs, residential and farm buildings, and various social and spiritual elements of traditional culture: dancing in pairs, target shooting at yearly fairs, family cooperatives (*zadrugas*), and so on. The photographs are sorted by inventory number and by topic. From the late 1920s, when Gavazzi pioneered ethnology studies at the university and simultaneously began collecting archival material during his prodigious field research, he also included the region of Dalmatia,[35] with photographs taken in the surrounding areas of Trogir, Split, Sinj, Makarska, Šibenik, the Pelješac peninsula, Ugljan, Hvar, Konavle, Dugi Otok, Omiš, Mljet, Iž, Novigrad, Šolta, and Murter.

I have chosen a few examples (Figures 5.2–5.11) of ethnographic photographs from the 1930s and 1950s taken by Gavazzi during his ethnographic field research in Dalmatia from three locations: the island of Hvar, the the Pelješac peninsula, and the microregion of Konavle.[36] This selection of Gavazzi's photographs was based on the geographic (Dalmatia) and chronological criterion (1930s to 1950s, a 'golden age' of Gavazzi's visual

ethnographic work – the largest number of archived photographs is from this period). There was also a content criterion: the largest number of Gavazzi's photos from this area and time frame present human figures (people), while a smaller number depict details (e.g. hands, material objects) and landscapes. I wanted to illustrate the content ratio I noticed in the archive's photographic fund itself: the human subjects and groups are the dominant visual content, while landscapes and ethnographic details are not as widespread.

The photographs form only a small part of the large photo archive of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. The photographs present people, landscapes, tools for agriculture, and built structures (mostly traditional stone houses in which the photographed individuals lived). Photographs capturing full human figures are common, while significantly fewer are portraits. The protagonists are mostly photographed as a group, as a couple, or as a family or household unit – women, men, and children. Gavazzi focused on documenting the family or household structure, inluding the protagonist's clothing and the tools and equipment used for work in and around the house. The items – material, social, and spiritual (this was Gavazzi's taxonomy) – were already considered to be disappearing in the early twentieth century because of spatial, economic, and social transformations of rural areas: emigration, de-agrarianisation, the development of a commodity and monetary economy, the disappearance of family and household cooperatives (*zadrugas*), and the weakening of the patriarchal order.[37]

The photographs are each glued to paper cards marked with an inventory number. The photographs feature no broader textual records or content except those regarding the year in which they were taken, location, and author (partly on the back of the cards and partly on the front). As occasionally told by Croatian senior ethnologists and cultural anthropologists even today, the purpose of these photographs was foremost visual documentation matching textual descriptions of traditional[38] rural life, found in written texts then in preparation for publishing. Photography was first and foremost an aid to classical ethnographic research and written contributions, whose experimental nature at the time was affirmed through the introduction of new research media and tools, visual aids to the written notes of field research, and a participant researcher's observations.

G. Nakovanj
(Pelješac) 1939. **657**
Bf

G. NAKOVANJ
(Pelješac)

1167
C2

JELSA
(otok Hvar)

1173
C2

JELSA
(otok Hvar)

21cu

2/95

1177
C2

JELSA
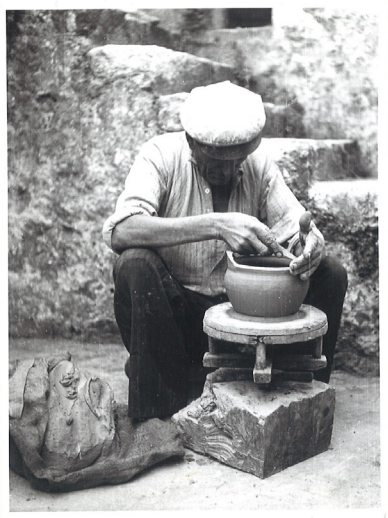(otok Hvar)

1190
C2

JELSA
(otok Hvar)

1203
C2

Uz cestu
JELSA - PITVE
(otok Hvar)
Većinom napuštene kulture na
terasama
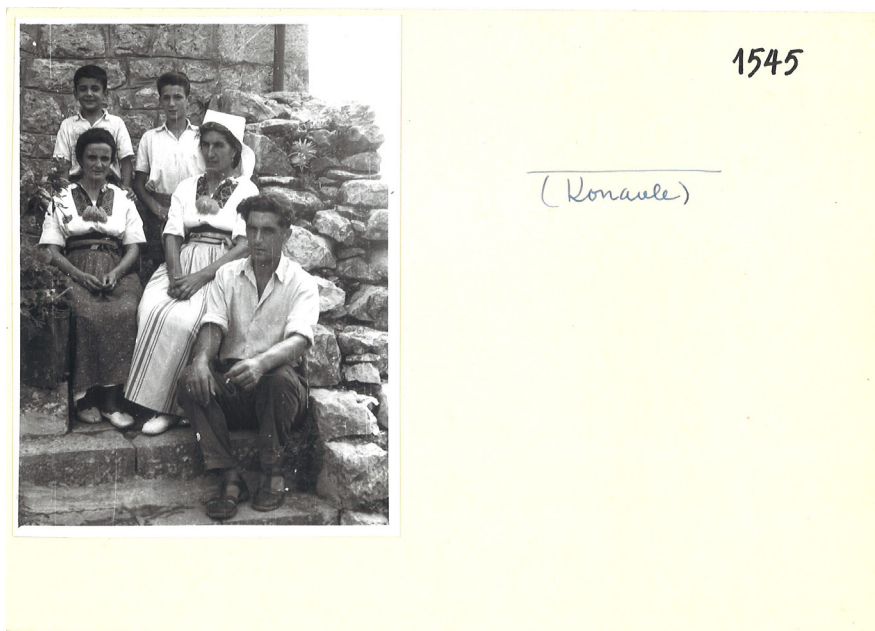
1542

(Konavle)

1543

(Konavle)

1545

(Konavle)

Figure 5.2–5.10: Photographs taken by Milovan Gavazzi in Dalmatia between the 1930s and 1950s. (Archive of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University in Zagreb)

5.5 Milovan Gavazzi: Ethnographer and/as Photographer

There is a dominant notion among contemporary Croatian ethnologists and cultural anthropologists, based on the content of Gavazzi's most famous written works,[39] that Gavazzi was interested primarily in the geographic, morphological, and aesthetic elements of material objects and customs, and less in social, economic, and political elements. The critique of the absence of political and socio-economic contextualisation and problematisation has been clearly argued in several places, both by his contemporaries[40] and by later ethnologists. Rihtman-Auguštin pointed out Bićanić's valuable contribution and pointed critically to the fact that ethnological literature 'about that one pair of boots owned by a family of ten members' does not provide sufficient data on socio-economic problems.[41] Accordingly, Rihtman-Auguštin suggested: 'therefore [. . .] one should read those other books, those with data on the economic condition of the people'.[42]

The corpus of Gavazzi's photographs, created over several decades of the first half of the twentieth century, shows an extraordinary variety of material, environmental, and sociocultural elements that attracted Gavazzi's attention as an ethnographic researcher-photographer. These are not 'only' expected objects of traditional material culture marked as such by researcher's gaze on traditional aesthetics and manual production but also many other elements: landscapes, built environments, people, and portraits. Protagonists often communicate with their eyes, laughter, seriousness, or restraint, with the photographer. When the protagonists perform craft works, eye contact is less present, probably because the protagonists are preoccupied with the craft. The craftwork is often photographed in a series. Photography often visualises a social group, mostly a family or a household. These images are staged, with Gavazzi framing time and space and 'constructing the reality'.[43] These staged photographs indicate and display politics and poetics of social interactions in the ethnological field: (1) immersed and immanent power relation patterns – in other words, the capacity of a researcher to stage certain material objects and even subjects (human figures) for the purpose of taking a photograph taking and the researcher's interests, and (2) the likelihood of intense and tender conversational actions, the interaction of researchers and subjects, and gaining trust to gather the subjects for the photograph.

After returning from the field and developing photographs at the faculty's photographic studio, Gavazzi would continue to have further

correspondence with the subjects, and he even formed friendship with the informants, sometimes sending them copies of photographs. Ethnology and cultural anthropology students in Zagreb occasionally provide narratives of their grandparents that were once narrators, who mention that the 'old photo album' they have back home was sent by professor Gavazzi himself, which makes it a point of family pride. I would then suggest that Gavazzi's fieldwork, research interests, and engagement are 'readable' as interactive and holistic much more from Gavazzi's visual ethnographic work (e.g. photographs) than from his written papers. It seems that visual material speaks of an ethnographer-photographer's individual research sensibility and poetics in a more complex manner than the written word. It also stimulates further thoughts on the potentials of contemporary scholarly encounters and engagements with old photographs. This has not been sufficiently considered so far by ethnologists in relation to visual content and photography.

5.6 Conclusion

By presenting and analysing a selection of Gavazzi's photographs, this paper aims to contribute to a larger discussion regarding the potential of photographic archival material (as a certain 'time capsule') in reflecting on the position and history of photography and visual research practice within ethnology and cultural anthropology, both from the discipline's outset and in modern times. Displaying and analysing 'old' photographs through contemporary lenses, from a chronological gap of nearly a century, instigates discussion and a consideration of disciplinary and historical 'emptiness(es)' and 'waiting(s)' within the discipline itself (in this case – Croatian ethnology and cultural anthropology, and an ethnographic archive). Visual content in Croatian ethnology and cultural anthropology has not been sufficiently examined and (re)valorised, and visual research methods and visual ethnography not systematically affirmed.[44] Gavazzi's ethnographic photographs have been 'invisible' and 'forgotten' for decades for a variety of reasons, ranging from occasional individual patronage that simultaneously discouraged public display, albeit with an altruistic goal – preserving analogous works from relocation and fragmentation – to scientific discomfort and disinterest in archives driven by postmodern and postcolonial critiques of (obsolete) positivist paradigms and fieldwork methodologies. This range of attitudes towards 'old' archival material and 'old' collected data is often referred to

as 'the end of ethnography', depicting the theoretical and epistemological transformation 'from realism to social critique'.[45]

Perera commented on anthropology's obsession with the written word and anthropology's reluctance to see photographs 'either as sources of information or as objects of research'.[46] Ethnographic photography and the archive of the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Zagreb was not 'reinterpreted, and reused, in the period since its creation'[47] many times. This long-term marginalisation of the photographic archive produced a failure to realise 'socio-historical specificities that emerge from encounters with old photographs'[48] and a failure to stimulate dialogue on the history of the discipline, on respondents' memories of particular historical periods, and on the epistemological, methodological, and ethical aspects of fieldwork and archival research.

Notes

1. This paper has been written as part of the project *Exposition* [*Ekspozicija*]*: Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today* of the Croatian Science Foundation (IP-2019-04-1772).
    Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the text were produced through agreement between the author and editors.
2. Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive', *History and Anthropology* 21, no. 4 (2010): 337; Sasanka Perera, 'Photography and the Ethnographic Method', *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods in Education*, ed. George W. Noblit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 1-17.
3. Paolo Chiozzi, 'Reflections on Ethnographic Film with a General Bibliography', *Social Anthropology* 2 (1989): 1.
4. The scientific project I am currently affiliated with, *Exposition* [*Ekspozicija*]*: Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today*, intends to, among other things, undertake a multidisciplinary overview, analysis, and (re-)evaluation of the aforementioned photographic archive and corpus. In parallel, a few other scholarly initiatives have also been launched and structured – from 2016, the archive is included in the focus of research and on the agenda of the institutional project and initiative of archive digitisation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and the development of digital humanities, defined as a strategic project of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb.
5. Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography* (London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage, 2007): 65.
6. Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011): 107.
7. Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography*: 65.
8. Nélia Dias, 'Photographier et mesurer: les portraits anthropologiques', *Romantisme* 84 (1994): 37–49.
9. David Bate, 'The Memory of Photography', *Photographies* 3 (2010): 255–256.

10. Milana Černelić, 'Uvod u raspravu o etnološkoj kartografiji: Poticaj za istraživanje na primjeru teme o godišnjim vatrama', *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 9 (1997).

11. Digitisation is seen here as a strategy for the corpus's preservation, availability, and presentation as well as for critical readings and (re)valorisation.

12. Leith Davis, *Music, Postcolonialism, and Gender. The Construction of Irish National Identity, 1724–1874* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005): 97; cf. Sanja Potkonjak, 'Vid Vuletić Vukasović i spasiteljska etnologija', *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 16 (2004).

13. Pierre Bourdieu et al., *Un art moyen, essai sur les usagesd sociaux de la photographie* (Paris: Minuit, 1965): 53–54.

14. Manéli Farahmand, 'Photography and Ethnography: What Collaborations for which Writing', *AnthroVision* 5, no. 2 (2018): 20.

15. Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive', *History and Anthropology* 21, no. 4 (2010), 337–349.

16. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 337.

17. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 337.

18. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 337.

19. Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism* (London and New York: Verso, 2019).

20. Perera, 'Photography and the Ethnographic Method': 8.

21. Melanija Belaj, 'Obiteljska fotografija – analiza i interpretacija u okviru teorije predstavljanja Ervinga Goffmana', *Etnološka tribina* 29 (2006): 54.

22. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 341.

23. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 344.

24. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 344.

25. Azoulay, *Potential History*. I would like to thank the reviewers for pointing out this author's perspective and discussion.

26. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 338.

27. Petra Kelemen and Tihana Rubić, 'Arhiv Odsjeka za etnologiju i kulturnu antropologiju', *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 16 (2006): 100–101.

28. Potkonjak, 'Vid Vuletić Vukasović i spasiteljska etnologija': 114.

29. Some of the associates were J. Horvat, I. Janković, B. Bratanić, V. Tkalčić, I. Perišić, B. Ivanović, A. Stojanović, A. Faber, N. Juračić, D. Draganić, S. Miroslavljević, M. Petrik, N. Teodorović, J. Kranjčev, M. Išgum, A. Muraj, D. Dragišić-Radišević, and Đ. Palošija. I would like to thank the assistant, Ivan Grkeš, for this data and valuable discussions.

30. The Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb holds tens of thousands of photographs, including some by Gavazzi. Roughly ten years ago, 1,560 photographs and 1,050 glass negatives were digitised. The Ethnology Department's photography collection within the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts' Digital Collection and Catalogue also contains twelve photographs taken by Gavazzi at multiple locations throughout Istria in 1949; see Marija Živković, 'Digitalizacija fototeke Etnografskog muzeja u Zagrebu', *Etnološka istraživanja* 14 (2009): 396.

31. Vjekoslav Majcen, 'Etnološki filmovi Milovana Gavazzija i Hrvatski etnološki film u prvoj polovini 20. stoljeća', *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 7, no. 8 (1996); Melanija Belaj, 'Obiteljska fotografija kao kreiranje i arhiviranje (poželjne) stvarnosti', *Narodna umjetnost* 45, no. 2 (2008): 153; Kelemen and Rubić, 'Arhiv Odsjeka za etnologiju i kulturnu antropologiju': 99.

32. Majcen, 'Etnološki filmovi Milovana Gavazzija i Hrvatski etnološki film u prvoj polovini 20. stoljeća'.

33. Tihana Petrović Leš and Suzana Leček, 'Od sluškinje filologije do prijateljice povijesti: Veze studija povijesti i studija etnologije od 1927. do danas', in *Sveučilišna nastava povijesti u Hrvatskoj. Tradicija, današnje stanje, perspektive*, eds. Damir Agičić and Branimir Janković (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet – Društvo za hrvatsku povijesnicu, 2018).

34. Leš and Leček, 'Od sluškinje filologije do prijateljice povijesti: Veze studija povijesti i studija etnologije od 1927. do danas': 213.

35. Dalmatia, as a point of researchers' interest, had captured the attention of local and foreign researchers, clergy, nobles, intellectuals, doctors, and theologists, who were documenting 'privileged native knowledge' in works such as 'Put po Dalmaciji/Viaggio in Dalmatia' by the eighteenth-century pre-Romanticist travel writer Alberto Fortis, and other popular travelogues and literature; Ivona Grgurinović, 'Putopis i etnografija: suvremeni putopisi stranaca o Hrvatskoj' (PhD diss., University of Zagreb, 2012).

36. Inventory numbers: 657, 658, 1177, 1176, 1173, 1167, 1190, 1195, 1203, 1206, 1207, 1542, 1543, 1544, 1545, 1546, and 1547.

37. Rudolf Bićanić, *Kako živi narod. Život u pasivnim krajevima* (Zagreb: Pravni fakultet, 1996); Vera Stein-Erlich, *Jugoslavenska porodica u transformaciji: Studija u tri stotine sela* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1964); Olga Supek-Zupan, 'Transformacija patrijarhalnih odnosa. Od zadruge do neolokalnosti u Jaskanskom prigorju', *Etnološki pregled* 22 (1987).

38. The term 'traditional' refers to the peasant culture or folk culture – different from the urban life and bourgeoisie, as formulated by cultural historical ethnology.

39. These are the books, *Vrela i sudbine narodnih tradicija*, *Baština hrvatskog sela*, and *Godina dana hrvatskih narodnih običaja*. Roughly translated, the titles would be, in the same order: *Wellsprings and Destinies of Folk Traditions*, *Heritage of the Croatian Village*, and *A Year of Croatian Folk Customs*.

40. Bićanić, *Kako živi narod. Život u pasivnim krajevima*; Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, *Struktura tradicijskog mišljenja* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1984).

41. Rihtman-Auguštin, *Struktura tradicijskog mišljenja*: 34.

42. Rihtman-Auguštin, *Struktura tradicijskog mišljenja*: 34.

43. David Green, 'Constructing the Real: Staged Photography and the Documentary Tradition', in *Theatres of the Real*, eds. Sarah Dobai et al. (Antwerp: Photoworks and Fotomuseum Provincie Antwerpen, 2009).

44. Last year's annual meeting of the Croatian Ethnological Society, an umbrella scholarly association of Croatian ethnologists and cultural anthropologists, will initiate precisely the discussion of the poetics and policies of the visual in ethnology and cultural anthropology, considering visual expressions such as photographs, illustrations, film, video, works of art, cartographic representations, and so on. Being aware of the lack of such scope in Croatian ethnology and cultural anthropology so far, the conference was titled Visual Contents in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. See https://hrvatskoetnoloskodrustvo.hr/godisnji-skup-hrvatskog-etnoloskog-drustva-vizualno-u-etnologiji-i-kulturnoj-antropologiji/ (accessed 11 June 2022).

45. Patricia Ticineto Clough, *The End(s) of Ethnography: From Realism to Social Criticism* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992).

46. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 338.

47. cf. Banks and Vokes, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive': 341.

48. Perera, 'Photography and the Ethnographic Method': 8.

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Chapter 6
Emptiness as a Tool in the Representation of Public Health Monuments in Croatia[1]

Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Martin Kuhar

Space, as Henri Lefebvre notes, is a social construct in constant transformation.[2] Throughout history, empty space has attracted imperial powers that 'sought to impose their idealized visions onto colonial lands and populations'.[3] The territory of today's Croatia also underwent multiple transformations while empty spaces and low population density stimulated the processes of colonisation, melioration, and cultivation. Exposed to many attempts at encroachment, Croatia struggled but persevered, incorporating into its history the remnants of innumerable cultural contacts. Conquerors, as Jennifer Keating stresses, have their own visions of the territories that they claim, which 'commonly include imperial reclamation and restitution, whether through watering, planting, building or populating', while using territorial improvement as a 'vindication of imperial superiority'.[4]

These aspects of Croatia's history have not only been touched upon in numerous published works but are also manifest in material sources, such as the collection of photographs preserved in the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The collection was previously exhibited at the Museum of the History of Healthcare in Croatia, which was opened in 1944 in Zagreb by the prominent phthisiologist Vladimir Ćepulić (1891–1964), one of the pioneers of medical photography in Croatia.[5] As early as 1924, as the founder of the Antituberculosis Dispensary, the first dispensary in continental Croatia dedicated to the fight against tuberculosis, Ćepulić commissioned a series of photographs named *Housing Misery in Zagreb*. This collection consisted of fifty-nine photographs, which showed patients suffering from tuberculosis, their everyday life, and the apartments in which they resided. After visiting

the first hygienic exhibition in Dresden in 1931, Ćepulić was even more determined to present to the public the entirety of Croatia's medical heritage. An opportunity for the realisation of that vision arose in the period between 1935 and 1945, when he presided over the Croatian Medical Association. The association – which represented the first professional organisation of physicians aimed at promoting their cooperation and education in Croatia – was established in 1874, the same year when the modern University of Zagreb was founded. However, it was only in 1937 that the association was given its own headquarters – the Croatian Physicians' Home (Hrvatski liječnički dom) building.[6] Ćepulić's proposition to open the museum was accepted by the association in 1942, and in the same year, he started the ambitious project of collecting objects for the permanent display. Over the next two years, Ćepulić exchanged letters with many Croatian physicians, asking them to collect objects and photographs they deemed relevant for the presentation of Croatian medical history. Originally, he expected the museum to be opened only after the end of the war, but the physicians' contributions exceeded Ćepulić's expectations, and objects were collected in such numbers that by 1944 it was possible to open the museum to the public. The museum, which was situated in two rooms of the Croatian Physicians' Home, represented the first institution in Croatia exclusively dedicated to the collection, documentation, and presentation of the country's medical heritage.[7]

An important part of the materials exhibited in the Museum of the History of Healthcare consisted of photographs mounted on cardboard, most of which were 30 by 40 centimetres in size. Some segments of Ćepulić's photographic collection have so far been analysed only from a medico-historical viewpoint.[8] Still, a part of this collection that has been outside the interest of researchers consists of a series of thirty photographs that depict hygienic and sanitary facilities and structures on the eastern part of the Adriatic, especially in Dalmatia. The photographs represent cisterns, fountains, and wells (eleven photographs), aqueducts (five photographs), statues of patron saints (four photographs), bathhouses (three photographs), streets (two photographs), quarantines (two photographs), sarcophagi (two photographs), and a latrine (one photograph). Focusing on the topic of emptiness explored in this volume, our selection includes ten photographs from the Adriatic towns of Nin, Čiovo, Dubrovnik, Solin, and Rab.

Kenneth Brophy recently stated that emptiness is often 'simply an illusion caused by the processes we use to look at the past and the ways that we look at the world around us, even today'.[9] Emptiness, multifaceted and

political as it proves to be, is a powerful tool in our understanding of the collection and the subjects of the photographs. It emphasises the monumentality of objects by giving them an aura of timelessness, while also granting layers of meaning to the subjects of the photographs and spaces around them. Thus, the photographs seem to support Marx's statement that every object contains, in itself, the traces of the human activity that produced it.[10] In this paper, we consider the plurality of meanings attached to those photographs as well as to the concept of emptiness by sketching their revelations about medicine and the past, societies, habits, and behaviour.

Without knowing the origin and 'biographies' of these photographs, one could conclude that their meaning is exhausted in their art historical and archaeological content. As Roland Barthes claims, a photograph seems inseparable from its referent – in other words, from what it represents.[11] Indeed, the visual content of these photographs communicates part of the cultural heritage of the Adriatic coast, but our knowledge about the purpose of these photographs displayed in the museum upgrades this perspective with a crucial medico-historical and political dimension. In this light, the photographs of cisterns, aqueducts, and bathhouses not only signify the traces of cultural heritage on the territory of Croatia but also provide proof of Greek, Roman, and Islamic influences and of civilising processes. These influences established hygienic rules and health practices and firmly situated Croatia's culture in Mediterranean and Central European cultural circles, an interpretation particularly relevant in the context of the Independent State of Croatia which was in power at the time that the collection was created and exhibited. Photographs evoke a long-forgotten past and abandoned spaces and objects. As Robert Hirsch notes, 'these transcendental qualities allow the work to escape the "thingness" that can be stifling and evoke a sense of essence about a place'.[12] While opening the museum to the public, Ćepulić emphasised that he and his team 'thought that it would be interesting to show the conditions that the Croatian people encountered in the territories in which it settled, because those conditions and the situation among our neighbours undoubtedly affected the development of our healthcare'.[13]

As part of the permanent display in the Museum of the History of Healthcare in Croatia, the collection of photographs became the property of the Institute for the History of Natural, Mathematical and Medical Sciences of the former Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts and, later, of the Division for the History of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. There, the photographs continued to exist partly as

reliquiae reliquiarum of the former permanent display, and partly as a photo archive that puts into focus their educational and research potential. In 2014, the collection was transferred to the newly established Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, where the photographs once again acquired the role of potential museum exhibits.

In this paper, we will analyse how notions of emptiness are employed to make statements about the history of medicine and public health. We will trace the ways in which photographs expose the temporal aspect of emptiness, and their origins and roles in different periods. In so doing, we will point out their layered meanings and their materiality as museum exhibits and relics. Moreover, we will demonstrate how the vacant land of monuments presented in these photographs has been 'reimagined from a landscape of decline to a "landscape of potential"' in the Museum of the History of Healthcare in Croatia.[14] Finally, we will address the role of these photographs in the dissemination of ideologically rich meanings, with the goal of situating Croatia's culture in Mediterranean and Central European cultural circles. We will thus argue that, with respect to public health development, the founders of the Museum hoped to demonstrate the legitimacy of Croatia's position among the civilised European nations.

6.1 Salona: Emptiness in the City That Does Not Exist

The transformation of the areas that form part of today's Croatia can be traced back to the seventh century B.C.E., when Greeks penetrated the Dalmatian coast and established their colonies: Pharos (Stari Grad), Dimos (Hvar), Issa (Vis), Epetium (Stobreč), Tragurium (Trogir), Salona (Solin), Heraclea (Rogoznica), Asphalatos (Split) and, to the north, Varvaria (Bribir), Aseria (Podgrađe near Benkovac), and Jader (Zadar).[15] With Greek power subsiding after several Illyrian revolts against Greek colonies and the Romans, in 156 B.C.E. the Delmatae and other Illyrian tribes acknowledged the authority of the Romans. With the Romans came extensive road building, as well as the development of a public health system and health legislation.[16] Dalmatia (Illyria) experienced a boom in construction and culture, witnessed by the establishment of towns and countryside villas all over its territory.

Emperor Diocletian divided Dalmatia into two provinces, one of which spread over a large territory from the mouth of the river Raša to the town of Budva in today's Montenegro. As a city on important commercial and

maritime crossroads, Dalmatia's capital, Salona, rose in prominence and developed into a large urban area with a population of around sixty thousand. Life in the city was comparable to that in Rome.[17] One similarity was the per capita consumption of water supplied by the aqueduct built in the first century during the reign of Emperor Augustus.[18] Altogether, there were fourteen Roman aqueducts in the province of Dalmatia, which provided drinking water and supported the economy by irrigating lands and powering grinders, launderettes, fabric mills, public wells, fountains, and bathhouses.[19]

The work *On Architecture* by Vitruvius from 27 B.C.E. established the ideal of Roman sanitary construction, emphasising the importance of clean water for health and longevity.[20] During the golden age of the Roman Empire, the significance of water was reflected in monumental construction projects. Networks of sewer pipes and aqueducts, as well as numerous thermal baths, became symbols of wealth, healthy living, and the intellectual superiority of the Roman Empire. It is a well-known fact that Rome alone was supplied with fourteen aqueducts under continuous control. Romans also used water for relaxation and enjoyment. Its properties in the context

Figure 6.1: Solin, remnants of a Roman bathhouse: underfloor heating by gases. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-2464)

Figure 6.2: Solin, remnants of a Roman bathhouse: a bathtub. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-4729)

of popular heated bathhouses decorated with mosaics tell us more about the mentality and the culture of living than about physical health. The popularity of Roman sanitary construction is strongly reflected in the photographic materials presented here as well.

One of the archaeological sites in Salona is a Roman bathhouse with a hypocaust (Figure 6.1). The bottom part of the photograph shows the ground, while the upper part shows the remnants of the once magnificent baths. The floor of the bathhouse is ruinous and supported by unstable columns between which sunlight enters and illuminates the ground. Figure 6.2 shows a detail in the baths – a stone bathtub. An oblique close-up view of this shapely object, together with its sharp edges and shadows, precludes the possibility of its communication with other elements in the baths. The focus here is more on the stone itself, its texture and patina, and less on understanding the function of the bathtub and its location within the broader context of the baths.

Figure 6.3: Roman latrine at the 'Majdan' location near Solin. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-2469)

Among the photographs in the collection, only one shows a person – the archaeologist and art historian Ljubo Karaman observing a latrine in Salona (Figure 6.3).[21] He is dressed in an elegant suit and overcoat, and he sports a hat. Overdressing for a research visit to the ruins is a statement about the terrain that he understands and wants to acknowledge. The photograph is taken with a longer exposure so that the focus is on the latrine covered in shadows. This procedure enables a plastic, three-dimensional view of the latrine, an object related to cleansing, but it also emphasises the whiteness of the stone without any nearby vegetation, thus symbolically evoking the notion of purity. This photograph represents a celebration of Karaman's visit to the ruins of Salona, a site with which he has a deep personal connection. Although it is the only photograph in the collection with human presence, it still induces a sense of emptiness. As Courtney Campbell, Allegra Giovine, and Jennifer Keating state, 'even more than historians, archaeologists deal with emptiness as a key challenge of their discipline: both the gaps within a historical record that relate to a period thousands of years ago; and the very physical empty spaces of prehistoric monuments'.[22]

Figure 6.4: Sarcophagi in Solin, destroyed by the Avars ca. 614 C.E. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-2462)

High sanitary standards collapsed together with the Western Roman Empire, and in the ensuing war, Salona was completely demolished.[23] Figure 6.4 shows sarcophagi from Salona, destroyed in the Avar invasions around the year 614. The cemetery looks like a raging sea, full of remnants of past aggressions and violence. This dead, inaccessible, and emptied cemetery is not a cemetery of dead people but a cemetery *of* a cemetery. Figure 6.5 shows old Christian sarcophagi in a somewhat better state. Unlike the previous photograph, the neat stone wall with lush vegetation, as well as the even ground, evoke a place of peaceful rest. Although the Mediterranean flora add an element of life to the photograph, the location is still characterised by harmony, emptiness, and silence. Time is so vast that human activity only represents a historiographic fact. The composition shows the sarcophagi not as separate from their surroundings but rather suggests timelessness through their assimilation with nature.

Figure 6.5: Old Christian sarcophagi in Solin. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-2463)

6.2 An Empty Street

It is not difficult to envisage emptiness at an archaeological site of an abandoned cemetery or in a city in ruins. Sometimes, however, as in Figure 6.6, it seems as if it was artificially created. This photograph shows a typical paved coastal street in the island town of Rab, which throughout the High and Late Middle Ages, as well as in the early modern period, represented the most important urban centre among the islands in the Kvarner Gulf. The town of Rab adopted the Venetian Late Gothic model of an urban patrician house with a courtyard, separated from the street with high walls.[24] The increase in the urban population during the Middle Ages brought additional health regulations, primarily due to the need to prevent the spreading of infectious diseases. One of the measures was the institution of a communal physician, who was tasked with overseeing health conditions in the city.[25] Communal hygiene in coastal towns was regulated with statutes, which frequently

Figure 6.6: A street in Rab. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-4748)

ordered the paving of roads and maintaining their cleanliness.[26] Moreover, the spatial arrangement of the towns' streets was such that they ensured good ventilation and thus provided clean air. Through a composition with high walls in deep shadows and a sunlit pavement, the photographer communicated the whiteness and cleanliness of the street, inducing in the viewer a sense of continuity of communal regulations from medieval times to today. The clearly deliberate emptiness originates in the subversion of expectations – our usual associations of a street filled with crowds and activity.

6.3 Stone Monuments of Water Supply Systems

The majority of photographs in the collection (nineteen of thirty) show water supply structures: cisterns, wells, fountains, and aqueducts. Ćepulić's

selection undoubtedly underscores the importance of water as an essential component of the human body and its health. The floods fertilise the land, while water supports the life of plants, animals, and people. Water also represented a key part of the first philosophical and medical conceptions in antiquity. The Greek mathematician Thales of Miletus thus claimed that water is the single originating principle of the world, while Empedocles advanced his system of four elements – water, fire, earth, and air – upon which Hippocrates based his humoral doctrine of four bodily fluids. Hippocrates and his followers prescribed liquid foods such as wine to their patients, as well as therapeutic procedures such as submerging, dousing, and bathing. Hippocratic doctrine, which paved the way for bloodletting, emetics, and enemas, survived through Galenic modifications until the eighteenth century.[27] Due to its life-affirming qualities, water became an unavoidable part of different ritual baths, such as baptism, which in Christianity symbolises the purification of the soul through the erasure of original sin.[28] The emergence of diseases and epidemics was often connected to the contamination of wells and other sources of drinking water. Water was considered an important element of bodily hygiene and communal health, while the preservation of clean and healthy water was an obligatory component of many statutes in medieval Croatia.[29]

It should not come as a surprise that some old noble families, such as the Šubić family, recognised both the existential and symbolic value of water. The Šubić family was one of twelve old Croatian tribes, nobles who in 1102 participated in the signing of an agreement – the *Pacta conventa* – with the Hungarian king Coloman to recognise him as the king of Croatia. The Šubić family possessed a large part of central Dalmatia, and Figure 6.7 represents the remnants of a water supply object from Nin near Zadar. It is a stone monument with a crest that depicts a half-moon, a flower, and an eagle's wing. The stone opening used to collect water from the cistern buried in the ground is placed on an improvised stone base. It is dysfunctional and has been moved from its original location, thus creating a solitary cracked stone monument without water and without communication with the cistern. The sense of isolation and oblivion is emphasised with the photographic technique. Namely, the photographer used a close frontal view, which, apart from the monument, shows only small segments of ground and the stone wall behind the monument. By choosing such an angle, the photographer deprived the viewer of the context, only hinting at an abandoned and untended yard. Moreover, short shadows and dry vegetation suggest that the

Figure 6.7: Cistern with the Šubić family crest in Nin. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-2471)

photo was taken during strong summer sunlight, which exposes the irregularities of the stone, the lack of homogeneity in its colour, and the depths of its cracks caused by centuries of weathering. This object stands inside the temporal emptiness, waiting either for its complete ruin or a transfer to a more adequate space.

During the Middle Ages, monasteries played an important role as the centres of written medicine. Apart from theoretical work, they also possessed special isolation chambers for tending to the sick brothers and, frequently, a garden with medicinal plants and cabinets with herbal preparations. Water was essential in supporting these activities, so the monasteries had large cisterns in the centre of the cloister, like the one in the Dominican Monastery and Church of the Holy Cross, represented in Figure 6.8. The monastery and church were erected on the northern shore of the island of Čiovo in 1432. Napoleon's conquests led to its decline, and in 1852 the monastery was left unoccupied. In 1957, it was revived and is still in use. The cistern is in the centre of the photograph, represented together with the surroundings. The photographer chose a view emphasising the whiteness of

Figure 6.8: Cistern in the cloister, former monastery on the island of Čiovo. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-2473)

the walls with arches bathed in sunlight, which are in stark contrast with the shadowy interiors evoking loneliness, silence, and peace. The cistern, which is covered with a wooden lid so that the water does not become contaminated, is situated in the centre of a round stone base. It is richly decorated, and especially remarkable is the coat of arms in the shape of a shield depicting a cross with the Holy Lance. The emptiness of the cloister, which was photographed before its revival in 1957, as well as the solitude and groundedness of its cistern, induce a sense of silence and calmness necessary for deep spiritual contemplation.

One of the first Croatian cities with a purposefully organised health service was Dubrovnik. In 1389, its streets were paved, and in 1397, sewerage was introduced. The city also had a permanently employed cleaning supervisor. Special attention in old Dubrovnik was given to its water supply, and explicit prohibitions on using public water existed for tanners and laundresses to prevent the water from becoming contaminated. Figure 6.9 depicts Onofrio's Large Fountain, a polygonal fountain with sixteen mascarons in the centre of Dubrovnik. It was designed by the Neapolitan engineer
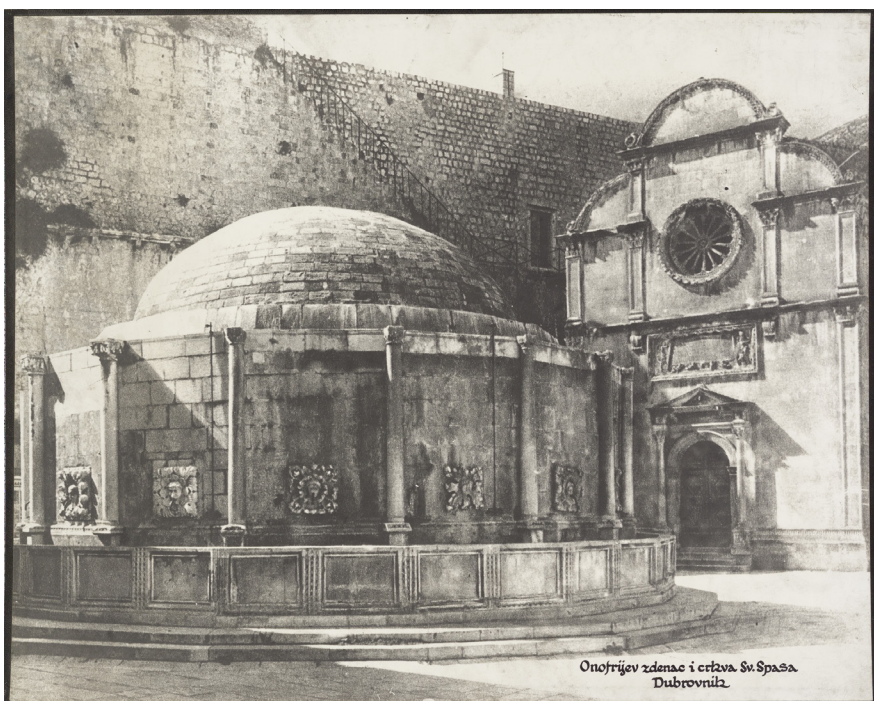
Figure 6.9: Onofrio's Large Fountain and the Church of the Holy Salvation, Dubrovnik. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-2477)

Onofrio della Cava as a symbol of putting the city aqueduct into function in 1438. The fountain is situated in close proximity to the Church of the Holy Salvation beneath the city walls. The church was built around 1520 and represents the first stylistically complete Renaissance building in Dubrovnik. It was erected as a token of gratitude by the citizens of Dubrovnik for their survival in the earthquake that shook the city that year. The proximity of the church to the fountain is of both a functional and symbolic nature. It merges body and soul, physiology and spirituality, evoking purity, baptism, and the beginning of life.

The only photograph in the collection with a bird's-eye view shows a segment of the aqueduct in Dubrovnik from the fifteenth century (Figure 6.10). The stone architecture of the aqueduct arises from the craggy, isolated scenery, filled only with Mediterranean macchia, which contrasts with the stout stone monument. The isolation of this structure is functional and logical, given the distance between the nearby river and the city centre. In that

Figure 6.10: Aqueduct in Dubrovnik from the fifteenth century: catchment in Šumet. (Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HMMF-4731)

sense, emptiness is self-evident, but it is not as expressive as in the previous photographs. It is negated by the aggressively expanding karst, obscuring the aqueduct that is thus partly hidden.

The emptiness present in these photographs is expressed in several different ways. The first type can be detected on the photographs of Salona, where emptiness and a lack of people are expected. In this set of photographs, the objects and structures are abandoned and without vitality, and in the case of the cemetery, the deafening emptiness negates not only life through death but also the material monument of that death. The same type of emptiness is present in the photograph of the monastery, which even when populated symbolises solitude and peacefulness, and in the cistern of the Šubić family, which represents a non-functional ruin. The second type of emptiness imbues two photographs: that of the street in Rab and that of Onofrio's Fountain. This type of emptiness is unexpected, nostalgic, and timeless, given how both the street and the fountain with the church are symbols of life, usually littered with people and activity, and not the spaces

characterised with abandonment. The emptiness appears artificial, because the photographer must have waited or arranged the crowds so that he could get the composition he wanted. The third type of emptiness is one that is denoted with displacement from the urban centre and can be found in the photograph of the aqueduct. Apart from the spatial, the emptiness in these materials also has a notable temporal dimension, given the continuity and durability of the monuments depicted. This temporal aspect is visible both in the sense that the structures that are represented on the photographs originated in different time periods, and through the pronounced deterioration of the material in which they were made.

6.4 The Materiality of Photographs and Their Biographies

Recently, Elizabeth Edwards pointed out that material culture – including photographs – determines social relationships and forms a type of a social process.[30] Individual photographic collections allow us to trace the origin of photographs, their storage, conservation, and exhibition, manifesting social interactions and changes within which photographs as objects became active participants in this process. The values driving the acquisition of photographs, as well as the reconstruction of the networks used in the dissemination of the photographs, become pertinent research topics in this context. The collection of photographs analysed in this paper also provides an interesting story on its creation and continuity through different periods and in various institutions.

The collection of material objects for the Museum for the History of Healthcare in Croatia lasted from 1942 to 1944. Given the extremely challenging circumstances during that time, it is impossible to trace all the people who helped Ćepulić collect the photographs. His correspondence only reveals that Ljubo Karaman sent him the photo of the Roman latrine.[31] Karaman is also listed as one of the museum's donors.[32] This photograph is the only one that could be connected to the person who collected it with certainty, although we do not know who was behind the camera. Ćepulić sent letters to other colleagues all over the country, and the rich photographic collection testifies to the good response rate.[33] Most objects from Bosnia and Herzegovina were collected and sent to Zagreb by the physician and the first curator of the museum, Stanko Sielski.[34] The museum was opened on 29 January 1944, when Ćepulić held a lecture accompanied with some

of the photographs displayed in the museum, which was then published in *Liječnički vjesnik*, the official bulletin of the Croatian Medical Association.[35]

For Ćepulić, collecting and presenting the photographs was inseparable from the museum's core mission. The museum testified to the influences of Greek, Roman, and Islamic medical culture, as well as the strength of folk medicine and its popularity in confronting disease throughout Croatia's past. Individually, the photographs depict rather diverse structures and objects from different time periods, frequently without the necessary context despite the inscriptions. As a collection, however, they acquire multiple layers of meaning, providing a specific interpretation of Croatia's history and longevity. As Lionel Gauthier and Jean-François Staszak note, 'the meaning of an image depends not only on the image itself', but is 'also determined by the manner in which the photograph is displayed'.[36] Since the 'specific ordering of the albums' is at the same time 'also a classification of the world', these photographs as a collection tell a story about the openness and ingenuity of the Croatian people, their collaborative efforts in fighting disease, and of the close historical connections between religious and secular traditions.[37]

Photographs formed the majority of the museum's exhibits, for two reasons. The first was that the space in which the museum was located did not allow for a more ambitious three-dimensional display. Ćepulić himself commented on the occasion of the opening of the museum to the public:

> The space which consists of two rooms does not allow for the kind of display and arrangement of the exhibits that we would prefer. The material that we have so far collected is so abundant that we had to confine ourselves to displaying only the older material and arranging it in a way that still leaves the contours of the future museum visible.[38]

The photographs thus served as shortcuts in painting a picture of the chronological development of medicine in Croatia since prehistory.

The second reason that the photographs were so prominent in the museum was the context of the war in which the collection was organised. Devastation on levels previously unimaginable was cause for fear that many of the objects planned for display would be displaced or destroyed in the conflicts. During such uncertain times, photography provided a method of preserving Croatia's material heritage for posterity. As M. Christine Boyer noted when analysing the 1851 *Mission Héliographique*, 'from the storehouse of the museum to the discourse in journals and folios, from the archive of

proofs and negatives to the monuments in their atmospheric settings, a preservation mentality was put into play and linked to collective memory'.[39] The *Mission*, of course, is probably the most famous government-funded project focused on photographing historical monuments. However, as Stephen Monteiro claims, the project lapsed 'into obscurity upon its completion'.[40] Unlike the *Mission*, the coordinated endeavour of photographing and collecting medical heritage in Croatia was at least a temporary success, given the prominence of the photographic material in the museum. That success can partly be explained by vital political changes that happened during the time Ćepulić organised the collecting of the photographic material. Namely, on 10 April 1941, the Independent State of Croatia, a puppet state of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, was proclaimed. Although all the power in the country was concentrated in the hands of Poglavnik Ante Pavelić and his Ustasha, its formation was applauded by part of the Croatian public, which felt that this was a historic moment in which Croatia had finally become independent after centuries of being exploited by stronger powers, such as Austria and Hungary in the Habsburg monarchy, or Serbia in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Ustasha recognised the importance of building a rather underdeveloped Croatian national identity, so they allowed a number of cultural activities to be carried out.[41] The most important publication from the Second World War was the *Croatian Encyclopaedia* in five volumes. It gathered experts from all disciplines and represented the most ambitious encyclopaedic project undertaken in Croatia until then. This awakened sense of national belonging also had an impact on the institutionalisation of medicine. In 1942, the University Hospital Centre in Zagreb was opened, while the Faculty of Pharmacy was finally separated from the Faculty of Philosophy and became an autonomous faculty within the University of Zagreb. In 1944, the Museum of the History of Healthcare in Croatia was founded, the same year that the efforts of the professors from the School of Medicine in Zagreb finally led to the establishment of a medical faculty in Sarajevo.

Michelle Bogre warns us that 'photographs are always rhetorical because photographic meaning is not fixed or univocal' and that 'readings of historical images change depending on who is viewing the image and when'.[42] The photographs from the Ćepulić collection, we argue, have a clear political imperative, which, although it is never explicitly stated, is impossible to ignore from today's vantage point. Photographs documented historical structures important for the preservation of health, which managed to survive numerous political regimes, conquests, and centuries-old migrations.

At first glance, this fact could make them appear apolitical, but their political aspect comes to the fore when discussing their origin and intended purpose. Namely, in the context of the establishment of the museum in a specific historic moment, when it was opportune to support the flourishing of a Croatian national identity and establish its close connections to Mediterranean and Central European cultural circles, photographs acquired strong political importance. By analysing the significance of landscape and monument photography in Germany and England in the nineteenth century, Jens Jäger noticed that middle-class Western culture 'tended towards nationalistic interpretations of literature, art, science, culture and landscape' and that the process of linking certain images with national identity depended on the establishment of symbols' objectivity and their relation to the national character.[43] The Museum of the History of Healthcare in Croatia was a fundamental part of a framework that gave symbolic value to individual structures and accelerated the acceptance of the historical nature of these structures as vital parts of Croatia's history and the civilisational level of the Croatian people. The emptiness so clearly evoked in these photographs served as a blank slate, allowing the cultural and political meanings to be readily ascribed to their subjects. Thus, the contextual knowledge on the origin of these photographs, their collection and display, allows a much more nuanced and politically coloured reading of their function. The photographs formed a coherent whole intended to demonstrate the centuries-long existence of a Croatian cultural identity, which was strongly reflected in its medical history – a vital component of the survival of the Croatian people.

The political understanding of these structures and facilities is further supported by the fact that the museum was also used in the education of medical students during their history of medicine course at the School of Medicine in Zagreb. The museum's director after Sielski was the physician Lujo Thaller, the first professional historian of medicine in Croatia. In that sense, the museum functioned as an extended arm of the public health system, which throughout the first half of the twentieth century, formed the basic method of combating infectious diseases such as typhus, syphilis, and tuberculosis. The museum thus took over the function of educating the public on the historical continuity of public health that was crucial for the survival of the Croatian people throughout its turbulent past. By eliminating temporal distances through photography, Ćepulić pointed out that the proof of that continuity was right before us, condensed in structures testifying to the past generations' resilience and intellectual rigour.

6.5 Conclusion

Photographs of sanitary structures communicate the centuries-old continuity of humankind's struggles in the application of hygienic measures to keep disease at bay, such as consuming water from reputable sources, bathing, maintaining bodily hygiene and, finally, burying the dead in an appropriate manner. They speak not only about the monumentality of public health ventures in the past but also about everyday life and the communal care for the health of the people, as well as the customs that existed to bring to mind the importance of health from birth, symbolised by baptism, to death, symbolised by burial. As such, the sanitary structures represented in the photographs become potent symbols of life and death. Thus, we can agree with Elizabeth Edwards, who claims that to understand a collection of photographs means not only to touch upon its content but also to traverse the road 'of the literal and metaphorical cross-referencing, rewritings, citations – both visual and relational, that make up photographs'.[44] According to her, photographs 'are not merely picture libraries which can be simply digitized, but rich social objects which carry the material traces of people's hopes and desires, of their being in the world – the stuff of history'.[45]

Joan Schwartz defined the concept of functional context in which photographs 'created by a will, for a purpose, to convey a message to an audience', become particular archival records that should be understood as 'the product of actions and transactions, either bureaucratic or socio-cultural'.[46] The photographs presented in this paper reveal traces of institutional transfers that changed their meanings. Throughout their existence, they have functioned as objects, museum exhibits, and relics, and as parts of the photo archive. In terms of their content, they represent a document of monumental public health heritage, but they also have a historical, cultural, aesthetic, and functional dimension. The latter becomes an indicator of the importance of sanitary hygiene through the appropriation of public health achievements by other civilisations as well as a political tool with which the building of national identity in a new country could be reinforced. Their political dimension is supported with a photographic technique that relies on emphasising emptiness, timelessness and, more often than not, the lack of context in which these structures could be found.

Notes

1. This paper has been written as part of the project *Exposition* [*Ekspozicija*]*: Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today* of the Croatian Science Foundation (IP-2019-04-1772).
    Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the text were produced through agreement between the authors and editors.
2. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
3. Jennifer Keating, 'Amid the Horrors of Nature: "Dead" Environments at the Margins of the Russian Empire', in *Empty Spaces: Perspectives on Emptiness in Modern History*, eds. Courtney J. Campbell, Allegra Giovine, and Jennifer Keating (London: University of London Press, Institute of Historical Research, 2019): 35.
4. Keating, 'Amid the Horrors of Nature: "Dead" Environments at the Margins of the Russian Empire': 41.
5. Ćepulić finished his studies in 1915 in Vienna, and he specialised in phthisiology in Leysin and Hamburg. He was the first professor of pneumophthisiology at the School of Medicine in Zagreb, the first director of the School for Assistant Nurses, and the president of the Society for the Fight Against Tuberculosis.
6. Vladimir Ćepulić, 'Muzej za povijest zdravstva u Hrvatskoj', *Liječnički vjesnik* 64 (1942): 204–207.
7. Vladimir Ćepulić, 'Otvorenje muzeja za poviest zdravstva u Hrvatskoj u spomen 70-godišnjice osnutka Zbora liečnika', *Liječnički vjesnik* 66 (1944), 43–47: 44.
8. See Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Silvija Brkić Midžić, 'Tuberkuloza i naličje grada: fotografije zagrebačke stambene bijede iz zbirke Vladimira Ćepulića', *Liječnički vjesnik* 142 (2020): 420–429; Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Darija Hofgräff, *Od države do javnosti: Tuberkuloza u fondovima Hrvatskog državnog arhiva i Odsjeka za povijest medicinskih znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2014); Tamara Bjažić, 'Radna grupa Zagreb – osnutak i javno djelovanje na hrvatskoj kulturnoj sceni', *Prostor* 13 (2005): 47–48.
9. Kenneth Brophy, 'Urban Prehistoric Enclosures: Empty Spaces/Busy Places', in *Empty Spaces: Perspectives on Emptiness in Modern History*, eds. Courtney J. Campbell, Allegra Giovine, and Jennifer Keating (London: University of London Press, Institute of Historical Research, 2019): 200.
10. Andrea Lešić, *Bahtin, Bart, strukturalizam: književnost kao spoznaja i mogućnost slobode* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2011): 160.
11. Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981): 5.
12. Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social and Aesthetic History of Photography* (New York: Routledge, 2017): 253.
13. Ćepulić, 'Otvorenje muzeja za poviest zdravstva u Hrvatskoj u spomen 70-godišnjice osnutka Zbora liečnika': 44.
14. Courtney J. Campbell, Allegra Giovine, and Jennifer Keating, 'Introduction: Confronting emptiness in history', in *Empty Spaces: Perspectives on Emptiness in Modern History*, eds. Courtney J. Campbell, Allegra Giovine, and Jennifer Keating (London: University of London Press, Institute of Historical Research, 2019): 11.
15. Grga Novak, 'Dalmacija, Povijest', in *Hrvatska enciklopedija, Vol. IV*, ed. Mate Ujević (Zagreb: Hrvatski izdavalački bibliografski zavod, Zagreb, 1942): 463–473; Jozo Bakić, 'Dalmacija povišću pritrujena', in *90 godina u službi zdravlja: Od higijenskog zavoda u Splitu*

do Nastavnog zavoda za javno zdravstvo Splitsko-dalmatinske županije, ed. Stella Fatović-
Ferenčić (Split: Nastavni zavod za javno zdravstvo splitsko dalmatinske županije, 2012):
18–22.

16. Mirko Marković, *Descriptio Croatiae* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1993): 27.

17. Marković, *Descriptio Croatiae*: 27.

18. Ejnar Dyggve, *Povijest salonitanskog Kršćanstva* (Split: Književni krug, 1996): 25–26.

19. Bakić, 'Dalmacija povišću pritrujena'; Joško Belamarić, *Dioklecijanov akvedukt* (Split:
Ministarstvo kulture, Uprava za zaštitu kulturne baštine, Konzervatorski odjel Split, 1999).

20. Belamarić, *Dioklecijanov akvedukt*.

21. Ljubo Karaman was a Croatian art historian and conservator (1886–1971). He studied in
Vienna, where, in 1920, he completed his doctoral studies in art history. From 1926, he
organised and led the conservation department in Split. From 1941 to 1950, he was the
director of the Conservation Institute in Zagreb. The focus of his research were Dalmatian
monuments from the antiquity to the Baroque, but he also explored monuments in
continental Croatia and in Istria. In his 1930 work *From the Cradle of Croatian Past* (*Iz
kolijevke hrvatske prošlosti*), Karaman established the foundations of early Croatian
archaeology. He was the first researcher to systematise graves from early Croatian times
and the objects related to them, such as jewellery, swords, and spurs, with which he gave a
complete picture of this period in Croatia's past.

22. Campbell, Giovine, and Keating, 'Introduction: Confronting Emptiness in History': 12.

23. Grga Novak, *Povijest Splita* (Split: Matica Hrvatska, 1957): 13–27.

24. Marija Bijelić, 'Razvoj rapske Donje ulice i njene stambene arhitekture' (master's thesis,
University of Zagreb, 2016).

25. Lavoslav Glesinger, *Veteris Ragusae medicina et pharmacia* (Zagreb: Pliva, 1969): 12.

26. Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Jozo Bakić, 'Statuti jadranskih gradova – korijeni veterinarsko-
sanitarnih predodžbi XIII do XV stoljeća', in *Zdravo očuvati zdravim*, ed. Bara Vinković
(Zagreb: Odjel za DDD Hrvatske vetrinarske komore, 1998): 109–115.

27. Stella Fatović-Ferenčić, 'Voda u medicinskim koncepcijama kroz stoljeća', *Hrvatske vode* 11
(2003): 213–217.

28. Josip Balabanić, 'Simbolizam vode. Ogled o fizici i metafizici vode u kršćanskoj viziji svijeta
prirode i u svjetlu evolucije', *Hrvatske vode* 11 (2003): 218–224.

29. Fatović-Ferenčić and Bakić, 'Statuti jadranskih gradova – korijeni veterinarsko-sanitarnih
predodžbi XIII do XV stoljeća'.

30. Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photographs: Material Form and the Dynamic Archive', in *Photo
Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History*, ed. Costanza Caraffa (Berlin:
Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2011): 48.

31. Letter from Ljubo Karaman to Vladimir Ćepulić, 27 June 1942. Correspondence Ćepulić.
Archives of the Division for the History of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of
Sciences and Arts, Zagreb, Croatia.

32. Ćepulić, 'Muzej za povijest zdravstva u Hrvatskoj'.

33. Letter from Vladimir Ćepulić to the Municipal Council in Novalja, island Pag,
14 December 1942. Correspondence Ćepulić.

34. Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Husref Tahirović, 'Osnivanje Muzeja za povijest zdravstva u
Hrvatskoj 1944. godine i uloga njegova prvog kustosa Stanka Sielskog', *Liječnički vjesnik* 137
(2015): 377–385.

35. Ćepulić, 'Otvorenje muzeja za poviest zdravstva u Hrvatskoj u spomen 70-godišnjice
osnutka Zbora liečnika'.

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37. Gauthier and Staszak, 'Framing Coloniality': 314.
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Rethinking Emptiness

Chapter 7
Silent Ruins: Traditions, Photographs, and the Perception of the Void

Elke Katharina Wittich

7.1 Emptiness in the City

In central Europe, we were not used to thinking much about emptiness in the city as an elementary borderline experience. Only the vacancy rate of shops in pedestrian zones and derelict sites in cities with significant outmigration, as well as the emptiness left by the Holocaust[1] has kept architects and urban planners busy.[2] However, we used to deal with these phenomena as exceptions or sensed new value-oriented socio-political or aesthetic approaches and design possibilities for architecture and urban design.[3] It was only the pandemic in the early 2020s that emptied entire cities around the world, even those the size of New York. It also reminded us of emptiness as a new kind of experience with an unknown outcome and left a profound irritation affecting our idea of social cohesion. We will have to find intellectual ways of dealing with these experiences, which have triggered a high level of sensitivity to conceptions of history and memory as well as the perception of places and photographs.

On 6 April 2020, the *New York Times* published an article titled 'How Will We Know When It's Time to Reopen the Nation?', with a scene of a totally empty Times Square, photographed by Angela Weiss (Figure 7.1). We see the prominent street line framed by skyscrapers and large billboards. Among them, a large space on the right with the words 'Thank You #Healthcare Workers' on a medium blue background stands out. But the core message of the photograph is the grey emptiness of the street that occupies the entire lower third of the picture and is dramatically emphasised by the single moving car in the distance. We had long since become accustomed to

Figure 7.1: *Times Square on Friday*. *New York Times*, 6 April 2020. (© Angela Weiss/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images)

understanding Times Square as a media-generated and designed contemporary place of the twenty-first century that is constantly renewed by the media and is therefore timeless;[4] now the literal emptiness of urban spaces makes it unmistakably clear what great significance people attribute to photographs in connection with formal means of both architecture and photography[5] and also how decisive atmospheres are for the subjective form of perception.[6] In other words, Times Square cannot even meet the expectations of a square if it lacks media staging and spectators;[7] since formal space-creating design elements are missing, the square without people becomes a street intersection, the social space loses its place. Also, the photograph of the location on that day can only suffice as documentation of the event but not as a form of artistic position in relation to preconditions of the perception of architecture.[8] A photographer who wants to take impressive pictures of street spaces would probably not choose this intersection without people and media staging.[9]

We know many photographs of high artistic quality depicting places in cities with few people or only one person – for example, by Ivor de Wolfe in his famous book on *The Italian Townscape*.[10] We are also familiar with architectural photography of the city, showing buildings, streets, houses, trees, and

cars but no people, yet they do not convey emptiness but the urban space we all usually walk or drive through. The photograph of Palazzo della Città del Lavoro in Rome (built 1938–1942),[11] taken by Eberhard Schröter, is one of such image.[12] The photo, taken in the '50s or early '60s, shows the neoclassical building built during the time of Italian Fascism, centred in the background and taking up a large part of the photograph. In the foreground, a Fiat 500 stands at the side of the road as material proof of its everydayness; it conveys the view from the observer to the building. The eaves of another building on the left as well as the seemingly unimportant board stones lead in perspective towards the palazzo. The line of vision is that of a real pedestrian on the street, as if one could immediately continue along the way in the photograph; thus, people are not necessary in this photograph. How can it be that the sensation of emptiness arises regardless of whether people are visible?

However, in days of the pandemic, what would have previously been perceived as an aesthetic experience of emptied squares within cities – a contradiction in terms[13] – was now irrevocably and elementarily a question of existence; at this time, there was still no vaccine and many people died. What is more, it was not just this one place that was swept empty and left unlived after destruction by natural, technical, or military forces, like Chernobyl in 1986,[14] but many cities in all continents. The photographs of the abandoned, deserted buildings in Chernobyl, which have been shown repeatedly for more than thirty years now, have an iconic character, precisely because the event was site-specific. During these years, however, we have also learned to confront decay through recurring photographs of ever increasing decay – year after year.[15] However, in times of the pandemic, even practised social rituals to collectively cope with such an extremely frightening experience, like those practised after the attacks of 11 September 2001,[16] could not take hold because there was no precise place to which this pandemic could be attributed and where it could be mourned and commemorated.[17]

The Russian photographer Andrej Krementschouk took two series of photographs in Chernobyl between 2008 and 2012.[18] *Zone I* shows landscapes as well as people and animals who live in the barely habitable area of Chernobyl; *Zone II* visualises destroyed interiors of public buildings in the uninhabitable surroundings of the nuclear power plant, among them the image of a restaurant with several chairs partly fallen over, partly broken. The focus of *Zone II* is on the void – nobody is there. Some of the white ceramic tiles are also broken, and through the large openings in the massive concrete construction, the outlines of high-rise buildings in the whitish

Figure 7.2: *Chernobyl Zone II*, 2011. (© Andrej Krementschouk)

mist can be seen. The colour photo in Figure 7.2 is a good example of how traditions in pictorial reproduction are taken up and developed further. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were many informational publications, such as *Farbige Raumkunst*, with depictions of interiors.[19] The images in these publications were usually rendered towards a corner in such a way that the ceiling of the room was still visible – an old trick to give the viewer the feeling of being in the room. However, it is not the users or inhabitants of the room whose absence is irritating in photographs of Chernobyl – they were also missing in instructional works such as *Farbige Raumkunst*. Rather, it is the birch tree that has grown between the broken tiles in the right half of the picture that is irritating. This surreal moment makes it clear that no one has been here for a long time. In addition, it becomes clear that the frisson of emptiness is generated not only by the absence of people but also – as in the case of the Times Square press photo – by situations that otherwise never occur or, as in the case of the photo from Chernobyl, by surreal motifs: birch trees do not usually grow indoors.

As a result of the pandemic in 2020, a lockdown was imposed in the Federal Republic of Germany on 23 March. As in New York, so in Berlin, even squares such as Potsdamer Platz, a square usually full of crowds, formed and

Figure 7.3: *Potsdamer Platz*, 1966, Landesarchiv Berlin. (© Hans Seiler)

visually dramatised for a large audience with several streets connecting to it, were emptied of people and vehicles overnight. Similar things happened in many places around the world. Surprisingly, contemporary visual culture, as if by arrangement, had a photographic cipher for this: the empty street between apparently inanimate houses. Astonishingly enough, this memorable idea of the empty Potsdamer Platz is reminiscent of two iconic images of extraordinary events. There is a photograph of Potsdamer Platz and its surroundings by Hans Seiler from the time after the Wall was built in the 1960s, which shows the course of the Wall across the historically developed terrain and the resulting evacuation of the area (Figure 7.3).[20] In this picture, the view, the reduction to black and white and the striking formal presence

Figure 7.4: Friedrich Gilly, *Design of a Monument to Frederick the Great of Prussia*, 1796, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

of the Wall and other parts of the fortification as well as a few ruins on the empty terrain in the centre of a huge city form the frightening message of disturbing exceptionality and danger. Particularly irritating, however, are the tracks that are embedded in the pavement of the street. They lead from the lower right corner to the wall, which dominates the lower half of the picture with concrete blocks, stones, and barbed wire. This symbolic blockade as a trigger of emptiness in the middle of one of the largest cities in Europe at the time is formally supported so strongly that the absence of people is hardly noticeable.

An unrealised 1796 design by the Prussian architect Friedrich Gilly functions as another iconic image of an emptied square (Figure 7.4).[21] On the busy inner-city square of Leipziger Platz, located next to Potsdamer Platz and close to the Potsdamer Tor as part of the city fortifications, the design shows a temple complex standing on a high base as a monument to Frederick the Great of Prussia. The traffic at an important trans-shipment point of that time, the road to the Garrison city of Potsdam, is slowed down – the monument was planned to block the way – the city stands still in remembrance. At that time, city fortifications demarcated cities from the surrounding rural area. Access for people as well as goods was possible only through the city gates. Gilly's design, however, negates any traffic – indeed any movement through the city gate and on the square. People are also missing from the perspective drawing of the design, as if they were mourning in the background; only their viewing direction is implicitly present in the perspective lines. One has to climb up to this monument – that is, you have to

symbolically rise above the city and the stagnant everyday life – to silently cherish the memory of this important Prussian king. This monument forces every visitor to stop – more than that: it forces the city to stand still to deal with memory and commemoration.

Architects of Gilly's generation were all strongly influenced by the Italian copper engraver and scholar of antiquity Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who made many ancient ruins present in his engraving publications; they were well received throughout Europe and had a strong influence on how antiquity was seen – namely, as a background foil for contemporary theorising.[22] One's own greatness could be reflected in the antiquities; indeed, their resurgence was prefigured in the ruins. Piranesi once called the ruins of Greek and Roman architecture, which he masterfully reproduced in copper engravings in the second half of the eighteenth century, 'speaking ruins';[23] they tell a great story of *Magnificenza*, as one of Piranesi's publications is titled. Piranesi's masterly prints, such as the *Arco di Tito* from the *Vedute di Roma*, combine graphic means for great expressiveness and use steep perspectives, strong light-dark contrasts, and exaggerated proportions. They place ancient buildings as if on a stage, allow us to marvel and admire them, and sometimes teach us to fear them.[24] In Piranesi's time, when ethics and aesthetics developed from philosophy as independent sub-disciplines, this phenomenon was discussed under the term 'sublimity' and also implied shock in the face of natural forces. From a formal point of view, the tradition also became formative for the genre of photography, as has been demonstrated.[25]

In contrast, the tall buildings on empty pandemic streets in otherwise busy cities can be described as silent ruins; they are, as it were, speechless in the face of the immense experience of emptiness in times of the pandemic. Silence corresponds to emptiness. Where no people are walking, no cars are driving and their drivers do not honk aggressively, nobody crosses the road or calls their dog; even the attention-seeking loud advertising is switched off. Places are then also empty in the sense of acoustics: silence. Emptiness and silence are the antithesis of what we, without a second thought, imagine, for example, Times Square in New York to be. Thus, as an elementary experience, we were reminded of emptiness through an unusual, unexpected form of collective perception.

And then there is photography, which could have taught us something about emptiness, had we thought about it. For photography was early on favoured for genres that can shape atmospheres out of emptiness: landscape

photography and architectural photography. In these photographs, which include masterpieces of the genre, the feeling of emptiness is at the same time sharpened by the absence of people in the picture. Have we ever thought, when looking at August Sander's *Rhine Landscapes*, from 1929–1946, that their effect is not only due to the reduction to black-and-white photography and the combination of a distanced gaze and formal presence but also because he has succeeded in keeping these *Rhine Landscapes* largely empty – empty of all the industry that has settled around this main European traffic route and empty of people in one of the few megacities on the European continent, the so-called Ruhr area?[26]

Thus, what exactly is emptiness, what does it do to architecture and urbanism, and what exactly does emptiness evoke in our perception of the living environment? Does emptiness exist beyond architecture, and how does it relate to the space in between or to squares and places within the city, which can formally be considered spatial elements of urban planning? Can photography with its formal and semantic means only reproduce emptiness or also represent or even produce it, and what exactly enables it to do so? In any case, as social creatures, we have experienced through the pandemic that for people, emptiness can mean a lack of contact, and it can be extremely difficult. Insofar as this experience was a collective experience, we will include the increase in awareness achieved in this way. Thus, we will also ask which intellectual and aesthetic traditions have played a role in shaping our reception of the void in photography today – certainly they are reflected in photographs as well as in their perception, and they form an epistemological process.

7.2 Ruins – a Narrative of Emptiness Representing History and Memory

Architectural discourse has a strong visual narrative of emptiness in the form of depictions of ancient ruins in copper or wood engravings, paintings and, later, photographs. We should keep this tradition in mind when dealing with emptiness, because our perception is shaped by perceptual habits – in other words, photographers and artists will draw formally and motivationally on visual traditions when dealing with phenomena such as emptiness. Indeed, the discourse on ruins as symbols of domination and decay has been a central European narrative since the Renaissance.[27] Early on, this discourse on

ruins was characterised by the fact that, in addition to buildings, there were also texts and images of buildings within texts – this dichotomy has existed at least since the first illustrations of Vitruvius's *De Architecura Libri Decem* from 1521.[28] Since Rome, the former centre of the Roman world, had fallen into ruins not only in late antiquity but also in the early sixteenth century in the so-called Sacco di Roma,[29] this city could be seen in the Renaissance as the epitome of a dialectic of absolute domination and total decay. Thus, in 1535, the Netherlands Protestant Maerten van Heemkerck showed St Peter's Basilica in one of the early drawings of Rome as a ruin, although the church was not ruinous at that time; rather, the artist has sketched his idea of the state of the Catholic Church: it is doomed to decline.[30]

Pictorial reproductions of ancient ruins from the eighteenth century – for example, in Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurff einer historischen Architectur* from 1721 or in Julian-David LeRoy's *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* from 1758[31] – followed different ideas of history from those we have today. History was regarded as a memorial practice for the visualisation of exemplary or admonishing model actions. Ruins could therefore remind us of the greatness of empires or their rulers as the Parthenon in Athens reminds us of Pericles, or – like the ruins of the biblical Tower of Babel – they could warn against hubris; this system was also organised dichotomously (Figure 7.5).[32] In a publication such as Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurff einer historischen Architectur*, the reconstruction of important buildings of the scholarly discourse could not be missing at that time, especially the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, with which the publication begins. The building, seen from above at an angle, impresses with its façade of mighty substructure walls, at the feet of which tiny structures illustrate their sheer dimension. LeRoy thus valued reconstructions based on written sources, which were far more important than archaeological findings, and distinguished between the history and theory of architecture. The former describes the ruinous condition in which buildings are found, which can represent the state and religion, while the latter represents the reconstructed ideal of architecture in admirable ancient forms.

Both publications played an important role in the development of a historical dimension in architectural discourse,[33] which was considered much more important for the contemporary conception of architecture than it is today.[34] This is made clear by the fact that Fischer von Erlach, for example, includes his own buildings for the Habsburgs in his *Entwurff einer historischen Architectur* alongside the famous ancient buildings and wonders of

Figure 7.5: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Arco di Tito* in the series *Vedute di Roma*, Hamburger Kunsthalle.

the world (Figure 7.6); according to this reading, 'historical' does not denote something past but something exemplary that transcends time. It is important to realise that at this time there was obviously no linear conception of history; rather, the present was always the direct counterpart to the exemplary antiquity. The fact that many years and as many events lay between antiquity and the present was irrelevant. Nor was the antiquity of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries limited to Greco-Roman antiquity, but it also included the biblical history of the Near East. A ruin was thus always a direct point of reference for contemporary considerations of example or admonition.[35]

This brings us to an important point: the figures of thought in dealing with ruins. For if ruins are not assigned to a specific time long gone but belong directly to the present, they can also stand for something other than history; they can, for example, be seen as a symbol, for example, in Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblems*, which was published in 1586. A small woodcut visualises the message of a Roman abbreviated proverb *Scripta manent*, which in full length reads *Verba volant, scripta manent*, meaning 'Words pass away, written texts remain'. (Figure 7.7)[36] Astonishingly enough, on this
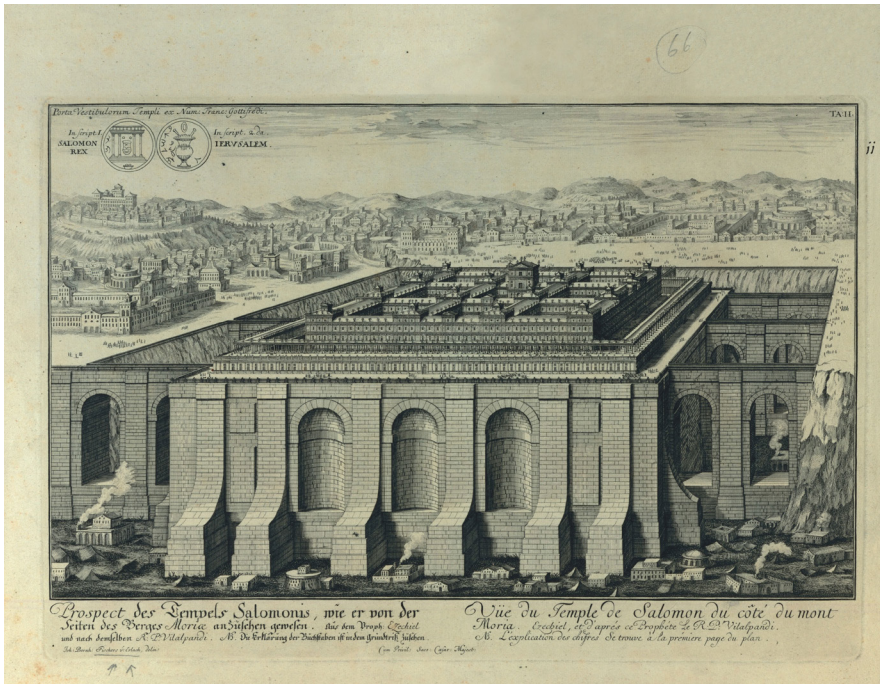
Figure 7.6: Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, *Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem* in *Entwurff einer historischen Architectur*, pl. II, 1721, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.

emblem, parts of the solidly built architecture break; they are shown as falling debris representing Greek (column and entablature, in the background to the right) and Roman (arch position) principles of architecture. According to the rules of thinking in symbols, this indicates that even the most well-built architecture is by its very nature threatened by decay. The accompanying explanatory texts name destroyed ancient and biblical cities such as Troy, Carthage, Thebes, and Babel – 'then, what maye last?' Samson and David, Alexander and Caesar, biblical and historical rulers and warriors will be named whose fame will have passed – only the books will remain and tell the heroes' stories. The woodcut, a printing technique whose abstract form of representation is particularly suitable for symbolic visualisations, shows a printing press in the lower right-hand corner. The mechanical device, however, stands for much more – namely, the ability to preserve and analyse the fates of cities and rulers as a memorial practice and make the results accessible. At the same time, however, ruins allow us to remember a renewal based
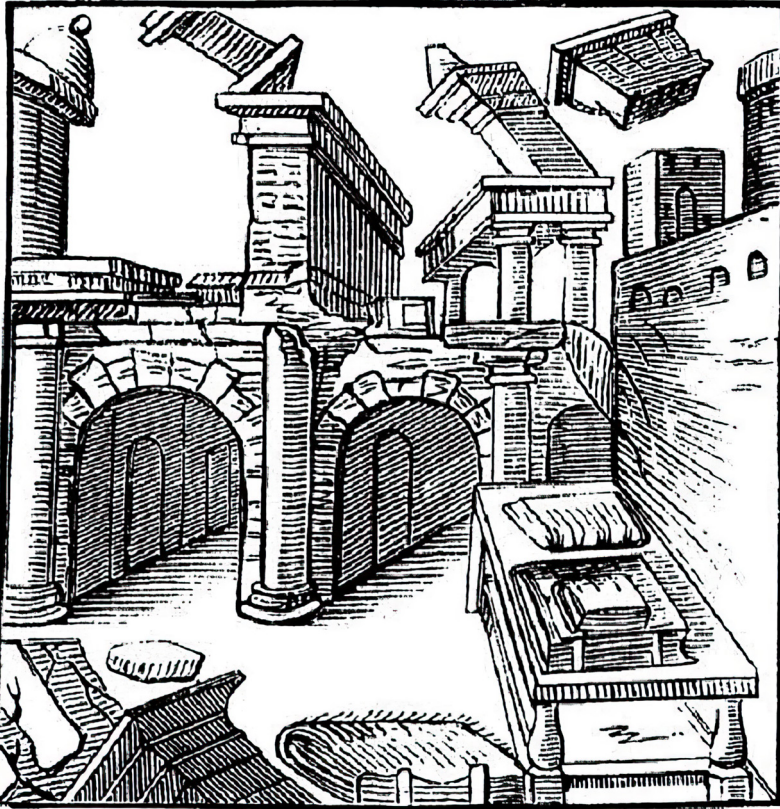
Figure 7.7: Geoffrey Whitney, *Scripta manent* in *Choice of Emblems*, 1586, Leiden University Library.

on analogy. In other contexts, the reconquest of human-made architecture by nature claims the central role and serves as a warning against hubris.[37]

It was only with the Italian and British publications of archaeological literature on ancient buildings in Italy, Greece, and the Near East in the second half of the eighteenth century that the pictorial representation more strongly connected the ruins' condition in which they were found – their historical condition, with the present of the rural population and of the visiting and researching travellers.[38] In a visual interweaving historical ruins and contemporary, everyday events connected to the discourse about country life – even secured in antiquity – are juxtaposed. This contrast is expressive of a time that has moved away from the normativity of ideal reconstruction

as it was practised before in favour of a subjectivised perception. A special role in this respect was played by the multivolume French publication on the excavations in Pompeii.[39] In addition to the excavated ruins of the city, the panels also showed visitors to Pompeii shivering in front of excavated ancient corpses – where else could one have immersed oneself so directly in the ancient world?

Only with this form of subjectivisation of the direct encounter with ancient remains did graphic renderings of imagined analogue experiences also emerge in northern Europe around the 1800s – for example, in Berlin. One such rendering could be seen on graphic fragments of ancient columns in the foreground in front of the Brandenburg Gate by Carl Gotthard Langhans, a building constructed between 1789 and 1793 that owed much to the reception of the Propylaea on the Acropolis in Athens.[40] Even on prints of the theatre built by Karl Friedrich Schinkel in Berlin between 1818 and 1821, the educated bourgeois audience walked past antique column stumps towards the performance of dramas,[41] which in turn represented evidence of the reception of antiquity or the reception of exemplary historical events, as in the works of contemporaries Goethe and Schiller.[42] However, the discourse of science in the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century was still decisively oriented towards a comparison with ancient positions, as they had been passed down in literature, and in so-called remnants, material traces of ancient rule and culture. The idea of a 'past character' of works of art from earlier times, on the other hand, was only coined in the mid-nineteenth century.[43] Such historical constructions were considered when, for example, a postmodern new museum was built in Stuttgart by James Stirling and Michael Wilford & Associates in 1984, which demonstratively presented a number of set pieces of ancient architecture in bright colours in an ironic way.[44] The dominance of the nineteenth century's linear image of history, oriented towards ever greater progress, was permanently shaken, if not invalidated, by such gestures in public space.

7.3 The Void and Its Media Staging

The preference for deserted places can still be seen in the reception of ancient buildings in photography today. Even where ancient ruins can be found in cities that are still inhabited today, some of them densely populated, such as Athens and Rome, Nîmes or Pula, and Split, their pictorial representation

of emptiness is given over to a void without any trace of people or their work. What is more, pictorial reproductions of Greek and Roman temple complex ruins in Sicily or Asia Minor exploit their location far away from settlements for the staging of emptiness around the stone traces of ancient history. The emptiness intensifies the effect of these historical traces. Photographs of ancient sites in Italy, the Balkans, and Greece by Herbert List, Nenad Gattin, and Karl Lagerfeld, and many others, represent the tradition of purified photographs in the reception of antiquity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[45] They can be divided into those using formal means aimed exclusively at the form and aesthetics of architecture (Gattin), those that play more or less ironically with set pieces such as rural population (Lagerfeld), and those that combine both forms to define a new access to pictorial effect and aesthetics (List). However, it is interesting to see that all three photographers have high formal standards; all three emphasised their reception of the European tradition in terms of motif and form.

Touristic advertising has also adopted the tradition of dealing with ruins: it is always good to show a site of deserted ruins, be it far outside cities like in Sicily or in the middle of a city like in Split; this suggests that everyone can make a unique educational journey but not participate in a mass event, as it is in reality. At the same time, the ruins' World Heritage Site status guarantees the legitimacy of such an advertisement: after all, such sites are meant to be looked at – they are heritage.[46] At the same time, the World Heritage Site status has become a destructive agent in an extremely economised culture, because with mass tourism, this status also implies due destruction of the local inhabitants' public life.[47] As early as the 1960s, Lewis Mumford, a hallmark expert of postmodern architecture and culture in times of total technification, realised that buildings and ruins are interchangeable.[48] Just as the ancient ruins had not been able to resist their decay, the seemingly superior technology of the twentieth century would not prevent the destruction and decay of architecture. Today, we have to count not only technification but also tourism as a cause of destruction. They change our view of our culture and how we deal with it.

The destruction of Palmyra in Syria by ISIS has illustrated that the development of the media also plays a decisive role.[49] The intended effect of the total destruction of this ancient site in the desert of Syria, which had already been described by Robert Wood in the mid-eighteenth century,[50] was based on the history of the ancient complex as a centre of cultural exchange but also precisely on its status as a World Heritage.[51] This event

seemed extraordinary in view of its cruelty and the calculated horror of the destruction of the complex around the Temple of Baal. In fact, it must be counted in the long history of iconoclasm as totally destructive processes of extinction of cultural assets.[52] Images of such erasure shape pictorial narratives for challenging social and political discourses. Technical possibilities are meaningful for our time: satellite images enable a simultaneous visual reproduction of the events in the theatre of war; everyone can participate in the events at the same time via the images. At the same time, the blasted ruins disappear from the satellite images; the comparison of the images before and after the blasting serves as evidence of what happened. This considerably increases the feeling of being at the mercy of the situation and its cruelty. What is also new is the technical possibility of quickly resurrecting the temple complex, true to the original, based on meticulous digital measurements using 3D printing processes and displaying it publicly in London, for example, as a memorial to the destruction of the war in Syria.[53]

A history of media behaviour and phenomena in dealing with emptiness after destruction in the nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first century has yet to be written. However, it can already be assumed that the dialectic of wanting to preserve buildings from destruction and the rediscovery of the remains of destroyed buildings will play a central role in this – precisely because the twentieth century brought forth great wars with hitherto unknown levels of destruction. Historical awareness and a culture of memory and subjectivisation led to a remarkable project in the middle of the nineteenth century, the French *Mission Héliographique*; several hundred photographs were taken by participating photographers, documenting historically remarkable buildings.[54] Even before buildings are reduced to ruins, they are photographed so that they can be rebuilt later in the event of destruction. Even before destruction, a model for overcoming reconstruction is provided, a phenomenon that is also interesting from a psychological point of view. Indeed, the Reims Cathedral, for example, was heavily damaged by German bombardment during the First World War. The photography of the Reims Cathedral by Henri le Secq[55] as part of the *Mission Héliographique* shows parts of the roof with several pinnacles and the lower part of the tower with figures (Figure 7.8). The detail of the picture does not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the shape of the building as a whole, but it does provide an insight into the overwhelming variety of precisely worked out individual architectural forms. Monument conservation has its origins in such projects – that is, in dealing with the idea of the ruin in a technological
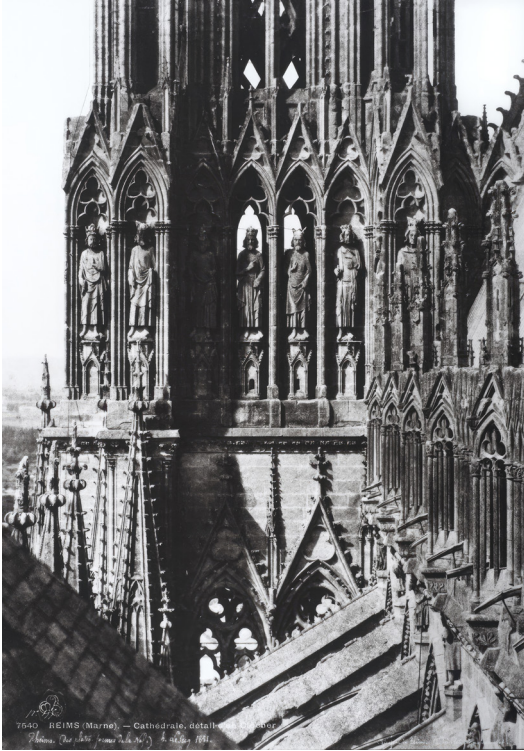
Figure 7.8 : Reims Cathedral, *Mission Héliographique*, 1851, Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon. (© Henri le Secq)

world of industrialisation increasingly perceived as dangerous through subjectively feeling individuals. Indeed, these subjective feelings are increased by the possibility of coming close to the admired artefacts, to kings, prophets, and apostles as arranged at gothic cathedrals, for example.

Archaeology has always been a science that deals with ruins, and it probably owes its existence to ruins. Yet it must also be noted that archaeologists not only practised archaeology as a political influence in the Middle East during the First World War but also produced ruins. For example, both the type of excavations and the form of visualisation of excavations of Troy, which was known from ancient writing but had previously completely disappeared from the face of the earth, were staged to serve the narrative of the ruins – one practised over centuries: nature and ruin in a state of mutual fusion.[56] It seems important to keep in mind that archaeology has always been concerned with the visualisation of artefacts and that there are many more sophisticated possibilities for this today. In the past, the dialectic of power and powerlessness, of rule and decay, of building and ruin, was always bound to the passage of time. In 1796, the French ruin painter Hubert Robert, decisively influenced by Piranesi, dared to depict the Grand Galerie de Louvre, where Napoleon collected artefacts from all over Europe and Egypt, as a ruin. As a reversal of the current discourse, this painter proposes a rhetorical figure of thought derived from ancient writings – what was a ruin could be or will be restored, and what

is currently being built is already a ruin – Hubert Robert thus shapes the central figure of modernist thought on architecture.[57] Today, however, archaeology has gained important momentum; highly technical devices for image reproduction allow visualisation of either buildings or ruins but also the identification of targets in military conflicts. There is only a blink of an eye between a building and a ruin or even a pile of stones – the building and the ruin are one.

We have long since gotten used to it too. We keep retelling an old story with recurring motifs and formal borrowings, becoming faster and more radical. For this reason, time lapses were probably the most irritating moment of the early 2020s pandemic – we waited and could do nothing. In a forty-eight-minute flight through lockdown New York, someone flew a drone through the city's eerily empty streets in April 2020. The video of this drone's flight is so impressive because of the simultaneous absence of human action in a city from which one would have expected a lot of everyday and human-made noise. On the contrary, people are nowhere to be seen; cars are not moving and are instead parked at roadsides. One hears music, but none of the familiar sounds of the city – all in all, this video represents an extremely subjective experience we had not been prepared for. While we dreamed of smart cities, we had to accept the experience that the city as a space with an unmanageable number and variety of real or virtually produced actions and interactions no longer functions as we always assumed. The video can still be watched with shivers and goosebumps on YouTube;[58] no one had ever seen New York like this. In any case, the total or near total absence of people seems to be part of this visual cipher.

Emptiness has always been a defining element of atmospheres and the experience of the built environment,[59] even if emptiness could only be thought of as complementary to the other or as something wished for in overcrowded moments: in the subway, for example, or in Tokyo. At the same time, the importance of subjective perception in connection with visual media that provide an overview of the situation is significantly increased. It is only the self-experienced knowledge of the consequences of the pandemic that makes emptiness and silence threatening. After this experience, we even look at photographs differently, and we understand the visual staging of emptiness today not only as a formal design tool. As personal experience connects with the viewing of photographs, the visual language and its semantic charge through the void now dominates. However, we came to know an atmosphere of collective concern, and this might change everything.

Notes

1. Wolfgang Kil, *Luxus der Leere: vom schwierigen Rückzug aus der Wachstumswelt* (Wuppertal: Müller & Busmann, 2004).

2. Ulrike Gehring, 'Semantik der Absenz: the making and meaning of the void', *Kritische Berichte* 39, no. 2 (2016), accessed 9 December 2021, https://doi.org/10.11588/kb.2011.2.33149.

3. Christine Dissmann, *Die Gestaltung der Leere: zum Umgang mit einer neuen städtischen Wirklichkeit* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011).

4. Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, ed. Jean-Paul Thibaud (London: Routledge, 2017).

5. Kirsten Wagner, 'Mobile Ruinen. Medienkanäle des Ruinentransports', in *Ruinen und vergessene Orte*, eds. Joachim Otto Habeck and Frank Schmitz (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020): 297–315.

6. Claudia Tittel, 'Times Square 3.0: Der Platz als Display und mediales Spektakel', in *Platz-Architekturen: Kontinuität und Wandel öffentlicher Stadträume vom 19. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, eds. Elmar Kossel and Brigitte Sölch (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2018): 299–310.

7. Cornelia Jöchner and Alessandro Nova, 'Platz und Territorium: Urbane Struktur gestaltet politische Räume', in *Platz und Territorium: urbane Struktur gestaltet politische Räume*, eds. Cornelia Jöchner and Alessandro Nova (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010): 7–18. On the tradition of public performances in urban squares before an audience since the fifteenth century, see Michael Diers, 'Der öffentliche Raum als Schauplatz oder: Die Erfindung des Zuschauers um 1500', in *Projektionen: der Platz als Bildthema*, eds. Stephanie Hanke and Brigitte Sölch (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2019): 77–92; see also Felix Schmuck, 'Stadt, Platz und Bühne: Räumliche Wechselwirkungen', in *Platz-Architekturen: Kontinuität und Wandel öffentlicher Stadträume vom 19. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, eds. Elmar Kossel and Brigitte Sölch (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2018): 225–234.

8. On the perception of architecture, see Ulf Jonak, *Architekturwahrnehmung: Sehen und Begreifen* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2015).

9. For squares as objects of images, see Stephanie Hanke and Brigitte Sölch, *Projektionen: der Platz als Bildthema* (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2019).

10. Angelo Maggi, 'Capturing the Italian Townscape: From the Beginnings of Italian Landscape Photography to the Anti-idyllic Images of Ivor and Ivy de Wolfe', *The Journal of Architecture* 21, no. 6 (2016): 890–909; Ivor de Wolfe, *The Italian Townscape* (London: Architectural Press, 1963).

11. Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture: 1890–1940* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

12. See 'Fotothek', *Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte*, accessed 9 December 2021, biblhertz.it.

13. On the question of what determines a square in the city, see Jöchner and Nova, 'Platz und Territorium: Urbane Struktur gestaltet politische Räume': 7–8.

14. 'Editorial – Tschernobyl', *Atw: International Journal for Nuclear Power* 56, no. 2 (2011).

15. Databases that can be used by all, such as flickr (https://www.flickr.com/), enable the posting of a large number of photographs and open up access to a long sequence of images of increasing decay in terms of time.

16. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror. The War of Images. 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); see also Charlotte Klonk, *Terror: When Images Become Weapons* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

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19. *Farbige Raumkunst* (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1930).

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26. See Wolfgang Kemp, '1935–1975–2014', in *August Sander Rheinlandschaften. Photographien 1926–1946* (Munich: Schirmer, 2014), 7–33.

27. William S. Heckscher, *Die Romruinen: die geistigen Voraussetzungen ihrer Wertungen im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance* (Würzburg: Mayr, 1936).

28. Bruno Reudenbach, *G.B. Piranesi: Architektur als Bild. Der Wandel in der Architekturauffassung des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: 1979); Julian Jachmann, *Die Architekturbücher des Walter Hermann Ryff: Vitruvrezeption im Kontext mathematischer Wissenschaften* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2006).

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31. Fischer von Erlach and Johann Bernhard, *Entwurff einer historischen Architectur* (Vienna: Fischer von Erlach, 1721); Julian-David LeRoy, *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* (Paris: Guerin & Delatour u.a., 1758).

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42. Hinrich C. Seeba, *Geschichte und Dichtung: die Ästhetisierung historischen Denkens von Winckelmann bis Fontane* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020).

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50. Wood, *The Ruines of Palmyra, otherwise Tedmor, in the Desert*; Finnegan et al., *The Life and Works of Robert Wood: Classicist and Traveller.*

51. 'Satellitenbilder zeigen Zerstörung in Palmyra', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 September 2015, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/islamischer-staat-satelittenbilder-zeigen-zerstoerung-in-palmyra13779050html.

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Chapter 8
A Land of Collective Solitude[1]

Isabelle Catucci

Aerial photographs showing the bare earth with newly dug graves in many Brazilian cities at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic were common in news reports about the country all over the world. The pictures featured patterns, rectangular holes dug into the earth in neat sequences, captured by aerial equipment. These images warned about the unknown fate of humanity in the face of statistics, and the dug graves became a danger that official sources were denying. At a time when doors and windows were a constant restraint in many countries, the result of lockdown measures necessary for keeping the contagion in check, the screens of electronic devices became virtual windows, displaying bright pictures of various places around the world, in a situational update loop, sometimes showing empty public places and stores, sometimes crowded hospitals.

The pattern and the numeric configuration seen in the images depicting the situation in Brazil were presented as terrifying news, opposing the contradictory official number of deaths given by the authorities and the disregard fuelled by political instability during the management of the pandemic.

At first, the presence of the bare earth in these photographs, the object of study in this article, is a destiny-image; it offers us a prophetic perspective of the future. Afterwards, the approximate images of this same scenario, but with the funerary rituals of a collective burial, appear as a testimony-image, whose narrative rawness, in the context in which it was presented, day after day, was opposed to the uncertainty of the numbers of infected people released by the Brazilian government health agencies during the first months of the pandemic.

With the objective of decoding the transmission of these images in the media, news from various sources which presented the earth as a representative image of the moment from an aerial perspective between April and June 2020 in Brazil will be analysed. The visual, literary, and popular languages were in accordance with one another when it came to attributing

meaning, since information about the virus was being manipulated beyond the sanitary sense, and the announcements regarding the impacts of the disease often divided public opinion, from polarised fields, through a political and economic bias, fake news and misguided statements that spread as quickly and erratically as the virus itself.

The analysis of photographs from a period of crisis like the beginning of the pandemic is a sensitive task, as the message transmitted indicated the collapse of health systems in many countries and the passing of loved ones, friends, and family, in a moment of global bereavement. However, even with warnings from international agencies like the World Health Organization about the seriousness of the pandemic, in some countries the discussion about the modes of transmission and the gravity of the symptoms was disregarded, with a direct impact on the population. European media outlets showed photographs of health professionals in protective clothes and equipment, overcrowded hospitals, and crematories. By April 2020, some media outlets were publishing images of the mass graves in Brazil, newly dug by heavy machinery, which appallingly revealed a truth omitted in the official numbers.

Statements by the federal government and influential groups in the media and social networks spread the idea that the virus caused only a mild cold, that other diseases were more dangerous, or even that the warm climate would reduce the impact of the symptoms. The sharing of biased information, not backed by science or facts, discredited the warnings from health professionals and led large portions of the population to neglect preventive measures. Crowded hospitals were an issue in the country long before the pandemic, and for this reason, this kind of image caused less impact, not being alarming enough to indicate a health crisis.

8.1 The Destiny-Image

On 2 April 2020, the front page of the *Washington Post* showed an image of the Vila Formosa cemetery in São Paulo.[2] The description exposed the contradiction between official statements – that the disease was a fantasy – and the growing number of graves, repositioning the issue of the pandemic and the necessity of preventive measures. The story had an impact on a national level in the Brazilian media: it was commented on by the main newspapers, based on the front-page picture with a desolating view of countless graves,
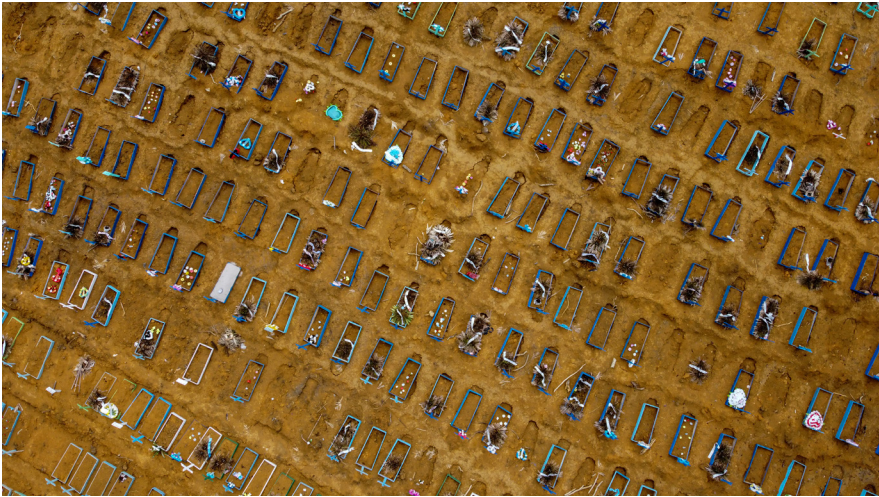
Figure 8.1: Mass graves in the Nossa Senhora Aparecida cemetery, Manaus, during the Covid-19 pandemic, 15 May 2020. (© Alex Pazuello, SEMCOM)

which was opposed to the discursive version. In images like this one, which portray the cemeteries of São Paulo, the empty spaces of the graves, linear and sequential, seek to highlight the seriousness of the situation.

In the photograph by Alex Pazuello/SEMCOM (Figure 8.1), from the *Fotos Públicas* website, in the cemetery in Manaus, the pattern of the aerial image is maintained, with strong discursive impact, but in this case, the burials have already been carried out. Though the official death count at the time did not appear alarming, the sudden increase in the number of mass graves around the country revealed a hidden number. The lack of strategic planning and the disregard for the management of the pandemic could be read in a statement by the president that was quoted in the publication and are stunningly contradicted by the picture above it. These pictures, in contrast to those showing crowded hospitals, were, at that time, a novelty, a sad, uncomfortable, and unknown sight of the earth as a destiny-image.

In April 2022, a photograph taken by Michael Dantas/AFP (Figure 8.2) brings back the aerial view of cemetery workers unloading a coffin from a truck in an area where new graves have been dug at the Parque Taruma cemetery, in Manaus, Amazonas state. The photograph is read from lines in which the last point is also one of continuation, introspection, and movement.

The difficulty of access to official data on the number of deaths, due to the lack of either testing and diagnosing or the standard procedure of

Figure 8.2: Mass graves in the Parque Taruma cemetery, Manaus. (© Michael Dantas, AFP)

health centres to inform the government about the occurrence of common symptoms of the virus, created a fragmented notion of the spread of the pandemic, a situation that was rearticulated, without a doubt, by the image of the cemetery workers wearing protective equipment or the unusual manner of dealing with grief, since funerals were restricted, and many victims were buried in mass graves, without ceremonies, due to sanitary measures.

With the rites abbreviated, the feeling of emptiness in farewells could be redirected to the distant aerial images of the cemeteries. The impossibility of gathering in grief with family and friends led to a sense of spectating, watching from afar; the images, the news, and the messages were as comforting and empathising as possible. Thus, for many, the act of watching was different from being alone, from loneliness – they were physically isolated but shared the situation with everyone; they were collectively exposed and isolated together, in a movement close to the notion of solitude. Given the obstacle to gathering and comforting each other in person, socially, the image of grief was redirected to the earth, as a space of desolation and buried affects.

On 3 April 2020, an opinion article in *El País* discussed how hard it had been to choose the Vila Formosa cemetery image as the front-page picture.[3] In it, the journalist Carla Jiménez reflects on the impact of this kind of image in publications with large circulation: 'It is a tough decision to make an

image like this public'. According to her, despite the sadness and sensitiveness of the time, the image of the cemetery helps warn readers about the importance of preventive measures for the collective welfare.

By this time, contradictory information about the number of cases and deaths and the images of open areas in cemeteries were still in the news, having as a reference point the aerial photograph of the bare earth. This also happened on local news websites, as in the state of São Paulo's inland cities like Bauru, where the situation was depicted through photographs of recently excavated cemetery lands on 15 April 2020. The picture was accompanied by conflicting numbers: 'With three deaths caused by Covid-19 and twenty-four confirmed cases, Bauru digs two hundred new graves'.[4]

On 20 April 2020, the publication *Isto É* showed the excavated areas in north-eastern Brazil, reproducing aerial images by TV Globo, and on 5 May, *Veja* depicted the expansion of cemeteries in São Paulo. On the same day, the BBC network's website also featured images of the earth in the Amazon region (along with an aerial photograph of the cemetery in the state of Amazonas),[5] also reporting on issues faced by the country, like the fires in the state of Acre and the difficulty of access to public services for native peoples.

From this point on, the aerial photographs of the bare earth and the serialised graves in a continuous rectangular pattern became routine and represented a kind of emblematic destiny-image to underline the warnings and the concern with the advance of the pandemic in the country.

As I chose to analyse and write about the photographs of that period, which featured in newspapers, magazines, and news websites, local and international, I wondered if a cold, distant, and pragmatic reading of these images could corroborate the feeling of solitude and uncertainty that they caused in me when I saw the headlines while browsing the news looking for information about the pandemic in places where my family and friends were.

8.2 The Testimony-Image

The reading of images about the pandemic, around the world, is related to suffering, loss, and bereavement, with stressful situations for health workers and loneliness for many during lockdown. The feeling of an emptying of discourses caused by the images showing countless rectangular holes, like the photographs of the cemeteries of São Paulo, waiting for the catastrophe, redirects the reading to the way the country dealt with the situation, delaying

lockdown and keeping businesses and public services functioning, without sufficient preventive measures.

For this reason, the images were impactful and revealed a side of reality that gradually gained space in public debate. With the advance of the regulations for the containment of the pandemic, autonomously decided by cities and states around the country, other images and narratives became frequent, with more empathic portrayals of those who went through that situation.

Avoiding the serialised, statistical, and quantitative logic of the zoomed-out aerial imagery of the earth, in photographs where the observer's point of view was closer, it was possible to see the sadness in the eyes of people wearing masks, talking about their grief, confusion, and indignation. The stories with photographs showing the graves with small gestures of homage, flowers, ribbons, and messages capture the feeling of intimacy and the farewells. In these images, the sense of the pandemic created a closer, more shareable reading.

In the photographs taken at the Nossa Senhora Aparecida Public Cemetery (27 April 2020) in Manaus (Figures 8.3–8.5), the narratives are built by other elements, in addition to the excavated earth.

On the Amazônia Real website, Fernando Crispim and La Xunga Produções's photograph (Figure 8.3) posted on 13 May 2020 accompanies a text by specialist academics Philip Fearnside and Lucas Ferrante, who seek to demonstrate the relevance of public policies to contain the spread of the virus, as well as the vulnerability of the population of this region, in particular the vulnerability of Indigenous peoples. In the article, the authors reinforce the difficulty of accessing official numbers of infected people while demonstrating the exponential increase in the number of deaths, which made Manaus one of the first cities to carry out collective burials in single graves due to the high number of funerals required in a short time.

In Figure 8.3, the aerial view of the burial maintains the pattern but with deviations and with the central focus on the excavation machine. In the image, we see people watching the machine during the funeral. The graves are filled, covered with flowers and objects. In a third of the photograph, we have the empty space of the earth still flat. In the other two-thirds of the image, the different patterns of flowers, bands, and objects indicate occupied spaces.

In a photograph of the same cemetery by Alex Pazuello/SEMCOM (Figure 8.4), the earth continues to occupy the image; however, the scene plans and the ongoing actions indicate new readings. As the main character, the cemetery employee accompanies the collective burial and walks.

Figure 8.3: Mass burials of poor people at the Nossa Senhora Aparecida cemetery, 13 May 2020. (© Fernando Crispim/ La Xunga Produções)

Behind him is the excavation machine with the earth being loaded. In the line already dug in the ground, some coffins are deposited. Some people follow the funeral, heads down, waiting, holding flowers. Beside them are other uniformed cemetery workers. In this picture, grief is materialised in the posture, in the wish to pay homages individually with flowers, in the indifference marked by the stakes that indicate the space of each burial. In the background, the overlapping blue wooden crosses indicate a pattern and the repetition of the same gesture in a short period of time.

In contrast to the geometric pattern, in these images the dimension of the tragedy is more affective, closer to the human dimension. The invisibility of the empty graves of the images taken from the São Paulo Cemetery, always present in the aerial shots, is reverted to the sight of confusion and farewells in Manaus. The relation between the visible and the visual is latent in these two pictures, a matter explored in Georges Didi-Huberman's[6] writings, in his study about the image from different epistemologies, paying attention to the dialectic images that are not restricted to the semiotic analytical scheme but require a philosophy of the history of art, closer to the latency,

Figure 8.4: Nossa Senhora Aparecida public cemetery, 27 April 2020. (© Alex Pazuello, SEMCOM)

the emptiness, the body. According to Didi-Huberman, from the visible, we can narrate that heavy machinery, meant for construction, is being used for mass burials, watched by people in a line. However, there is an aspect of the image that affects us, that concerns the visual world, perceived, experienced, and shared, that escapes the obvious description of the object.

The series of associations evoked by this image, in the context in which it is presented, reconducts the reading of the events, of the conflicts that take place in this region, frequently reported in the news, of the environmental disasters, the fight of Indigenous peoples for the right to stay on their land, the juxtaposition of earth, machines, and people. Here, the scientist in flight, who sees from above and is aware of the statistics, falls to the ground, brought down by the details of the surroundings.

In the publication, the context in which the photograph is presented, on a news website, there is no space for silence. As in the other publications mentioned, the subject competes with ads for space on the screen – marketing and bereavement side by side – without any space for reflection. There is, though, as stated by Didi-Huberman, an unsettling image that contextualises the occurrence, and from this effect, this collective imagination evoked by the detail, articulated in the relation between the visual and

the symptoms associated with this reading, we register the encounter with these images.

In this sense, not knowing this visuality, this chaotic environment between earth and desolation, reminds one of *Tierra*,[7] a work by the Guatemalan artist Regina José Galindo. In the performance, recorded on video, we see the stillness of the artist, standing naked in front of an unceasing excavator digging around the space she occupies. This evokes conceptual questions about the earth, the materiality and frailty of the body, referencing the genocide in her country. A written statement by the artist claims the reference for the work is triggered by the memory of how the authorities dealt with the bodies of those considered enemies of the regime, mostly Indigenous people. The presence of excavators digging mass graves was frequent. During the performance, the images, in contexts of territorial disputes, reveal how exposed the bodies are, how delicate and fragile the line between the advance of the machine and the position occupied by the artist on the ground is.

In the pandemic context, the relation between earth, people, and machines is still conflictive in Manaus, in northern Brazil, where the photograph was taken. Territorial disputes are marked by the absence of policies that guarantee the livelihood of Indigenous populations. The feeling of emptiness caused by the seriation and the numbers is worsened with the massification suggested by the machine.

Even in the distanced and aerial view, the space opened by the machines, in the context it is presented, takes us beyond the immediate dimension. Approaching Didi-Huberman's thought, as we see the repeating space of the graves, waiting for the coffins, the empty, rectangular space, in a simplified reading, looks less affective, affects us only through its visible form. Nevertheless, in front of the grave, besides the geometric evidence, there is a non-evidence that stares back, empty. According to Didi-Huberman, an inevitable emptying is recognised in the destiny of a lifeless corporal volume, which is not to be confused with an artefact or simulacrum; as such, destiny participates in the construction of a sense, the sense of loss.[8]

In the images of the bare earth with empty graves, the space of visualisation of the situation became a space inhabited by the desolation of the numbers, the lines, a space of repetition. In the photographs without the human figures, the relation between testimony and destiny are merged, the anthropomorphic absence, justified by the difficulty of the moment, occupied with memory. People were hidden in many of the photographs that the

media published about the pandemic – be it for the impossibility of accompanying the bodies, or because the workers, responsible for the burials, were always wearing protective clothes and equipment – where they were completely covered, recomposed in the dialectics of the distance of the view, which is virtual in itself. The image touches us while we see, re-creating the notion of spatiality and emptying.

In the following months, the destiny-images with aerial views of cemeteries were recurrently substituted by testimony-images and the effort of the media to gather data about the number of people infected. Thus, the doubt about the gravity of the situation was relocated from the mortality rate and the rules that indicated the impossibility of sharing or witnessing the moment.

8.3 On the Conflict Between Destiny-Image and Testimony-Image

The image of people in grief in the photographs usually implies an intimate, painful moment. For this reason, we often wonder about the validity of imprinting this moment in a public image, available to the heedless view of the headlines. The danger of causing insensibility by publishing the image on the front page, trivialising it, in a situation that should ask for an attentive and careful look, is one of the matters faced by Susan Sontag when she analyses photographs by war correspondents. In the book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, the author reflects on the sense of exposure to horror, with shocking images of mutilated children and helpless people against a state of devastation and ruin. The war victims, as they are exposed, expose the state of war, a real situation, and if on the one hand it offers supporters of the war a kind of victory, on the other it shows the incoherence of the discourses about who the enemies are. The illusion of a consensus on the state of war, found in the photographs, is presented in bodies and devastated landscapes, printed in newspapers and magazines, announcing the events and atrocities taking place in a distant land.

This dimension of the story, the dimension of the other, of grief, in a situation of weakness, as demonstrated by Sontag,[9] was concretised by Francisco Goya, for example, without the dimension of the spectacle. In the series *Los desastres de la guerra* (*The Disasters of War*), from the early nineteenth century, the scenes rearrange the spaces, the bodies, the positions, and dispositions of people facing grief and suffering. The cruelty of war in his works urges us to feel the pain too; it is possible to hear the voice and the

story of the artist facing the situation. In this sense, the testimony-image, composed in an approximated scene, creates discourses and rearticulates public opinion about actions that affect the lives of people collectively.

In her reflections about the trivialisation of images of war and suffering spread by the media through photography, Susan Sontag takes up the question about the constant exposure to conflict and the trivialisation of pain. In this sense, for many, the debris, death, and suffering printed day after day could cause, due to their regularity, an effect of unreality. By opposing the divulgation of this kind of image, the argument used by those against it is that the images are unnecessary, as they trivialise the pain, and the repetition of the horror might lead to apathy, making it less real, with the opposite result of the expected, in a kind of moral or emotional numbness.

At the beginning of the pandemic, on 30 March 2020, in a live broadcast by *Globo São Paulo – SP1*, a mass burial was shown from a helicopter. The presenter warns the viewers that the images are unsettling, then justifies the reason for showing them, reiterating the necessity of preventive measures to avoid virus transmission. The controversy on social media networks because of the exposure of grief on television was reported by *Catraca Livre*, with comments from people wondering about the necessity of such exposure, as it showed a lack of respect for the families, using a moment of sorrow to generate views.

In this case, the aerial view featured in the broadcast emphasised both the dimension of the land and how many people were impacted by that event. In the same way, the fact that the journalist was forced to report from a distance due to sanitary measures and the risk of transmission reframed the message as one, in more generalist narratives, of a state of alert – though it was still sympathetic to the sensitivity of the moment. Still, the controversy generated on social media networks indicates the impact caused by the image, as it took place during a moment of doubt about the validity of the pandemic, set against a scene of suffering and collective loss.

Without the photograph or the report of the event, we would be able to ignore its existence in distant locations. For this reason, Susan Sontag points out the importance of the photographer in a chaotic scenario. As we face the images of war and its victims, we can't ignore the reality of the impact of actions taken due to collective decision-making. Through this register and testimony of reality, announced in the news by photographs and texts, according to the Sontag, we have access to the event, whose imaginary – even a small fraction of the imaginary of what other people went through

– becomes a daily matter and touches a multitude of people in protests and elections. Thus, the commotion and the effect created by the images of suffering of war victims caused a reaction opposed to apathy: they did not stifle the reaction; readers were not insensible to the news, mere spectators.

The testimonial side of the photographer, emphasised by Sontag, is the characteristic that articulates the proximity and the sharing of experiences. In the photograph of suffering spread by the media, rather than a spectacle or news that suggest a passive audience, following Sontag's thought, this kind of image evokes the same experience of pain and fear we feel when facing danger, suffering, and death. Going back to Didi-Huberman's approach, the visual aspect of the accounts of the scene appeals to the notion of sensibility that goes beyond what is visible.

In another news broadcast from Globo, on 22 April 2020, in Pernambuco, also published on the *G1* news website, a report is accompanied by an aerial image of the cemetery. A man, with his identity and occupation disclosed, says his mother broke her leg, was hospitalised, got infected with the virus in the hospital, and he never saw her again; he was only informed of the number of the locked coffin in which she would be buried. Prevented from approaching her to say goodbye, he said he could not believe what he was going through, as it felt like being in a horror movie. The scene he witnessed, seeing the cemetery workers dressed like astronauts, while he was unable to say farewell, to choose the place for the burial, took him to a reality that he could testify about, so he did, to whomever still doubted, reaffirming that the virus did exist.

In Figure 8.5, the photograph maintains an aerial perspective. However, even though it depicts the same scene, the land that occupies the foreground is marked by a tractor tyre, two employees in hazmat suits walking out of the frame, leaving behind a disturbing scene: people in serious and silent postures following the ritual performed by the machines, framed by a repetition of crosses and flowers.

In the dimension of the story, even with a mask, the filmed face portrays the pain of loss. In the narrative, the description of the swiftness with which the situation unfolded is marked by the impossibility of access. In complementary images, we see the cemetery in the background, and in the foreground, we follow someone talking about the necessity of sharing their experience and attesting to the reality of the pandemic.

Thus, the distant images of the mass burials expressed a characteristic that extrapolated the technical facility of using a single framing, a wide area. The in-depth space depicted here was reshaped by a sense of inaccessibility,

Figure 8.5: Nossa Senhora Aparecida public cemetery, different perspective, 27 April 2020. (© Alex Pazuello, SEMCOM)

repetition, and unpredictability. If the image can numb or paralyse us, as it is repeated daily, despite the seriousness of its content, to recover the affected view it is necessary to awaken the memory evoked by an image, according to Didi-Huberman, to resume the view, the narrative and the historical construct of what is photographed. Even if the image tells it all, as a story, it shows us the possibilities of reading realities that words would communicate differently. The images of the empty space in the earth, the open grave, the earth as the final destination, were broadcasted with warning messages, urging people to willingly accept the lockdown as the alternative to transmission, when this measure still wasn't an official and collective duty. The images, discourses, and news communicated a state of emergency, highlighting a situation – a space and a time – to be considered collectively.

According to Martin Heidegger, the earth is inescapable;[10] we build our houses on it and from it we attribute meaning to the world. These photographs remind me of my homeland, the colour of the earth, the way the farewell rituals are conducted, though they also depict the space where we imagine the rituals not conducted, where we deposit our condolences to those who lost their relatives or passed away without support. In this sense, the earth, as an image, carries an appeal of collective belonging and, at the

same time, collective absence, in its inverted space, in a heterotopy, as indicated by Michel Foucault.[11] The overlapping of a specific space for decomposition and eternity, where people visit the memory of their relatives and recognise the passage of time, in a heterochrony, where, paradoxically, there is an interest in stopping time, characteristically marked by the absence and the growth that, in times like these, becomes populated by the collective imaginary, about understanding the situation, reality, the world.

The earth as a world-shaping instance, here, is also the earth that restricts access, that can only be seen from afar. Even though in the streets, businesses, and public places the population had no restrictions, in the photographed location, access was limited to prevent overcrowding, given the number of families and the risk of transmission.

When we take the aerial images out of this context, reading them only as geometric sequences on the earth, with human absence, the message still continues with tragic and catastrophic aspects. The excavated space is anthropomorphic: the sequentiality is not unknown; it is common in cemeteries. In context, in addition to the numbers of the pandemic and the tragedy, the images impel us to read beyond the news, about a space and event that refers to ourselves and puts us in the same situation. In this case, the messages were followed by death, as observed by Didi-Huberman when he analysed the works of Tony Smith: even in simple objects with little information, the word *Die*, the title of one of Smith's sculptures[12] consisting of a steel cube, resonates with 'I', in the subjective dimension, the 'eye' that sees, and 'die', like the lucky dice.[13]

The earth scanned as a surface in waiting, nameless, with no certain address, replicated in many cities around the country, in a short period of time, triggers an introspective view. The pattern seen in the earth does not resemble the fertility common to the images of farms, nor to the notion of home, habitat. The social relation of the mass burial often exposes the most vulnerable layers of the population facing the pandemic. In the Brazilian context, the poem *Morte e Vida Severina* (1954–1955), by João Cabral de Melo Neto, shows an ironic, sad side of this land, retold in Brazilian popular music. The phrase 'this is your piece of the latifundium', the sought piece of land as a means of living is repositioned as a space for burials. The phrase is said by the friends of a peasant during his burial, and for the desolating way it is put, it references social injustice and inequality.

In this phrase, the image of the earth is repositioned in popular culture as a repeating fate and destiny. Severino, a character in the poem, sees the earth

mentioned as a symbol during the funeral. The relation between the struggle of a peasant to conquer the earth to work and the agrarian conflicts and the dimension of the earth for the burial is associated with a historical reality in Brazil. The scale of the latifundium is reduced to an undesired fate in popular language, repeated as a reference to inaccessibility and social inequality.

The earth, seen from afar, associated with large expanses, resumes the story told by Severino. Nevertheless, the solidarity of those the popular phrase is addressed to is also expressed in the image, which in the anthropological sense refers to the body that we cannot see, but we instead infer its existence due to the burial. By giving it a face, a past, a path, the image fades in favour of the narrative.

Later on, as an alternative to funerals, many people announced and mourned the loss of their loved ones through social media, and they received comforting words from friends and acquaintances the same way. This affective sharing, which escapes the distanced and numeric logic, even if virtual, allowed the reconstruction of the image of a moment from other references. At times, it was permitted to place objects, symbolising affection, at the location of the mass burials, like flowers, ribbons, and crosses – but only by a few people and always from a distance. The measures to contain the virus became routine, with efforts from most of the civil society and, later, from the government, with financial support during times of compulsory lockdown.

The images analysed in this article, published by mass media, recurred at the beginning of the pandemic, a moment of many uncertainties, contrasting official speeches that gave little importance to the impact of the virus with strong symbolic content of the images. Taken by photojournalists, sometimes with the use of drones or helicopters, they showed a landscape inaccessible to most, though the subject was of general interest.

The aerial photographs represented, in many contexts, images with an impartial technological aspect, a pattern repeated in newspapers around the world, especially through the Internet. The fast circulation of images between electronic devices informed viewers about what was restricted, intimate, suppressed. However, the large number of graves and the frequency of this kind of action in many cities communicated what the official numbers did not. Even though we come across death every day in the news, the impact of some visual messages, like those of the mass graves or the impossibility of farewells, touches us on a deeper level beyond virtual communication, that recovers the earth in its dimension of place and destination, a space in expectation, in a series of possibilities.

On the other hand, though the image isn't everything or the 'whole' story, following the discussion by Didi-Huberman, by not being the whole reality and not containing the whole reality, it informs and is part of a common narrative, collectively built. For this reason, apart from those whose purpose is aesthetic appreciation, the pictures taken as a testimony, from a distance, approximate the view, mediated by the many technologies in question, in a testimony that few could convincingly narrate, given the large circulation of fake news and unofficial data.

If we consider, as claimed by Jean-Paul Sartre,[14] that the image is an act, and not a synthesis or a thing, the images published in newspapers of large circulation and on social networks acted collectively. With the impossibility of farewell gatherings, the interdiction of funeral rites, responsible for making someone's death public, reallocated the farewells to an inaccessible spatiality. Beyond the news, the image was followed by an awareness and a warning from people in grief, in a widened social dimension.

Although we consider that, historically, photography has a close relationship with death, as a record of mourning that can be shared, in a procedure associated with the notion of holding time, remembering, honouring. In the case of aerial images (Figure 1), the photograph presented by the media is foreshadowing; it announces the creation of new empty spaces, which they do not yet contain, but whose action of excavating the earth presupposes. The graves in waiting, about to be used, communicate, along with the discourses, a danger and a vision of the future. Combined with the photographs of people accompanying the excavators, this rite introduces the tragic dimension of spectated loss in a public place.

8.4 On Solitude and the Emptying of Discourses

The empty space as an image is perceived in the absence of funeral rites, the space of listening, hugs, affection. At times, this was attempted in a virtual space, which allowed for the exchange of messages of comfort. Memories, narratives about the other, interspersed with the aerial photographs, presented a narrative about a reality that could be shared with those whose movements were restricted, who could not be present.

The impossibility of sharing grief, in rituals with the gathering of family and friends, in person, was sometimes mitigated by the exchange of messages, on social networks, as a space for affection and critical elaboration.

In the absence of these rituals due to the crisis, some non-governmental organisations and support groups took a stand and critically replicated the images of death, attempting to resume the debate about access to healthcare, respect for others, and the defence of human rights. Protest groups gathered in touristic attractions around the country, like Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, and official government buildings in the capital, Brasília, with crosses, posters, and flowers, wearing protective clothes and equipment like hospital workers, recapturing the images from the newspapers, in altered contexts. The line of crosses represented the loss suffered by so many families, as the messages and stories requested public attention.

The empty space is now perceived as a space of solitude. Respecting social distancing is a demand that only becomes noticeable when the other side of the discourse asserts that the economic collapse caused by the lockdown should be avoided. The isolation between discursive groups, whose narratives prioritised diverging points, made the notion of emptiness emblematic, as a space that cannot be shared. On the other hand, population groups that were already at risk of losing their basic rights received the contradicting narratives with protests, creating organisations of support.

The contradictory relation between physical and discursive isolation, sharing a point of view and a space, and refraining from sharing this space for the benefit of the collective, became evident. At this time, images were presented to solitary, polarised groups that could not share a common point of view, since often one of the sides suppressed the possibility of listening and dialogue. The discursive loneliness, in this case, was prone to be contested by the destiny-image and the testimony-image; there was a silent implication in this state of reclusion that prevented the discussion itself.

In response to the silence and suffering during a moment of crisis, the solitude in recognising oneself as part of a group and contributing to physical distancing, as hard and painful as it might be, was a continuous exercise, sometimes accomplished, sometimes forgotten. Recognising the importance of the other and of oneself, the exercise of revealing the existence of mourning and the tragic event, contribute to the understanding of solidarity and collectivity for each person, and isolation from discourses and narratives, presences and absences in the public space. Regardless of the discursive disputes of knowing who is right or keeping track of the mistakes from the image and the statistics, this data still concurs with oral narratives, the moments experienced and shared, and what people say about it. In this context, the memory is one of pain, deprivation, and fear.

In the Brazilian imaginary, the earth often represents people's struggle for permanence, to stay and maintain a lifestyle that goes against the agricultural policies that cause rural depopulation. Among the generations that suffered this process, it is common to find those who want to have a little piece of land when they retire, to be able to farm again, to have contact with the earth. The feeling of belonging, of home, of culture, is still linked to the image of the land, as well as territorial disputes and political and social issues. However, land as a final destination, an empty space waiting, was frequently exposed, and this resumed the old discourse of a country that witnesses death, like Severino, the poem's character, who attended the funeral of a peasant who fought for his own space. Anyone who watches the image of the collective burial in a region with so many territorial conflicts, sees the fate of those participating in this struggle. Land, an example of property that is the subject of these conflicts, drives this perspective of non-being.

Against the destiny-image, of apathy and numbness, the pandemic earth was sometimes displayed as a warning. The notion of collectivity happened in movements in response to the image that informed the growing number of deaths, in reaction to the destiny-image. Though isolated in opposing discourses, there was an intense presence of messages, actions, protests, and testimonies that requested a collective view of reality that included the possibility of choosing isolation and, even when we were alone, of cultivating a sense of solitude, encouraging friends and family to do the same, to take a stand, to stay home, and to see isolation as a selfless act, building a setting of collective solitude.

The symbolic, enunciative images mostly concurred with the sense of fantasy, disclosure, and disregard for the situation. Confronted by the impartial view, aerial and numeric, the story brings us closer to virtuality, of what is broadcast, in its communicational aspect. The photographs, followed by discourses, doubts, the exchange of messages between friends and family, do not spare us the shock, the drive of the earth that we see as memory, experienced and observed, the same earth that stares at us, uncertain of its fate, though it may be repeated in sermons, choruses, and dissensions. In the paradox of visuality, of feeling the pain of others as we watch, the photograph of the earth was a warning, later repositioned as a reminder of what awakens us as living beings, as a group.

Notes

1.   Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the text were produced through agreement
     between the author and editors.
2.   Photograph of the headline of the Washington Post newspaper on 2 April 2020, by Andre
     Penner/Associated Press.
3.   Photograph by Amanda Perobelli/Reuters.
4.   'Com três mortes por coronavírus e 24 casos confirmados, Bauru abre duzentas novas covas
     em cemitério', *Jornal do Povo*, 15 April 2020.
5.   Photograph by AFP.
6.   Georges Didi-Huberman, *O que vemos, o que nos olha* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2010).
7.   'Regina José Galindo, 'Works, 2013, Tierra', *Regina José Galindo*, accessed 9 December 2021,
     https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/home-en/.
8.   Didi-Huberman, *O que vemos, o que nos olha*: 37.
9.   Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).
10. Martin Heidegger, *A origem da obra de arte* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2008).
11. Michel Foucault, *O corpo utópico. As heterotopias* (São Paulo: n-1 Edições, 2013).
12. *Die*, sculpture by Tony Smith, 1962. 183.8 × 183.8 × 183.8 cm.
13. Didi-Huberman, *O que vemos, o que nos olha*: 93.
14. Jean-Paul Sartre, *O Imaginário* (São Paulo: Ática, 1996).

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The Performance
of Emptiness

Chapter 9
The Power of Emptiness: Arne Jacobsen's National Bank, Copenhagen, 1961–1978[1]

Ruth Baumeister

> Se una vita libera assolutamente da ogni senso di peccato fosse realizzabile, sarebbe vuota da far spavento.
>
> – Cesare Pavese[2]

The above quote, taken from the diary of the Italian writer and poet Cesare Pavese (1908–1950), hints at the existential fear emptiness can possibly yield. At the same time, it relates this horror vacui to a state of impeccability in life connected to a hypothetical condition of an absolute freedom, which probably does not exist anywhere but in paradise. This article investigates the notion of emptiness and the representation of enclosure and isolation in the project of the National Bank in the Danish capital (Figure 9.1), a project by Arne Jacobsen (1902–1971).

The Danish architect is first and foremost known for his organically shaped, exquisitely crafted, timeless furniture, such as the Ant (1951), the Swan (1958), and the Egg (1959), which are still highly sought-after design classics today. He is internationally celebrated for his functionalist architecture, such as his white cube projects for housing and recreation in Klampenborg, north of Copenhagen, from the 1930s, Aarhus City Hall (1937–42) and his minimalist buildings of the post-war period such as the Royal SAS Hotel (1958–60) and St Catherine's college at Oxford University (1964–1966). Jacobsen, who was born into a bourgeois family, grew up in a Victorian-style home in Copenhagen. Because of his joy in and talent for painting and drawing, as a young man he considered becoming an artist. Eventually, he followed his father's advice to make use of his talent to create

Figure 9.1: Exterior of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

images by envisioning the environments in his drawings and then realising them as an architect. He subsequently took lessons in technical drafting and was apprenticed as a mason. In 1924, he was admitted to study architecture at the Royal Danish Academy, where he was educated in the neoclassicist tradition, focusing on proportion, composition, plastic articulation of forms as well as the harmony inherent in classical Greek architecture.

Even though he later became one of the proponents of Danish functionalist architecture, his classicist training remained the orderly base of his design thinking. An important aspect in the context of the following discussion is his love for botany and, related to this, his view of the relationship between architecture and nature in general. Decisive in this respect was his exile in Sweden. Even though Jacobsen never practised any religion, the fact that he was born into a Jewish family forced him to flee from the Nazis during WWII. Arne Jacobsen had an eminent flair for botany and had made a thorough study of what could grow in a Swedish garden. 'He had made an excellent plan for the house, but also an excellent garden plan with a detailed description of the plants which readers could use directly as a source of inspiration'[3] – this is how the Danish architect Niels Koppel recalls Jacobsen's work with nature, which he witnessed during the time they both

Figure 9.2: Construction site of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

spent in Swedish exile. After his arrival in Stockholm and a short period of working in a large Swedish housing company, he got in contact with the chain of department stores Nordiska Kompagniet, discussing wallpaper and fabric designs for them. Financially and professionally supported by his wife Joana, who was a well-to-do artisan, he experimented with photographically transferring natural motifs such as flowers and leaves onto cloth. As one of the last projects of his career for the Danish National Bank will show, Jacobsen's interest in botany and nature in architecture was neither simply a pastime he undertook during his period of exile in Sweden, nor was it restricted to a formal imitation or reproduction.

In 1961, due to its increasing spatial demands, the Danish National Bank launched a closed competition for a new bank building, including new facilities for printing bank notes. The site designated for the project was a whole block in the centre of the Danish capital, bordered by Niels Juels Gade, Holmens Canal, Havnegade, and the harbour (Figure 9.2). The bank had then occupied a neo-Renaissance building by J.D. Herholdt (1913–1917), in a part of a block otherwise densely filled with five-story commercial and residential buildings. According to the competition programme, it was up to the architects to either preserve and include the Herholdt building into the new

Figure 9.3: Demolition of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

scheme or erase it and build from scratch. Jacobsen chose the latter option
(Figure 9.3, 9.4) and submitted a project consisting of two major volumes: a
one-story volume covering the entire block and a tall one.

The low volume forms a wedge-like basis on top of which the taller one,
a trapezoid-shaped complex, is positioned. This tall five-story volume en-
closes two interior courtyards with gardens. The entire complex was to be
surrounded by a marble wall which, when viewed from the outside, created
the base from which the colossal building volume would rise towards the
sky. To allow for the continuous functionality of the bank, a realisation of
the project in different stages was required in the competition brief. One of
the jury's reasons for awarding Jacobsen's scheme was that it was the only
one to completely meet the rather complex functional requirements of the
brief, another was 'its appearance in the city scape, its high spatial quali-
ties, its prolific use of materials and detailing as well as the garden architec-
ture'.[4] Once the winning scheme was published, it stimulated a controversial
public discussion, and it therefore took several years before construction
could get started. The primary reason for the controversy was that an entire
block of historical substance had to be demolished to realise the scheme.
In the end, Jacobsen was able to build as proposed in the competition, but

Figure 9.4: Demolition of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

in return, the National Bank agreed to compensate for the lost housing by building another housing block elsewhere in the city. As Jacobsen suddenly died during the process of realisation, he was not able to see his masterpiece completed. It was not until 1978 that the bank was finished by Hans Dissing and Otto Weitling, two of his former employees, who carried on Jacobsen's office after his sudden death.

This paper investigates empty space and the representation of enclosure and isolation in Jacobsen's design as an instrument to express power reaching from the urban level, over the building, all the way to the garden architecture. In the description of selected situations, the text furthermore analyses the use of photography as a means of representation and how it is used to emphasise the architect's intention when it comes to power, related to emptiness and enclosure in the building. At the same time, it aims to reveal that there is another dimension to emptiness and isolation in architecture. Emptiness as expressed in Jacobsen's scheme not only provides an opportunity to escape overstimulation and excessive consumption but also enacts contemplation and empowers us to reflect on what is essential and what is not. In that sense, it has the capacity to act as a means of transcendence.

The National Bank is a gigantic building, with about 48,000 m² of floor space, broken into four general facilities: a plant for printing money with adjacent workshops and laboratories; an additional staff area, consisting of a large banking hall and offices for the bank, supporting technical and staff facilities; a money-depositing space; and parking – as well as a roof garden and two interior courtyard gardens. Given the monolithic character of the building, which takes up an entire urban block, it seems absurd to talk about emptiness when discussing the project. Yet, in the mind of the ordinary Copenhagener, this massive block, which had to be anchored into the soil with the aid of adjustable steel anchors and an extra double floor with a built-in gravel ballast to allow the foundation to fight the natural up-ward pressure of the groundwater, leaves behind an empty spot. At the time the bank was built, Danish money was printed in the building's basement, and even today the building is subject to high security standards. With the exception of the entry hall, the building is not open to the general public. A three-metre-high perimeter wall several hundred metres in length marks the border between the bank facilities inside and the public space of the city outside. Thus, the architect chose to design the building as an enclave.

Pedestrians, cyclists, or car drivers who experience the bank from the ground level at closer range only see a continuous stone wall (Figure 9.5). From further away, the bank does not reveal anything of its interior either. The short façade on the north and south sides is divided into tall panels clad with the same precious Norwegian marble as the perimeter wall but clearly recessed from it. The panels are vertically separated by a slender concrete stud with recessed, narrow slits of glass on either side. Horizontally, the pan-el rests on a concrete bracket which supports a deeply recessed glass win-dow. The long façades on the west and east sides are covered with curtain walled glass panels following the same rhythm as the stone panels. The glass on all four sides is reflecting so that the building does not reveal anything of its inside through the façade. In its purely abstract, formal composition, as well as in its material property, it does not relate to the surroundings of the urban context either. Not only are you unable to physically enter the build-ing but you are also unable to see what takes place behind the perimeter wall and the façade (Figure 9.6).

The perimeter wall, much like the cladding of the façade, is beautiful in its pure simplicity but repellent at the same time. It clearly signals: pass by or stay away! In this kind of architecture, scenes devoid of people do not need to be created or staged – they naturally happen. If you were to

look for a place to meet with a friend, for example, you would not suggest meeting in front of that wall, because in its generic appearance, it is intangible in the sense that you could not make out any specific spot in front of it. Standing in front of it means completely exposing yourself, without any kind of cover or shelter. Surveillance enhances this condition, as the wall is equipped with cameras to monitor any activities in the bank's immediate surroundings. Just like in Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, those who watch cannot be seen and therefore have power over those who are being watched. Through the clear demarcation of inside and outside achieved by the wall and the façade, the building remains a secret. In the centre of the city of Copenhagen, the building constitutes an enclave for the very few who are entitled to access it because they work in it – and a void in the urban fabric for the rest of the population. Monumental in its size, volume, and appearance, it constitutes an absent centre of an intangible power.

To any Danish democrats, the power field which was symbolically created by positioning the National Bank face to face with Holmen Church, the Danish Parliament, and the Stock Market was appalling. When criticised for the building's monumental appearance, the architect supposedly confirmed this as an intentional design decision. After all, this was the nation's bank and not just any kind of building. The architect's position corresponded with the intention of the client – which was to show the National Bank's financial and political power, capable of affording and wanting to represent itself with such a monumental building. Protesters further criticised the

Figure 9.6: Façade of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

fact that, due to the necessary security standards, the bank was hermetical-
ly closed and therefore it could not contribute anything to public life in the
centre of the city. Seen from the outside, the architect had obviously created
a non-place in the heart of the city.

A further investigation of the National Bank on the inside of the perime-
ter wall with a focus on the aspect of emptiness suggests that we look at two
different places: the entrance hall (Figure 9.8) and the gardens (Figure 9.7).
Both roofs in the trapezoid building, which form the bottom of the two
courtyards, approximately 670 m² each, as well as the large roof over the
one-story building, are laid out as gardens. There is a watercolour drawing
by Arne Jacobsen of the garden in the courtyard of the northern side of the
five-story building, which reflects his idea of the garden as an isolated space.
In my analysis, I will therefore only concentrate on that garden because the
spatial boundaries for the one on the southern side are, on the one hand, ex-
actly the same. On the other, just like the large roof garden over the one-sto-
ry building, it was only created after Jacobsen's death and is therefore not
considered to be part of his original design. (I will subsequently refer to
this garden as 'Arne's garden', which is the term by which it is referred in
literature.)

Jacobsen's oeuvre as an architect goes beyond only designing build-ings, as he also designed furniture, carpets, fabrics, objects of daily use, and gardens. Therefore, his projects are often discussed as total works of art.[5] Related to the latter, there is an inherent aspect of control. In many of his projects, such as the Aarhus City Hall (1937–1942), Søholm housing, (1946–1950), or the Munkegaard School (1957), he gives special considera-tion to the relationship of the designed object to the surrounding garden landscape. In his own private house and garden in Klampenborg (1951),[6] for example, the building becomes the mediating device between the user and the environment, and the spatial design of the garden, with elements such as hedges, paths, rest areas, and views, reiterate the compositional logic of the house.[7] Thus, the garden is not just an appendix to the house or what is left over of the site but a natural extension of the architecture itself. The building and the garden form one coherent work: they reflect each other, impact one another, and are part of one bigger whole.

With Arne's garden at the National Bank, though, the architect takes a radically different approach. Arguably, private housing has different secu-rity standards than a bank building. Moreover, the particular design of this garden might be partially rooted in the fact that the space underneath the garden is in use, and therefore the roof only allowed for specific, short-root-ed planting, and from the beginning, there was a demand to keep the main-tenance of these spaces low. Yet I suggest looking beyond only functional aspects in the analysis of this space.

Looking at the building from the outside, the interior courtyards are in-visible, and there is no evidence of the garden's existence. Most inhabitants of Copenhagen do not even know of Arne's garden. Thus, the garden and the building are two separate entities, completely independent from each other. The façade of the building in the courtyards becomes the demarcation line which encloses the garden. It is fully climatised, windows are not operable, and sun blinds move automatically; there is no physical connection between the offices and the garden in the courtyard. With the exception of those who occasionally maintain the garden, it is devoid of people. The garden's phys-ical relation to the building is restricted to the functional aspect of bringing light into the surrounding office buildings and providing space for the air-ducts, five cylindrical objects on either side, coming up from the workspaces underneath it. But the grid of the building and the rhythm in the façade, for example, do not in any way correspond with the orderly system of the garden. This becomes most obvious in the watercolour the architect made
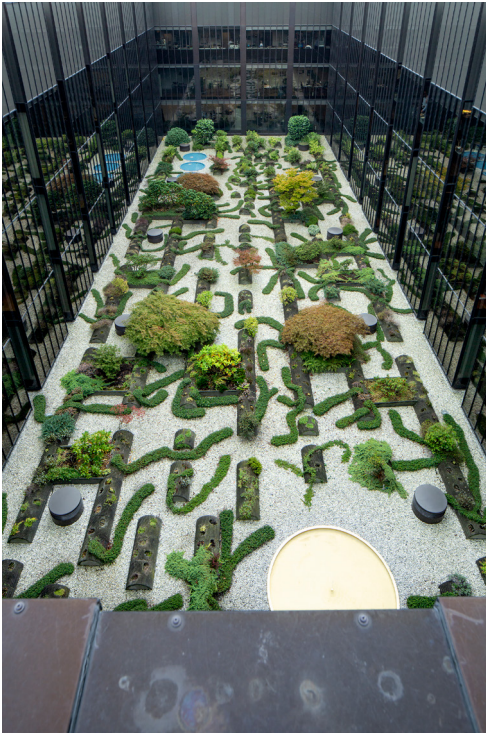
Figure 9.7: Interior garden of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

to present his idea for the garden, in which the building itself is practically absent.

The garden itself is an abstract composition of green-coloured objects on the background of a light grey grid. Given the low height of the plants, the garden almost seems two dimensional and is reminiscent of Japanese zen gardens: spatially enclosed, stylised compositions of stones and plants. On either of the long sides, cylindrical objects covering the ventilation ducts – five to the left and five to the right – seemingly nail down what looks like a carpet laid out in the space of the courtyard rather than a three-dimensional composition. Seven long, parallel rows of half-cylindrical corrugated pipes are distributed over the gridded surface. These cannelured pipes are reminiscent of overgrown fragments of ancient columns, as can be found in ruins of classical temples. Between them, there are rectangular beds with plants. Three small circular pools on one side and a large white one on the other maintain the balance of the asymmetrical composition.

There is little difference between Jacobsen's plan drawing and the realised garden. Even after half a century, the plants in the garden seem not to have changed much, compared to their state in the 1970s. In this project, Jacobsen's view of nature is completely unsentimental, as he treats the elements of this garden like building materials, such as brick and metal. His plan drawing of the garden is architectural, as it is characterised by order and measure. The plants are independently integrated in the totality of the architectural composition and become an integral part of it. Nature comes in as an extension of the regularity of the architectonic composition: by

filling the cylindrical objects with earth and furnishing them with holes for plants, he controls the growth of the plants that grow out of it. Arne's garden does not represent nature itself, but rather the architect's interpretation of it. The growth of the plants is controlled and at the same time limited by the distribution of earth or substrate in the pipes. As the garden itself is not accessible, the windows in the façade cannot be operated by the clerks, and since the sun blinds between the exterior and interior glass are automatically regulated, Arne's garden represents a particular controlled, secure, and surveilled zone. Both the interior office climate and the exterior garden are highly controlled spaces, which do not give the user any authority to manipulate the environment.

Thinking of this garden as an empty space seems incorrect at first sight, because of course, there are objects and plants in the garden. The careful orchestration of Arne's garden and the absence of humans makes it appear empty, almost uncanny. It is impossible to enter the garden and physically experience it by smelling the flowers or touching the soil, for example. It is an isolated space, and the power to access it is beyond those who have their offices next to it and who might want to use it. Clerks can only enjoy the garden by looking at it, recalling the idea of looking at an artwork that is framed. The frame for this artwork is the building's façade, which constitutes the demarcation. The border between the building as the outside world and the garden as the isolated space is not only defined by the physical boundary of the façade but also emphasised through the choice of colour, material, and the effect of light. The glass façade is dark in colour, and its technically refined material is reflecting. In contrast to this, the dominant colour in the garden is the greyish white of the pebbles, which reflects the light into the offices. Given its enclosure, the garden itself is out of reach. The only way to enjoy it is by looking at it, and this view is a purely aesthetic experience of the garden. Photographs of Arne's garden usually present it from above, from the bird's-eye perspective, never in the way an office worker would see it. The reason for that may lie in the simple fact that to take a picture from the office, the photographer would have to shoot through the window, which is conventionally not done. But the absence of any depictions representing the garden from an individual's point of view makes it an absolutely private experience.

The walled garden recalls paradise, an isolated, enclosed space. Etymologically, the word 'paradise' is derived from the Persian *paira-daeza*, which describes an enclosed, walled, or fenced-in garden, a reserved space which may be detached from the surrounding world by either water, plants, or
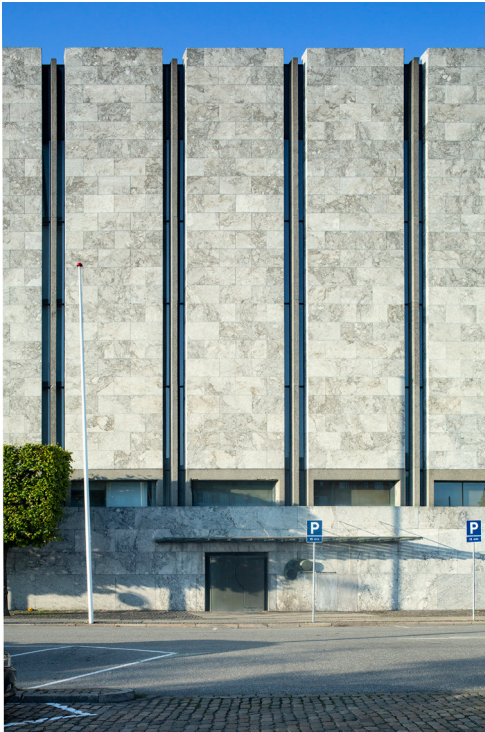
Figure 9.8: Entrance of the
National Bank, Copenhagen
(© Jens Frederiksen)

constructed walls. This kind of absolute enclosure gives meaning to something which is completely different from the outside world. The wall is not only a material boundary but also a frame which distinguishes the place from its surroundings and separates it from the viewer. The distance then enables the viewer to visually experience it and at the same time allows for contemplation. In this way, the value of the garden lies in its transcendence rather than its recreational effect.

The only space of the entire complex that is publicly accessible is the bank's trapezoid-shaped lobby. Visitors access it through a metal-clad door which blends well into the perimeter wall. The entrance is discretely marked with a thin metal roof, hovering above the door to protect the visitors from rain, in case they have to wait before being admitted. The door is modestly dimensioned, with no extra public space in front of it which would signify that this is a building of greater significance. Visitors do not enter directly but have to pass through an interior bulletproof glass sluice. The enormous lobby, measuring 100 m² with a height of 20 m, is furnished with nothing but a workstation for the custodian and seating for people waiting to be admitted by a clerk. The two showcases, featuring a selection of Danish coins and a big gold bar, were added later and seem lost in the gigantic space. A sculptural staircase reaches over the full height of the space. The furnishing of the lobby is reduced to an absolute minimum and the space feels completely empty (Figure 9.9, 9.10).

The material property of the interior corresponds with its reduced furnishing. Both the glass sluice and the staircase speak the same formal

and structural language. They are not massive but light in construction. The stairs are suspended from the ceiling by means of a steel structure, reduced to minimal dimensions, combined with glass fillings to achieve a see-through effect. To a non-expert eye, the way it floats in space almost looks mystical, as if supported by an invisible, absent power. Walls and floors are clad with the same marble as the building's exterior. There is no decoration or ornamentation on the surfaces. The absence of any kind of signage or symbols for orientation suggests that the code of behaviour inside the space is self-evident, governed by nothing but the architecture itself. Emptiness, expressed by an absence of form, signs, and symbols, thus becomes an index to the unrepresentable. The lobby is ruled by abstraction as a means of demonstrating the presence of absolutes.

An employee who guided me through the building during one of my research visits last year confessed to me: 'Back then, when I first came here for my job interview, I was sitting in this lobby waiting to be picked up and I thought: "Synes at her har man styr på tingene!"', which translates to something like: 'It seems that things are in control here!' How is this atmosphere of control, or the sense of a passive anonymous 'steering', represented in architectural terms? Apart from a distinct minimalism in material and structural composition, the above-described emptiness in the space directly relates to power, control, and the protocol taking place inside the lobby. It starts when you are admitted, because it is the custodian who exercises control over who is granted access. Moreover, power is executed by controlling the visitor's movements, who for a moment gets caught in the in-between space of the bulletproof glass sluice. Only after the exterior door has closed completely does the second one open, and the visitor can enter the lobby. Most importantly, though, given the clarity of the floor plan with no extra corners or other spaces that may hide or conceal, the lobby provides maximum exposure. The custodian's counter is positioned in such a way that it is possible to oversee any access – for example, the entrance to the outside, the gate to the bank hall, the door openings to offices on various levels. Thus, the spatial composition of the custodian's place allows them – in a way that is similar to Bentham's panopticon – to have full visual control of the entire lobby. A difference from the case of the panopticon, though, is that the custodian is not exposed but acts from a niche, which creates an imbalance in the power relation between the person being watched and the one watching. In addition, any movement inside the space is strictly orchestrated. After being registered by the custodian, you are asked to use the seating in

Figure 9.9: Interior lobby of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

the centre of the lobby, where you are picked up by the person expecting you. Minimal distraction and maximal exposure are granted.

The fact that the lobby as well as the garden are highly controlled is not unusual for places that demand high security. What becomes apparent in the employee's statement, though, is the sense of an absent power. This is especially apparent in the images of the entrance hall in publications. Most often, the huge space is represented by two images: one seen from the perspective of a person entering the space, looking up to the stairs which lead to the different spaces that for visitors are only accessible upon admission – and the other one from the stairs looking down at the entrance. This choice of different perspective is not a coincidence, as it clearly communicates a condition of power, which the bank as an institution has over the general public – the visitor. In addition, due to the layout of the floor plan, the entrance is located on the narrow and the staircase on the wide side – visitors have the sensation that the space unfolds and becomes larger when, upon entry, they look towards the bank offices, which are hidden behind the wall and can only be accessed by means of the staircase. In contrast to entering a space that unfolds and becomes larger, on the way out you get the rather negative sensation of walking through a funnel.

The concept of power in the building of the National Bank reaches beyond what is enacted and therefore visible in the lobby as well as in the garden. The eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke stated in his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime*

Figure 9.10: Interior lobby of the National Bank, Copenhagen (© Jens Frederiksen)

and Beautiful (*1757*): 'I know of nothing which is sublime which is not connected to the sense of power'.[8] As previously explained, the National Bank represents its sense of power within the city as well as in the building itself. Though when it comes to the discussion of twentieth-century architecture, especially that belonging to the functionalist period, any mention of the sublime seems to have been consciously avoided, maybe even repressed by designers and theorists, who wanted to distance themselves from the past, especially the classical period and historical eclecticism. Most obviously, the radical break with the history of the discipline which the early twentieth-century avant-garde architects called for was paralleled by a change of the terms of the aesthetic theory.

In opposition to that thought, phenomenologist Alberto Pérez-Gómez claims that for architecture to be understood as meaningful requires a 'metaphysical dimension' which 'reveals the presence of Being, [or] the presence of the invisible within the world of the everyday'.[9] I argue that in the architecture of the bank, this metaphysical dimension – in other words, the sublime – is created through its monumentality, formal abstraction, the manipulation of scale, and the control of light and sound. It has previously been pointed out that there is a dramatic shift of scale between the monolithic bank building and its surrounding, rather diverse urban context. This shift is continued between the outside and inside: entering the building comes with a moment of surprise – it is not only mentally but also physically moving. When passing through the exterior door, which relates more or less to the dimensions of the human body, one would by no means expect

a lobby of such scale. The sheer dimensions of the space are overwhelming. Moreover, the emptiness and absence of any major public activity in such a vast space – not least because regular employees are required to use a different entrance – leaves the visitor astonished. Inevitably, your body feels small.

Isolation is another important aspect in the building's metaphysical dimension. Upon entering the lobby, the visitor leaves the outside behind and enters a new world. Memories of entering a church, a monastery, or any other space of religious cult come to mind. Due to its isolation from the outside, this 'other world' of the lobby is completely silent. Time seems to stand still, even freeze. Such a condition of spatial enclosure almost automatically urges the visitor to remain silent; speaking might potentially be conceived as disturbance. The silence is paralleled by a visual enclosure and a control of light. Thin slits in the marble façade allow light to percolate in but allow no visual connection between inside and outside. The slits become shards of light, stretching over the entire height of the space, providing the interior with daylight. The light entering through the shards is reflected on the opposite side and has a white-washing effect on the stone wall, affecting the entire height of the 20-metre-high space. At the bottom of the exterior wall, there are five artificially lit niches with yellow and orange woollen tapestries, which spread warm light into the space. Similar to the use of light in a church, the source is not revealed; it directs attention and seemingly symbolises the physical presence of the divine.

The attraction of Jacobsen's National Bank lies in the appeal it has as a building founded on the notion of simple elegance. The emptiness is commonly discussed as an inherent feature of Jacobsen's purely functional, minimalist architecture. In the case of the entrance hall, this is a space reduced to nothing but its intrinsic purpose of entering and waiting, and in the case of the garden, a space of pure contemplation. Emptiness goes far beyond aspects of function and purpose, though, as it incorporates a metaphysical dimension, capable of evoking the sublime. The significance of the sublime as a subject of architecture lies in the conceptual reach of its spiritual dimension. The fact that there is no direct visual connection between the inside and the outside of the entrance hall, no infiltration of sounds and smells, prevents distractions. Moreover, the introverted atmosphere in the entrance hall, as well as in the interior garden, enacts contemplation. Subsequently, this space of isolation, watching, and controlling offers another dimension which is at the same time spiritual and sublime.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the text were produced through agreement between the author and editors.
2. 'If it were possible to have a life absolutely free from every feeling of sin, what a terrifying vacuum it would be.' Cesare Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere. Diario 1935-1950* quoted in: *The Burning Brand: Diaries 1935–1950*, trans. A. E. Murch (New York: Walker, 1961).
3. Peter Thule Kristensen and Martin Søberg, *Arne Jacobsen's Own House – Strandvejen 413* (Odense: Realdania By & Byg, 2020), https://www.realdaniabyogbyg.org/media/xokpkfjs/ arne-jacobsens-own-house-strandvejen-413.pdf.
4. Danmarks Nationalbank, *National Bankens Bygning, Danmarks National Bank* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalbank, 2016): 19.
5. Toshihiko Suzuki and Yukio Yoshimura, *Arne Jacobsen* (Tokyo: Toto, 2014): 10.
6. Kristensen and Søberg, *Arne Jacobsen's Own House*.
7. This becomes especially obvious in his watercolors, where he presents his buildings in their natural surroundings; see Poul Erik Tøjner, *Atlas: Arne Jacobsens akvareller* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 2002).
8. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (New York: Garland, 1971): 59.
9. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architectural Representation in the Age of Simulacra* (Copenhagen: SKALA 20, 1990): 42.

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Chapter 10
Ornament as a Regulatory System: Photographic Representations of Field Hospitals During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Klaudija Sabo

10.1 Field Hospitals

Press photographs of field hospitals from around the world that were made during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic show pictorial and aesthetic similarities in their transregional conception. The central perspective visible in the photographs collectively emphasises the systematic and homogeneous arrangement of the seemingly endless rows of beds, partitions, and chairs, which are thus more reminiscent of ornamental structures than rooms. Details lose their importance as a result of the chosen perspective, while the ornamental patterns and structures are highlighted. The rhythm of the lines is given by the beds and the recognisable formations in the photographs. The spaces shown in the photographs were transformed from their original function as sports facilities, exhibition halls, or concert halls to temporary field hospitals or reception camps for those infected with Covid-19. The objective was to relieve hospitals and their critically stretched infrastructure during the early days of the pandemic.[1]

These homogeneous images of field hospitals can be understood as a kind of figure for a socio-political condition. They mark a turning point, which in its universal symbolic function, reflects the state of emergency of a society in a pandemic. To approach this phenomenon of globally repeating illustrations of field hospitals during the pandemic, it is crucial to deepen our

understanding of two specific aspects: the formal-aesthetic dimension of the photographs and the socio-historical dimensions the portrayed spaces imply.

10.2 Perspective

The slightly elevated central perspective used by the photographers generates a top view or supervision over the bed camps stretching out into the depths of the photographed space. In the exhibition hall in Belgrade, Serbia's capital, the formation of beds resembles well-ordered mosaics accentuated by the formation of soldiers standing in between (Figure 10.1). This is mirrored by the imposing and graphically constructed dome of the exhibition hall. The dome in turn thus acts as a counterpoint to the mosaic formation on the ground. The photograph of the field hospital in the exhibition hall in Tehran startles the viewer with its contrasts of colour (Figure 10.2). The repetitive floral pattern of the duvets loosens the strict ordering of the steel beds while being an ornamental element themselves. Coloured markings on the floor indicate the intended routes and paths to be taken by patients and staff. The photograph of the transformed Liacouras Center in Philadelphia

Figure 10.1: The exhibition hall in Belgrade was converted into a field hospital for Covid-19 patients. (© Marko Djurica, Reuters)

Figure 10.2: A temporary hospital for Covid-19 patients was set up by the Iranian army at the international exhibition centre in northern Teheran, Iran, on Thursday, 26 March 2020. (© Ebrahim Noroozi)

again illustrates the symmetrical layout of the bed storage facilities, blending into a concise pattern through its photographic oversight and broken only by the worker walking through the image (Figure 10.3.).

The fundamental characteristic shared by all these pictures is the central perspective of photographic composition, where all lines running into the depths of the space seemingly meet in one single vanishing point on the horizontal line.[2] This use of perspective generates a contraction of the depicted objects because the lines running into the depths are depicted as shorter. Therefore, the beds in the foreground appear oversized, while those further behind shrink in the direction of the vanishing point. On the other hand, the bird's-eye view, primarily seen in photographic images of the field hospitals, is created by shifting the horizon line upwards; the line can also be shifted in the other direction, establishing the so-called worm's-eye view.

The central perspective is an innovation made in the Renaissance.[3] During this period, for the first time, artists managed to depict objects in a painting behaving, in the eye of the viewer, as in reality. One of the first artists and architects to use central perspective to depict a room that looked like it was before the viewer was Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446). One of his

Figure 10.3: A worker walks through a federal medical station as it is set up as a field hospital at Temple University's Liacouras Center in Philadelphia, 30 March 2020. (© Matt Rourke)

architectural designs for a church is the first example of central perspective. Following this achievement, he also laid out the rules for depicting three-dimensional spaces in two dimensions using the central perspective.[4]

Following the Renaissance, the use of central perspective for pictures of all forms increasingly became a figurative norm. Because of this, one can assume a standardisation of the perception of pictures. At the minimum, there is a certain expectation we all hold in respect to the depiction of objects and space in art, photography, and cinema.[5] A unique feature of images using the central perspective and its modifications by way of the bird's-eye and worm's-eye perspective is the ability to directly involve the viewer. 'Even computer games and virtual realities like Second Life are commonly depicted using the central perspective'.[6] Accordingly, one is to understand one's self as part of the game. Following this train of thought, the photographic representation of field hospitals for Covid-19 patients allows us to be invested and interested in the depiction through the use of central perspective, suggesting a direct participation and transposing the viewer into the depicted space. Furthermore, the use of central perspective conveys an impression of symmetry and order, amplifying the effect of the meticulously arranged beds and the resulting geometric formations.

10.3 Ornament and Order

The arrangement of the beds, the uniform design of the partitions, the mattresses and duvets lying on the beds, together with the corresponding perspective not only have a geometric effect but moreover that of an ornament. Art historian Sabine B. Vogel states that ornaments are patterns that 'structure spaces, tying the individual elements into an arrangement, turning components into compounds and lacing them within a frame'.[7] This is also supported by the etymology of the word 'ornament', hailing from the Latin terms *ornamentum* (furnishing, equipment or adornment, decoration) and *ornare* (to arrange, to equip, to furnish, to decorate or adorn), which are themselves derived from the preform *ordo* (row, order).[8] The temporary field hospitals, with their strict and formal arrangement of beds and partitions, generated exactly this 'order' within a defined space. Every bed has a defined distance to the next, and through their sheer mass, an ornamental pattern emerges. Vogel even takes this one step further, maintaining the opinion that 'the effect is for the most part fascinating, because the individual element is integrated, safeguarded and neutralized within a superordinate whole'.[9] This also means that if one detail of the symmetric evenness gets out of joint, the whole order is toppled.

In his acclaimed treatise on ornament and masses, Siegfried Kracauer also discusses ornament as a functional part of choreography and how the ornament in this instance overwrites the individual to leave it behind as a fraction of a wider figure. In the above-mentioned treatise, Kracauer establishes a link between the abstract figure of mass ornaments and the social situation and social changes of his time. He describes the phenomenon of the Tiller Girls, a popular dance revue group in the 1920s, as a 'performance of identical geometric exactitude'[10] and regards their onstage appearance as an indication for the self-organisation of masses to ornaments, a building pattern that happens in stadiums as well as in cabarets. The mentioned ornaments of masses appear like aerial photographs and geometric diagrams in which the organic moment is erased, leaving the ensemble behind as an accurate order of parallel lines, in which the individual is consumed by the abstract ornament. Therefore, in Kracauer's understanding, the Tiller Girls are a streamlined conglomerate of ornamentally arranged legs and other fragmented body parts who symbolise the relations of production in his time. They embody an ornament of the masses, suggesting a rationalisation of bodies and bodily movements also to be found in the fragmented

workflow in factories and offices.[11] Especially the assembly line and the Taylor system are seen as the basic figures of capitalistic rationalisation in this context.[12] His interest in the Tiller Girls and his sociological reflections on the ornament of masses correspond with a general and fundamental 'shifting in the form of society'[13] during the time of the Weimar Republic. This specific zeitgeist was effectively coined by a consciousness for physicality and form expressed through formative masses, marching columns, gigantic sport events, standardised identity elements, or uniform-wearing people, especially in metropolitan areas. All these tendencies mirror the basic properties of the ornament as structure and a symmetry-driven principle.[14]

The rational and detailed arrangement of orderly rows of beds inside the field hospitals have a comparable effect to that of the Tiller Girls described by Kracauer. Instead of a choreography of bodily movements creating the ornamental performance of the Tiller Girls, the field hospitals use scientifically established rules for optimal distances and distribution of space to establish ornamental patterns. Compared to the Tiller Girls, the body is naturally less involved in a studied choreography but rather bound locally to the assigned bed. The ornaments of masses resemble geometric diagrams. The ensemble becomes a formation of parallel lines in which the individual is dissolved in the greater abstract ornament. Following Kracauer's analysis of the ornament, both the Tiller Girls and the field hospitals for Covid-19 patients can be understood as a symbol for social change. Burghart Schmidt summarises the chequered history of the ornament with the following pointed thesis: 'A love of ornaments is a symptom of particularly deep crisis'.[15] Vogel supports this as well when she writes that the ornament can be understood as an indicator for social change.[16] Expanding on this, she remarks that ornaments are increasingly used in the contemporary art world as a means of criticism: of totalitarian political systems, standardised patterns of behaviour, and expectations and conventions.[17] To further deepen our understanding of this aspect, it is necessary to elaborate which socio-political dimensions are found in the negotiated photographic representations of field hospitals and how expectations and conventions are being enforced by the use of ornaments.

10.4 Space and Technocracy

In his work *The Production of Social Space*, sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre provides further insights into the socio-political construction of space. Starting from the assumption that spaces are made and do not emerge coincidentally, he understands space as a social product that has to be understood as flexible and always changing dimension.[18] The term 'product' as well as 'production' is in his diction directly linked to the Marxist concept of practice: everything people are bringing forth is production. Accordingly, not only material wares are products of the social space but also knowledge, or even emotions.

Lefebvre imagines the social production of space as a dialectic act combining three components: material (concrete space), knowledge (abstract space), and meaning (lived space). For the description of the material component, he uses the terms 'spatial practice' or 'perceived space', for the knowledge component the terms 'representation of space' or 'conceived space', and for the meaning component the terms 'spaces of representation' or 'lived space'.[19] Following his understanding of space, there are different 'spaces' in different historical moments. This raises the question: How is our contemporary production of space depicted in photographic representations of field hospitals for Covid-19 patients?

Lefebvre's second component, 'abstract space', provides useful insights and can deepen our understanding regarding field hospitals. He defines his concept of abstract space as 'the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers, and social engineers, as certain types of artists with a scientific orientation – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived'.[20] It therefore pertains to all who compose a picture of the world for us and create 'concepts' of social processes or, in short, all who are abstracting space in one way or the other.[21] Abstract space is 'shot through with a knowledge [*savoir*] i.e. a mixture of understanding [*connaissance*] and ideology – which is always relative and in the process of change'.[22] For our understanding of the depictions of field hospitals, Lefebvre's term 'technocratic subdividers' can act as a 'hinge' between theory and concrete examples. Technocracy (the rule of experts) is the idea that all actions, especially political ones, should be taken on a foundation of science and technological knowledge. Technocracy stands therefore for all those utopian programmes that demand a 'fundamental restructuring of political rule'[23] in favour of a dominion of experts. Jacques Ellul describes

technocracy as 'the rule of a small group of the technically educated'.[24] Even broader is Frank Fischer's description of the objective of the technocratic utopia, which he describes as 'a system of governance in which technically trained experts rule by virtue of their specialized knowledge and position in dominant political and economic institutions'.[25]

The idea of technocracy as a new system for states and countries arises from 'situations in which genuine social institutions are thrust into a crisis'[26] – whether they are in an actual crisis, or only appear to be. Technocracy is also thought to be an answer to a system of rule incapable of keeping up with the necessities of modern society. As a system of rule, technocracy would endanger democratic processes because it regards scientific results as authoritative and paramount. Although the last comprehensive debate on technocracy in Germany dates to the end of the 1980ies, for Sophie Haring[27] the idea of technocracy and its debate has gained new momentum in the media as a result of the ongoing pandemic.[28] Recent news articles, for example, weigh the extent to which we are still living in a democracy and not in a technocracy when courses of action are determined by epidemiologists and scientists. Another indicator of a probable rise of technocracy can be seen in the formerly unthinkable social prominence of personas like virologists Anthony Fauci in the United States, Christian Drosten in Germany, and Norbert Nowotny in Austria.

The technocratic understanding and representation of society may be transferred to the micro level when the topic is narrow enough, such as regarding field hospitals and their photographic representation, presented here. The foreground is dominated by rational, effective planning and goal-oriented execution based on scientific findings.[29] In the framework of its conception, space is reduced to one single function, aiming for behavioural control and regulation, very much in line with Lefebvre's description of abstract space. This is the reason why Lefebvre states that abstract space tends to produce homogeneity, a certain alignment of individuals.[30] Although the inherent aim for homogeneity remains when an abstract space becomes real and inhabited by people, the result is never more than a tendency towards an alignment of individuals. This is because the lived space developed from abstract space is populated by various groups made up of individuals who interact with the space as well as with themselves. Usually, the individuals inhabiting the formerly abstract space are too varied in their backgrounds, aims, and behaviours to achieve homogeneity.[31]

10.5 Space and Control

In Lefebvre's understanding, abstract space possesses a regulatory function for behavioural control.[32] At the same time, abstract space has the task to organise space, regulate the flow of goods and people, and control networks.[33] Field hospitals must fulfil a rather similar set of expectations: the space is meticulously partitioned, the beds are arranged in a rather strict order, and the runways are thoroughly marked and set. But how is control exercised over the patients inside of the space of a field hospital to maintain a certain level of order? To answer this question and to better understand the practice of organisation and control of space, we can turn to Michel Foucault. In his work *Discipline and Punish*, he elucidates, among other things, the quarantine measures during a plague outbreak in the seventeenth century. His diagrammatic thinking leads to a contemplation on the organisation of quarantine space that is remotely linked to Lefebvre's abstract space. Some of the terms used by Foucault for his examination of the above-mentioned topic are the partition of space, detailed inspection, and order. He describes the qualities of space during the quarantine at the high point of the plague outbreak:

> This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, [. . .] in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.[34]

For Foucault, the organisation of space during the examined quarantine is a compact model of the 'disciplinary mechanism'[35] where every movement is controlled and documented. The argumentation in *Discipline and Punish* leads to the theory that from the seventeenth century onwards, societies began to construct a new kind of power regiment. Foucault calls this regiment 'disciplinary power'. The inside of quarantine space is defined by the absence of privacy and does not allow any form of retreat. Foucault explains: 'Each individual is fixed in his place. And if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion, or punishment'.[36]

The quarantine spaces shown in the photographic depictions were developed by the respective governments of cities in which the depicted field hospitals are located. They were created to provide the possibility for

infected people with mild symptoms to be cared and provided for outside of their private homes. With this construct, governments hoped to relieve pressure on regular hospitals. The field hospitals shown in the photographs are not so much created to intern people against their will but to give an alternative possibility to receive care for those who need it. In most cases, the use of the field hospitals was and is a free decision, although there were exceptions.

Nevertheless, it is rather obvious, considering Foucault's concept, that the spaces shown in the photographs are created to be anonymous and easy to control with regard to movement and general behaviour. Although some of the field hospitals depicted use partitions, they are essentially open spaces and allow for a view of the entire area due to their surrounding structure. Because of this structural openness, no movement or change can be missed – whether by the staff or by the patients themselves – everyone is 'fixed to his place', to use Foucault's words. This medical surveillance of disease and infection is, in his theory, bound to be accompanied by other forms of (disciplinary) controls. Therefore, according to Foucault, the given space must be rigorously structured and closed.[37]

Hospitals in port cities are a focus point of Foucault's analysis. These hospitals have a long-standing history of implementing quarantine measures. Usually, this meant to isolate the ill and those suspected to be ill and to treat or observe them in remote spaces. One of the first documented quarantine measures was carried out by the Dalmatian city of Ragusa (today's Dubrovnik).[38] In 1377, when the plague was already raging in certain parts of Europe, the magistrate of the then important trading hub and port city of Ragusa mandated that 'foreign ships' not be allowed to enter the harbour to safeguard the population from the spreading disease. Only if they waited under surveillance for thirty days on the nearby rocky island of Mrkan, or in Cavtat on the mainland, were they to be cleared, provided no symptoms were found. If the merchants and sailors displayed no symptoms after these thirty days, they were allowed to enter the city and sell their wares.[39] Later, a permanent quarantine station was constructed in Ragusa between 1627 and 1647. The so-called Lazaretto was an ensemble of ten buildings with separate entrances, its own water supply, and its own staff of doctors, priests, and nurses.[40] From 1468, the infected and those suspected to be ill were also interned on different islands in Venice. Following this, quarantine facilities were constructed in many major ports and trading hubs throughout Europe. Foucault views the development of disciplinary measures in these

quarantine stations as resulting from a fear not necessarily of the disease but of 'people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder'.[41]

10.6 Conclusion

The photographic representation of field hospitals from the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic can be understood as a microcosm representative of the age of the pandemic. The field hospitals explored in this paper present a fragment of the much more extensive measures taken to combat the pandemic globally. At the same time, they open a window into the microcosm of specific spaces, in which the infected are separated from society and treated in isolation. The transnational aesthetic arrangement of these photographs created by the use of perspective and enforced by the geometric formation of the beds allows recognisable ornamental patterns to appear. The individuals for whom the beds were intended are subsumed into the organised ornamental space, absorbed by the mass of ornament and the system of order established to combat the virus and safeguard the patients. The ornamental nature of this system of order entails that the breach of the ornamental pattern also breaches the order and, with it, the system established and maintained during the pandemic to fight it. The quarantine space – in this instance, the field hospital – is therefore not only an image representing the pandemic but also one representing political (technocratic) agency driven by strict rationality and, in a broader sense, the desire to enforce a specific form of control and order on social space under the premise of containing the infection.

Notes

1. This is in contrast to the permanently built quarantine stations in the Renaissance during and after the Black Death – for instance, those at Dubrovnik, one of the earliest known quarantine stations built by seafaring companies to keep infectious diseases out of the city; Vesna Miović, 'Life in the Quarantine. Lazaretto at Ploče During the Republic', in *Lazaretto in Dubrovnik. Beginning of Quarantine Regulation in Europe*, ed. Ante Milošević (Dubrovnik: Institute for the Restoration of Dubrovnik, 2018): 13–48.
2. Friedrich Kotz, 'Von der Entdeckung der Zentralperspektive zur Augmented Reality. Wie Mediatisierung funktioniert', in *Mediatisierte Welten Forschungsfelder und Beschreibungsansätze*, eds. Andreas Hepp and Friedrich Kotz (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2012): 27–59.

3. Primitive forms of perspective depictions can be found as early as prehistory, in cave paintings, but the Renaissance was the first time in history when a consequent central perspective and the mathematically correct use of vanishing points were consistently used by artists. Maximilian Weinzierl, 'Eine Frage der Perspektive', *Color Foto/Fotocomunity* 2 (2018): 5.

4. Leonhard Schmeiser, *Die Erfindung der Zentralperspektive und die Entstehung der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft* (Munich: Fink, 2002).

5. Kotz, 'Von der Entdeckung der Zentralperspektive zur Augmented Reality. Wie Mediatisierung funktioniert': 30.

6. Kotz, 'Von der Entdeckung der Zentralperspektive zur Augmented Reality. Wie Mediatisierung funktioniert': 30.

7. Sabine Vogel, 'Vom Widerspruch im Ornament', in *Die Macht des Ornaments*, eds. Agnes Husslein-Arco and Sabine B. Vogel (Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2009): 12.

8. *Duden, Das Herkunftswörterbuch. Etymologie der deutschen Sprache*, ed. Dudenredaktion, vol. 7 (Mannheim, Leipzig, Vienna, and Zurich: Dudenverlag, 2007): 576.

9. Vogel, 'Vom Widerspruch im Ornament': 12.

10. Siegfried Kracauer, *Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977): 51.

11. Kracauer, *Ornament der Masse*: 59, 51.

12. Jacob Joachim, 'Ornament und Raum. Worringer, Jünger, Kracauer', in *Raumkonstruktionen in der Moderne. Kultur-Literatur-Film*, ed. Sigrid Lange (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2001): 155.

13. 'Formwandel der Öffentlichkeit'; Werner Faulstich, *Die Kultur der 20er Jahre* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2008): 15.

14. Evelyn Echle, *Ornamentale Oberflächen. Spurensuche zu einem ästhetischen Phänomen des Stummfilms* (Marburg: Schüren, 2018). Contemporary photographers like Cyril Porchet, Andreas Gursky, and Shirin Neshat have been using the ornament and its powerful implications regarding aesthetics as well as potential criticism of social deformities up to today.

15. 'Ornamentfreude ist Symptom für besonders tiefe Krisen'; Burghardt Schmidt, 'Gründe zum heutigen Wieder-Interesse am Ornament', in *Political Patterns. Ornament im Wandel: ifaGalerie, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Berlin, 8. Juli bis 3. Oktober 2011*, ed. Sabine B. Vogel (Berlin: Berlin Kulturtransfers #3, 2011): 84.

16. Vogel, 'Vom Widerspruch im Ornament': 10.

17. Vogel, 'Vom Widerspruch im Ornament': 12.

18. 'We come to think in terms of spatiality, and so to fetishize space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities, where the trap lay in exchange, and the error was to consider "things" in isolation, as "things in themselves"'. With this, Lefebvre refers to the already established relational reference that in his opinion is to be considered in regard to the production of space; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991): 90.

19. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*: 38–39.

20. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*: 41.

21. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*: 38.

22. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*: 41.

23. Thomas Saretzki, 'Technokratie, Technokratiekritik und das Verschwinden der Gesellschaft. Zur Diskussion um das andere politische Projekt der Moderne', in *Politikwissenschaft als kritische Theorie: Festschrift für Kurt Lenk*, ed. Michael Greven (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1994): 355.

24. 'Herrschaft einer kleinen Gruppe technischer Gebildeter'; Gottfried Rickert, *Technokratie und Demokratie. Zum Technokratieproblem in der Staatstheorie einschließlich des Europarechts* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe 2, Rechtswissenchaft: 1983): 9.

25. Frank Fischer, *Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise* (London: Sage, 1990): 17.

26. 'Situationen, in denen genuin gesellschaftliche Institutionen in eine Krise greaten'; Saretzki, 'Technokratie, Technokratiekritik und das Verschwinden der Gesellschaft. Zur Diskussion um das andere politische Projekt der Moderne': 361.

27. Sophie Haring, 'Herrschaft der Experten oder Herrschaft des Sachzwangs?: Technokratie als politikwissenschaftliches Problem', *ZfP Zeitschrift für Politik Jahrgang* 57, no. 3 (2010): 261.

28. Part of the debate is led by daily newspapers and is obvious in the choice of titles: Gregor Dotzauer, 'Coronavirus zwischen Demokratie und Technokratie', *Tagesspiegel*, 6 April 2020, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/coronavirus-zwischen-demokratie-und-technokratie-warum-wir-nicht-nur-auf-experten-hoeren-duerfen/25713026.html; Anders Indset, 'Beginn einer Technokratie, Das Leben nach Covid 19', *Handelsblatt*, 24 March 2020, https://www.handelsblatt.com/meinung/gastbeitraege/expertenrat/anders-indset/expertenrat-anders-indset-beginn-einer-technokratie-das-leben-nach-covid-19/25674772.html?ticket=ST-3689772-qhfmjHygX1xImdb19SRf-ap1; Thomas Walli, 'Politik und Wissenschaft: Eine schwierige Beziehung', *DerStandard*, 12 March 2021, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000124970898/politik-und-wissenschaft-eine-schwierige-beziehung.

29. For Christian Schmid, Lefebvre's establishment of abstract space is closely interwoven with the state and its use of space as a privileged means for the achievement of its rational. Abstract space therefore seems to be foremost a space of statehood and bureaucratic order which, for Lefebvre, is realised in state capitalism as well as in state socialism; Christian Schmid, *Stadt, Raum und Gesellschaft. Henri Lefebvre und die Theorie der Produktion des Raumes* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2010): 264.

30. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*: 36.

31. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*: 287.

32. Karin Sommer, 'Raumproduktion im frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Zwei architekturtheoretische Diskurs-Positionen im Lichte der Raumtheorie Henri Lefebvres' (PhD diss., Universität zu Köln, 2010): 38.

33. Schmid, *Stadt, Raum und Gesellschaft. Henri Lefebvre und die Theorie der Produktion des Raumes*: 265.

34. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1995): 197.

35. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*: 195.

36. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*.

37. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*: 184–185.

38. Miović, 'Life in the Quarantine. Lazaretto at Ploče During the Republic': 13.

39. Miović, 'Life in the Quarantine. Lazaretto at Ploče During the Republic'.

40. Miović, 'Life in the Quarantine. Lazaretto at Ploče During the Republic': 15.

41. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*: 255.

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Chapter 11

Deconstructing Understandings of Emptiness: An Examination of Representations of Transitory Space and 'Non-place' in Photography

Jessie Martin

> The human population is more mobile than at any other point in history.[1]
>
> – Les Back

Built spaces are designed around the increasingly interconnected lifestyles, industries, and technologies of modern societies. Mobile experiences involve intervention and mediation; whether walking through a shopping centre listening to a podcast, sitting on a bus scrolling through social media, reading an advert in an airport, or listening to a tannoy announcement in a gas station, we inhabit sites in ways that reach beyond the physical. Modernity poses a problem for photographers, as the action often occurs elsewhere; what is present in a moment is not all there is to it. Photographers must look for new ways to represent and evoke the real and imaginary. In a hypermobile and technologically advancing world, emptiness in transitory environments is brief but also psychological, hard to identify because of the disconnected nature of experience.

Airports, train stations, and superstores are defined by the connectivity they enable, yet they fit within anthropologist Marc Augé's popular label of the 'non-place'.[2] These liminal spaces signify processes of globalisation, a notion of place not confined to location or within borders but defined by what

it represents and enables on broader scales. Augé's non-place reinforces a spatial hierarchy established through remoteness and based on the perspectives of those whose experience is transient. Photographs are ideal vehicles for communicating such meanings, as outcomes of a process which appropriates scenes for new viewers in acts of removal, reproduction, and reclassification through context. Photography is an accessible language; through photographs, we can travel to new places, gaze into the past, see unfamiliar realities, and explore emotional responses, all from a stationary point in time and place. Visual meaning becomes accessible because of the recognisability and familiarity of visual cues. Augé's writing centres on homogeneous sites replicated worldwide; such spaces are wholly recognisable and often filled with activity. Absence is antithetical to these spaces of consumption and connection. Through an examination of photographs and the photographic process, this text explores how transitory sites exemplative of the non-place are used as a vessel to contextualise emptiness and evoke feelings of placelessness.

My aim is to address how representations of emptiness have become tied to ideas of separation and remoteness, asking why we see isolation in photographs of empty sites which enable human connection and analysing the value of such photographs within and beyond this framework. I focus on the photographs from Edgar Martins's photo-book *When Light Casts No Shadow*,[3] which depicts empty airports at night. I use Martins's work to analyse the meaning produced by the photographer's approach, the space as subject and viewer as interpreter of meaning, gaining insight into how a visual language of emptiness has become fused to particular emotive responses and notions of place. Augé's theory of the non-place is used to frame an analysis linking common understandings of transitory space with photography as a universal visual language.

In teaching photography, photographs of empty urban spaces consistently precipitate discussions on alienation, loneliness, and dislocation, responses associated with placelessness. There seems to be an almost psychological pull towards such photographs as traces of these emotions that viewers can invest in and personally relate to. Drawn into correlation in the photograph, a triangulation of meaning has formed between the supposed non-place, aesthetic emptiness, and specific emotional and physical states of being. Photographs are accumulations of multiple truths, choices, and perspectives. My approach recognises the disjunctured nature of visual meaning and is informed by my viewpoint as a photographer and educator, as well as theory spanning disciplines including sociology and environmental

psychology. This research is informed by an understanding of how openly and narrowly photographs can be interpreted, and the processes which fix interpretations to images. My aim is to disrupt and disentangle notions of fixity, drawing connections between the viewer, subject, and photographer, and deconstructing readings of photographs that link emptiness with dislocation.

11.1 Non-Place as a Framework for Understanding

Non-place is measured against place, the latter implying a sense of belonging created through personal attachments with localities; the inhabitant is positioned as an insider and forms a relationship of identity directly with the site inhabited. Political geographer John Agnew argued that place is bounded, delineating a geographical site, its corresponding locale and attached social practices, through which the self establishes relations.[4] A feeling for place takes time to acquire, being made up of everyday experiences repeated over a span of years.[5] Place as a concept thus represents situated relationships built through personal intent. There is an agency to this type of belonging which sees the self existing in space for broad and multifarious purposes beyond consumption. Augé contends that when individuals come together, they 'engender the social and organize places'.[6] The ability to collectivise and influence an inhabited site is integral to place. In contrast, non-places, as the synthetic spaces of supermodernity,[7] are inhabited in the majority by transitory individuals,[8] identified through their roles as customers, passengers, users, and so on.[9] Because of the regulated and temporal nature of inhabitation, the ability to collectivise and organically produce social space is lost in non-places.

The dichotomy of 'non-place' and 'place' has a moral element to it, with opposing labels pronouncing the relationships of possibility and denoting judgement on each type of site. The concept of the non-place reflects an ontological fear that we are losing a depth of meaning in the connections we feel towards the spaces we inhabit.[10] This fear corresponds to rising mobility and reflects the idea that 'we have started to make "bad places"'.[11] Non-place is a contemporary space born out of changes in the way we live; Augé states that it is an outcome of modernity, defining it as space that is not relational, historical, or concerned with identity.[12] He sees place and non-place as intrinsically intertwined, with non-place as a form of relegated place which centres the managed individual and defies the collective. The concept

responds to notions of individual experience but understands these experiences as exemplars of the compliant collective.

Inhabitants occupying these spaces in real time are unconcerned with such labels: 'a lorry driver on a highway, or a waiter at a tourist restaurant, does not necessarily prefer to move, or change habits just because their daily places may be disqualified or labelled "inauthentic"'.[13] Authenticity is relative and a product of remoteness. Non-places necessitate the separation of roles, denying the possibilities for dynamic, stimulating places where people meet organically as strangers. Architect and urban designer Jan Gehl makes the distinction between integration and segregation in publicly inhabited spaces, stating that the integration of purposes allows people 'to function together and to stimulate and inspire one another'.[14] Integration as it is lived in everyday spaces determines how engaging and distinctive, or monotonous and homogeneous, the identity ascribed to a space is.[15] In non-places, inhabitants are given fixed roles which deny their agency to influence and shape environments. These occupational roles deny the formation of diverse place identities, and this feeling is exacerbated as the same relationships are manufactured elsewhere, transitory spaces such as airports following the same design structure worldwide. Such environments are emblematic of neoliberal political dynamics that produce spaces to meet the needs of capitalist development.[16] Consequently, the inauthenticity ascribed to non-places speaks more to a collective wariness of modernity and the isolation it causes through separation of roles than individual abilities to form connections with place, because these are specific and dependent on circumstance.

Augé's prologue describes a scenario where a man travels to catch a flight. The journey is mediated through machines and interactions not specific to geographical location but rather a type of modern process. The man sits on an airplane; reading his in-flight magazine, he smugly observes the benefits of flying business class, noting mentions of the new Espace 2000 seat he's currently occupying and its additional built-in features.[17] He comes across an advertisement for a car with the same name as his seat, reading '"One day, the need for space makes itself felt [. . .] it comes to us without warning. And never goes away. The irresistible wish for a space of our own"'.[18] Augé describes a removal and distancing of attention; the character sits on a plane as he reads about his occupied seat via a magazine produced to draw attention to his purchased experience. The seat is upgraded to a car, as the label 'Espace' draws the character's eye into a pitch for space and the

freedom it brings. Space, itself a form of emptiness, becomes a profitable entity accessible only through purchase. The character's experience is maximised for profit on multiple levels, as he is transported to parallel spaces of consumption to serve the purpose of capital. Here, space becomes a luxury, marketed to audiences through common tropes in car advertising that depict cars in empty rural scenes or driving along isolated roads stretching into the distance. The further the character is distanced from his own present, emptiness as an ideal is compressed by an ongoing process of commodification. The space advertised is filled with purpose; here, a desired form of emptiness is accessible to all for the right price. Augé conceptualises the non-place as a process and event rather than a fixed entity. He builds an understanding of placelessness around disconnection, representation, and consumption. His writing creates an intermediary space where we focus on the environment inhabited by the character while simultaneously on an imaginary parallel present which could be occupied if the right routes are followed. Emptiness becomes a tool to facilitate the imaginary.

Places and non-places can be classified by how they are belonged to, their categorisation determined using a system which grades the 'mode of feeling included/excluded'[19] in each. Through these means, place is ascribed identity and value based on human attachment. One of the categories is incidental outsideness, a mode of belonging reflective of the transitory visitor occupying place for functional reasons.[20] This type of belonging explains thought patterns common when occupying non-places. Reflecting on these views, architect Gunnar Sandin states: 'as incidental outsiders, we turn the place into a mere background for our more or less unreflective activities: "the fact that we do things frequently overshadows where we do it".[21] A detached mode of belonging corresponding with Augé's characters experience is described, one where the subject is present in body for a functional purpose but with a removal of mind. As it typifies an experience beyond the physical, the state of outsideness felt in such spaces defies straightforward representation. What I seek to understand is how this form of detached belonging has become associated with emptiness, as representations of sites are ascribed with the label of 'place' or 'non-place' in a cyclical way, images becoming a vital means of how the concept is recognised and applied.

The concept of the non-place is tied to notions of anonymity and an architectural style used worldwide regardless of local context. Because of the anonymity this engenders, these environments lend themselves to a detachment from fixity and reality that fits with photographic representation.

When viewing a photograph, we are always viewing a scene stripped of context; the act of photographing generates removal and dislocation. When the concept of space and place as an abstract entity is discussed, in discursive terms a distance has already been formed: non-place is created through the terms of the discussion. Photographs still time and rob events of their context, and this gives any messages they carry a loss of specificity. Non-places are defined by a similar loss of specificity and history; they are environments where only the recent present matters, where the last forty-eight hours of news broadcasts are played on repeat, newspapers read and re-read, and announcements sounded to alert consumers to updates, offers, and instructions.[22] As Augé states, 'everything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time'.[23] In these sites, the present moment, and what it facilitates in future time, is all that matters.

11.2 Understanding Emptiness in Transitory Spaces

In photographic terms, how is the sense of belonging attached to place visually represented through its depiction? Type 'belonging' and 'place' into a Getty Images search, and you see pages of natural landscapes with smiling people, holding hands, and sharing food,[24] images of collective action and organised events in urban environments.[25] A popular visual understanding of belonging is tied to occupancy, nature, distinctive experiences, and intentional behaviours responsive to a space and its surroundings. We understand belonging to mean representations of places in action; behaviour demonstrates how those spaces are activated by people. Notions of collectivity are evidenced and reinforced through photographs that show the potentiality for inhabitation. As space is emptied, these readings are blocked and, with that, the potential for shared belonging shut off. What is recorded instead is an absence associated with experiences, emotions, and imaginaries exemplative of the non-place.

Edgar Martins's photo-book *When Light Casts No Shadow* depicts abstracted photographs of airports at night. Martins chose and was granted access to airports with historical significance across Europe, producing nearly all the images at night using long exposures, supplementary lighting, and moonlight.[26] These sites are defined by both their function and their role in history, yet the photographs trigger a contradictory response, depicting anonymous airport scenes and runways devoid of activity (Figures 11.1
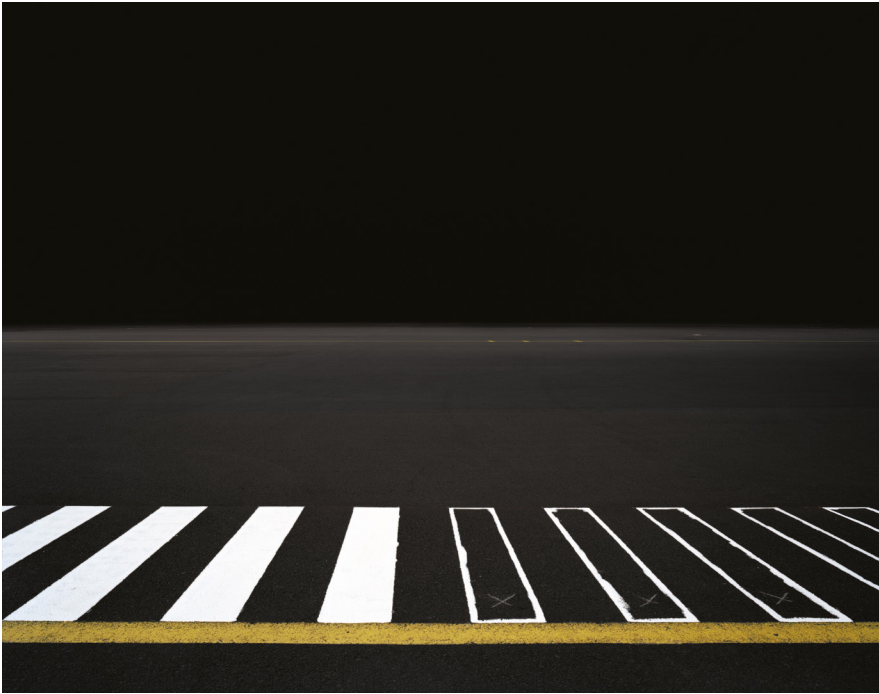
Figure 11.1: *Untitled* (*Santa Maria – 16m exp.*), 'When Light Casts No Shadow, 2008'.
(© Edgar Martins, www.edgarmartins.com)

and 11.2). To photograph and abstract an established space becomes a means of escape from fixity; different possibilities for relating to the image space are opened through a loss of specific information that could facilitate literal readings of time and space. Martins is drawn to the idea that any given space changes for the individual each time it is observed.[27] His photographs play on this notion, seeing visual information stripped back to show essential forms 'simplified until they provide reference only through their absence'.[28] By representing absence above all else, the images guide us towards a relationship with space which is both fleeting (because any indication of time extending in either direction is removed) and unspecific; the photograph's referent is not predetermined because it is our role as viewers to identify with the space and decide what absence means. This is a complex process because of the lack of information given to us and because the sterile nature of transitory environments denies relationships to be formed on terms that don't fulfil the requirements of occupancy. A tension is established as viewers are forced beyond comfortable viewpoints, as Martins

Figure 11.2: *Untitled* (*Santa Maria – 65m exp.*), 'When Light Casts No Shadow, 2008'.
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says, 'the images are constructed as manifestos of restlessness'.[29] The ease
and lack of conscious awareness these spaces require when inhabited as
intended is reformed through a shift in representation, the simplification of
space used as a tool for unease to be embraced.

When discussing the meaning of absence in transient spaces, there is
a split in subject matter. There is the form of space itself, with its attached
set of meanings, and then there is the state of emptiness it is pictured in.
Breaking this down in search of an answer to the question of what absence
indicates, we can look to semiology and the index. To index something in a
photograph means that another thing is being referred to;[30] what this 'thing'
is may or may not be recognisable from the image. Indexicality points to-
wards a certain relationship between photography and truth, namely that
what the image shows is a trace of reality, an event which occurred in front
of the camera. While the veracity of the term and its deeper meanings have
been contested over the years, its significance in photography lies in the
technological process, whereby the represented object is '"imprinted" by

light and the chemical [or electronic] process on the image, creating a visual likeness with a degree of accuracy and "truthfulness" unattainable in purely iconic signs'.[31] Essentially, the index is a sign 'which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that object'.[32] As documents produced because of direct corporeal relationships, photographs are permeated with reality and accepted notions of authenticity.

Charles Peirce, one of the leading theorists in semiotics, once declared that 'icons and indices assert nothing'.[33] This statement was based on the notion that for a statement to be asserted as true, first it needs to be framed by a proposition;[34] the reader, or viewer in this case, needs to be told *how* to view the photograph and what kind of truth they should seek. This is not possible with photography because, unlike writing, photographs do not have a syntax and cannot be deconstructed in the same way.[35] Nevertheless, Peirce suggests that a photographic syntax could be constituted out of the connections between elements: 'as a photograph is the product of the rays of light from a known object in the world, a photographic print can be seen as a quasi-predicate and the light as the factual quasi-subject [. . .] giving the photograph the status of quasi-proposition'.[36] Because the camera controls how light is processed, it acts as a tool enabling photographers to manufacture illusions of emptiness, determining how the photograph is read by establishing which components are visible or unseen and how they are relationally recorded. The structure of the photo-book, with its fixed layout of images and successive text, sees emptiness build over the pages to pose questions regarding the imaginary while referencing the history of the sites as information of secondary importance. Meaning is established through contextual choices reaching beyond the frame.

Regarding the form of Martins's photo-book, there is minimal text at the start, and no captions accompany the images, while the white space of the background pages extends notions of emptiness beyond the photographs. This lack of contextualisation, combined with shifts in subject matter across the airport spaces, has the effect of drawing the viewer into the discomfit proposed by Martins. Johnston explains that use of the term 'reading' in relation to photo-books elucidates a form of encounter more layered than alternative terms such as 'looking' or 'watching'.[37] The term enables reference to the 'material, chronological, semiotic and phenomenological aspects of the photobook',[38] acknowledging how photo-books are constructed to enable and enhance photographic meaning through presentation for a broad readership. The enclosed world of the photo-book is an attempt to

guide visual reading, creating a contextual home for photographs to collectively propose meanings across and beyond the individual frame. Johnston emphasises the importance of individualised reader responses, explaining that reading a photo-book is synonymous with making it;[39] he describes this process as an unfolding, 'expanding what was condensed, constructing a world from the page'.[40] Through the photo-book, the viewer becomes a reader, as their relationship with the photographic is structured through textual proposition. In *When Light Casts No Shadow*, notions of isolation, dislocation, and restlessness are exacerbated as meanings are extracted through the individual process of reading. Martins uses blank pages, double-page spreads, selective text, and sequencing to control how his photographs are experienced. By enabling the photographer to manage this process, the photo-book functions to propose Martins's photographs as truth in relation to a selectively constructed world.

What is the referent in Martins's photographs of emptiness? Imagine Martins's images were filled with presence and action, inside the airport showing people sitting around waiting, reading, talking to one another, or planes being loaded with cargo and refuelled, the presence of air traffic controllers and flight staff. Instead of creating a specific record, emptiness guides us towards the imaginary beneath the surface of reality. Place and non-place are not opposites but rather layered entities; place is never entirely erased but exists under the surface.[41] There is an interplay between both environments, as they prevail 'like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten'.[42] Martins embraces an approach to photographing which is gamelike in nature, relinquishing control to the camera and embracing chance.[43] His approach to photographing and this reading of the sites both acknowledge the fluidity of place and representation. Looking back to the thoughts and actions of Augé's character on the plane, they are incongruous; there is the surface layer of what is happening and what it looks like, then there is what it feels like. Augé states that 'the space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude'.[44] Using emptiness as a referent draws out a particular reading of these spaces that taps into what it feels like to inhabit them, acknowledging a split between consciousness and action and the imaginary potentiality of space beyond its prescribed usage.

Type 'non-place' into a Google image search, and the results predominantly show empty corridors, airports, waiting rooms, tunnels, motorways, and shopping malls, or the same sites shot from distanced viewpoints and

detached perspectives.[45] These results demonstrate a popular visual under-standing of non-place and the isolation implied by the term. Emptiness re-moves cues that would locate and give life to the image space, the strategy becoming a vital feature of the non-place, both illustrating and reinforcing the concept. Martins was influenced by Augé's theory,[46] and ever since I first encountered Martins's photographs, they have been at the forefront of my mind as illustrations of non-place. While the imagery associated with the non-place naturally focuses on the types of spaces specified by Augé, the way these spaces are shot is significant; such images are almost always emp-ty of people.

Marc Augé defines non-places as sites of activity that enable and indi-cate connectivity; he refers to empirical non-places as 'spaces of circulation, consumption and communication'.[47] These are sites characterised by con-tinuous time and motion. When spaces of transit are photographed empty, emptiness produces a reaction corresponding to the type of space depicted. Augé states that 'the place/non-place pairing is an instrument for measur-ing the degree of sociality and symbolization of a given space'.[48] Places are sites of genuine and organic human connection. The human connectivity that non-places represent is hollow because of its controlled and contrived nature; it is based upon the production and circulation of capital, with peo-ple as transitory subjects enabling and signifying these processes. Individual character or enjoyment is insignificant in transitory spaces because the individual gains value through the mobility of capital they represent. Vulnerability and anonymity are subsumed into the identity of these sites because their purpose disregards the importance of secure and meaningful place relationships. Captured in photographs, visual emptiness strips away cues for comprehension, as the viewer is given little human information to relate to. The viewer is centred in the frame because they are only made aware of their own (invisible) presence. Consequently, emptiness serves as a mirror relaying back to us how it feels to exist in unfamiliar urban spaces without the security of knowledge, location, and belonging. Non-places are liminal sites which enable functions extending beyond location. Through inhabitation, we can purchase goods, go on holiday, and travel between points, while on a macro scale these sites stimulate the global economy. For most of us, our presence in non-places is a step in between, a means to an end. The meaning we associate with these sites responds to patterns of experience replicated worldwide through similar looking and function-ing spaces. Emptiness becomes the means through which hard-to-capture

dislocation can be signified; the activity is not present in the moment but happening elsewhere. As such, our own presence is all that matters.

A disappearance occurs when we view photographs of scenes detached from the reality of their surroundings. Photographs are documents of second-hand reality, their existence and our reliance on them testimony to the fact that much of our knowledge and perception is determined through subjective and indirect means. Nicholas Muellner argues that 'photography both obscures and reveals our desperate mental game in ways that words cannot'.[49] Emptiness is definitively vast and expansive. When a photograph of it is captured and boundaries established, it becomes formulaic as it is made manageable, able to be perceived in the frame of a rectangle. If our experience of places is defined by local relationships, possibility, and collectivity, then in contrast, non-places are managed, predictable spaces limited in the possibilities they hold for inhabitation. Examining the two subjects and processes side by side, the act of photography is comparable to the conceptualisation of the non-place because of the way that control and fixity over the subject are enforced and promoted in both acts of capture and theorisation. In making an image out of a scene which has come into being because of high levels of control and regulation, those qualities are strengthened as they are further contained and reproduced through the photographic process.

11.3 The Photographer's Approach

> Perhaps today's artists and writers are doomed to seek beauty in 'non-places'.[50]

Martins is a former philosophy student. He finds the medium of photography insufficient in its ability to communicate ideas; what motivates him is not its possibilities but its inadequacies.[51] His work is as much about what is absent as what is visible. This visual approach feeds into the conception of photographic objects that act as portals, the object signalling a threshold between two worlds. Augé's discussion around frontiers has parallels with photography and a shared language of seeing. In this context, the frontier becomes the photographic object which acts as a promise of communication; he states, 'a frontier is not a wall, but a threshold'.[52] Martins offers his viewers something which becomes accessible through absence. In terms of

location, Martins chooses airports with analogous architecture. Augé states that such architecture reflects an idealised planetary society that's yet to materialise, addressing an approach applied worldwide whereby architecture takes on a utopian dimension as frontiers are broken down by the dismissal of context. The photographic object similarly lacks specificity, becoming a threshold with an indistinct relationship to contextual time and place; its relationship to the real is an intrinsic part of its existence, but there's a defiance as this connection becomes unmoored by capture.

The space of the airport wasn't chosen by Martins because of a desire to tell a descriptive, narrative story but rather because of its potential for communicating ideas through abstraction. He chose the airports on the Azores archipelago because they are some of the few black-tarred runways worldwide.[53] To create the abstract images, he used the distinct fluorescent markings against the black tarmac, a large depth of field and minimal lighting with exposures of up to two hours.[54] In some photographs, the sky and ground merge, with viewers only able to orient themselves by the airport hieroglyphics depicted.[55] The feeling of endlessness is captured through his approach, which takes away specificity, instead generating suggestions for meaning through the relationship between elements. To capture the qualities of the non-place requires taking us outside of our everyday and the photographs we're used to encountering. Because the feelings these in-between spaces generate are complex and multilayered, to depict them requires an approach which moves beyond the literal and descriptive. Martins uses abstraction to guide us in the direction of the non-place. The space of the airport points us to readings and ideas attached to their analysis but leaves it to the viewer to make those connections. Light, location, and technological approach combine to propose the non-place in the photographic image.

How do we make sense and meaning out of visual images? The brain processes information incredibly slowly. There is too much to process as we try to make sense of the world. To compensate for this, our brains use a wide variety of tricks to help us decode information.[56] Neuroscientist and psychogeographer Colin Ellard asserts that 'our brains are designed to anticipate what kinds of things *might* be "out there" based on what kinds of things are *normally* out there'.[57] Emptiness is absence, a visual conception of a lack, and it becomes one of these tricks used to break down information, part of the arsenal of tools we use to fix meanings onto visual scenes. Martins states that 'the airport is the elementary expression of abstract space. It renders everyone weightless. It is the space of the uprooted'.[58] As a photographer, he

exploits emptiness for its psychological effects while gesturing towards the social function of the space. By photographing spaces defined by activity in states of emptiness, he highlights meanings associated with temporality and, in his words, 'a sense of historical discontinuity'.[59] In doing so, Martins changes how we perceive the visual space and assigns it an alternative motive. Regarding his photographic approach, he is drawn to the specificities of the places he photographs but denies a straightforward reading by creating complex representations that engage with photography's deceptive nature.[60]

One of the ways in which emptiness is created in photographs is through the absence of light. An impression of emptiness occurs when views are restricted by darkness, disturbing the viewer by informing them that they cannot know all that is there. Bright lights create an illusion of safety, a feeling of assurance that everything visible is known to us. It is hard for emptiness captured in built transitory spaces to convey the feelings of peace and solitude positively associated with it in natural spaces because the need for artificial light always signifies a loss of presence. In Martins's airports, emptiness reminds us of the mediated nature of such spaces but simultaneously abandons us, guiding us into the space then leaving us to relate to it through the imaginary. Using long exposures, Martins can create an illusion of absence not present in the moment. Such an illusion fulfils Martins's desire to facilitate the imaginary, to infuse the image plane with narratives, memories, and emotions beyond the subject, as our mind drifts to that which is unseeable, the possible presences lost through long exposure. These methods enable Martins's photographs to illustrate and embody the non-place, because the viewer's means of looking comes to mirror the process of being in these spaces, a process which is not about fixity or presence but rather the state of being in between: present in body but without the determinacy of mind.

11.4 Outcomes of Emptiness

Martins deploys emptiness, darkness, and location to generate a fascination which sustains our looking. For emptiness to effectively embody the non-place, viewers must first be compelled to invest in the photograph. Awe becomes a means of signalling an exploration of self and the imaginary. Captivation is pivotal to photography and art and underpins an engagement with visual imagery. Artist Tony Benn deliberated on the role fascination plays in photography: 'For fascination to be successful, to work,

it must draw on something at once primary and stereotypical. Commodity-fascination has replaced religious awe [. . .] Perhaps what we most want and are aroused by is the state of being outside ourselves'.[61] Martins draws on a common subject (the airport) but photographs it in an uncommon way: the functionality of the space is removed. The essence of the space is retained through its recognisable structure, but darkness and emptiness force a dislocation. Benn describes the state of mind that occurs during this dislocation, a process where 'we are drawn to the horizon of ourselves [. . .] here we are most intimate to our self [. . .] at the point of the dissolution of the self which we passionately want'.[62] Writing for *Creative Camera* magazine in the 1980s, Benn explained the conflicted pull often felt towards photographs. What lies at the heart of both emptiness and the non-place is absence, the suspension of time, and the solitude imposed by environmental and spatial constraints. Benn describes the dissolution of the self that occurs when we are taken outside of ourselves and our located, situated experience. The formal space of the image is a referral to this state of being. Emptiness is a way of reclaiming these commodified spaces; in redefining the transactional nature of them, the photograph centres the autonomous viewer and these spaces come to exist not for the user, but the self.

Augé's text centres human narratives but describes an existence where people are not wholly present; Martins's photographs reflect this simultaneous absence and presence. In *When Light Casts No Shadow*, there is only one image where a figure is present (Figure 11.3), and it is the first photograph in the book, acting to guide the viewer into the space. Most photographs depict empty scenes where no figure punctuates the photographic plane to complete our act of looking. Emptiness removes people from the places they inhabit, showing viewers instead how sites exist outside of actions and interventions. Half of the sensory information processed by human brains is visual.[63] The way we take in visual information has a structure which defines how photographic meaning is interpreted and how photography works as a vehicle for mass communication. A study conducted by Boston's Institute for Human-Centered Design used eye-tracking measures to examine how people experience their surroundings through visual perception.[64] Using photographs, this study tracked the subconscious responses people have to different urban scenes. The outcome revealed how human-centric perception is, as participants spent over half their time viewing the photographs checking for other human beings. Where people were present in the images, the viewer sought them out and focused on them over the surroundings. In contrast, little information is

Figure 11.3: *Untitled* (*Ponta Delgada – 45s exp.*), 'When Light Casts No Shadow, 2008'.
(© Edgar Martins, www.edgarmartins.com)

given in Martins's images. With human subjects and often architectural forms removed from the frame (Figures 11.4–11.5), our gaze becomes restless, reverting upon itself to build a sense of unease as a narrative develops where we are present through spatial purpose but not in a physical sense. Emptiness adds to this disturbance because it reveals a space created by us but existing beyond us, highlighting a fragmented landscape which is intrinsically human yet removed from human life by layers of regulatory processes.

Martins's photo-book includes an interview conducted by photographic writer Gerry Badger, which relates his work to the New Topographics.[65] This school of photography centres ordinary, human-made, often industrial, landscapes stripped back to their essential forms: emptiness is a common feature of these photographs, which see built landscapes photographed straight on, stripped in the creation of a functional beauty. Martins's work has similarities with this style of photography, but he takes removal a step further through use of darkness, artificial light, and perspective. He states that his images 'are marked by the sense that things are forever unreachable.

Figure 11.4: *Untitled*, 'When Light Casts No Shadow, 2008'.
(© Edgar Martins, www.edgarmartins.com)

[They] trap our visual literacy, they disturb language and meaning itself'.[66] Martins abstracts landscapes through an approach which reconfigures our experience of them. In our physical lives, we visually experience environments through perspectives responding to our bodily position in space. Photographs taken from uncommon human viewpoints such as aerial views, or from positions which are unfamiliar or untenable (such as occupying an empty airport runway in darkness), create a detachment because the viewpoint is physically unknown and separated from known reality. Additionally, the sites photographed here, and discussed by Augé, are experienced by the vast majority en route between places. Martins, like Augé in his writing, halts a mobile process; instead of passing through this space to reach the next destination, and without knowing the place that came before, the viewer becomes stuck. The pathway forwards is blocked, and the photographic plane emptied of information that could enable easy readings of the space as it is. Our visual perception is trapped and disturbed; instead of moving onward, we are required to stay and read into the darkness.
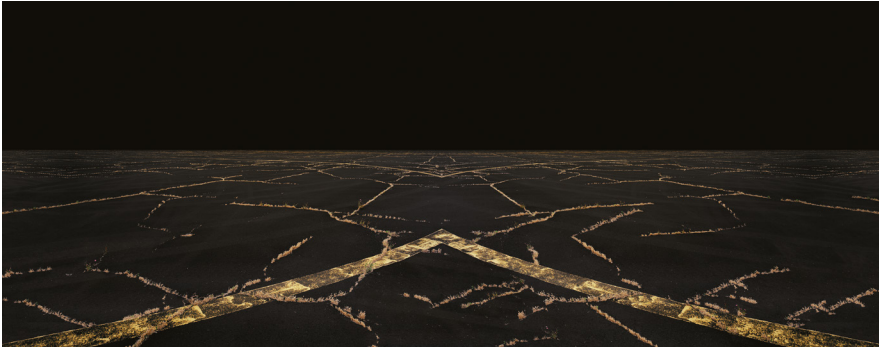
Figure 11.5: *Untitled* (*Santa Maria – 160m exp.*), 'When Light Casts No Shadow, 2008'. (© Edgar Martins, www.edgarmartins.com)

Martins uses human-made landscapes as his subjects but through abstraction they appear almost extra-terrestrial in nature (Figure 11.5). These sites move beyond their human function as airport scenes are deconstructed and pieced back together through the book's sequencing, which sees vast landscapes followed by the contained interior spaces of airports (Figures 11.4 and 11.6) in the creation of a landscape which sits somewhere between real and imaginary. Emptiness pervades these images, which are photographed with uniformity and symmetry. The space that we encounter here as emptiness represents a minuscule fraction of what emptiness means in a cosmological sense. Philosopher and historian of science Gregor Schiemann describes emptiness in its pure, universal meaning as something which is expansive and inhospitable, this form of emptiness posing a threat to existence through its accelerated spread.[67] Martins references this hostility in his photographs, partly through use of symmetry. Symmetry signals order, and applied to these sites, it shows space as complete without inhabitants. Empty space does not require us; instead, it is us who depend on our environment for survival. Martins states that the symmetry in his photographs renders their meaning fugitive, as reason is heightened to the point of becoming disturbed, and 'one is not able to identify or understand the signs and codes that contemporary space yields'.[68] The symmetry in Martins's photographs creates a structure for emptiness that centres it and complicates our understanding of the subject. By capturing and presenting contemporary spaces of connectivity in the way he does, Martins evokes the hostility contained in astronomic emptiness.

Photographing functional spaces devoid of the action that renders their identity creates a separation between the space and its meaning. This
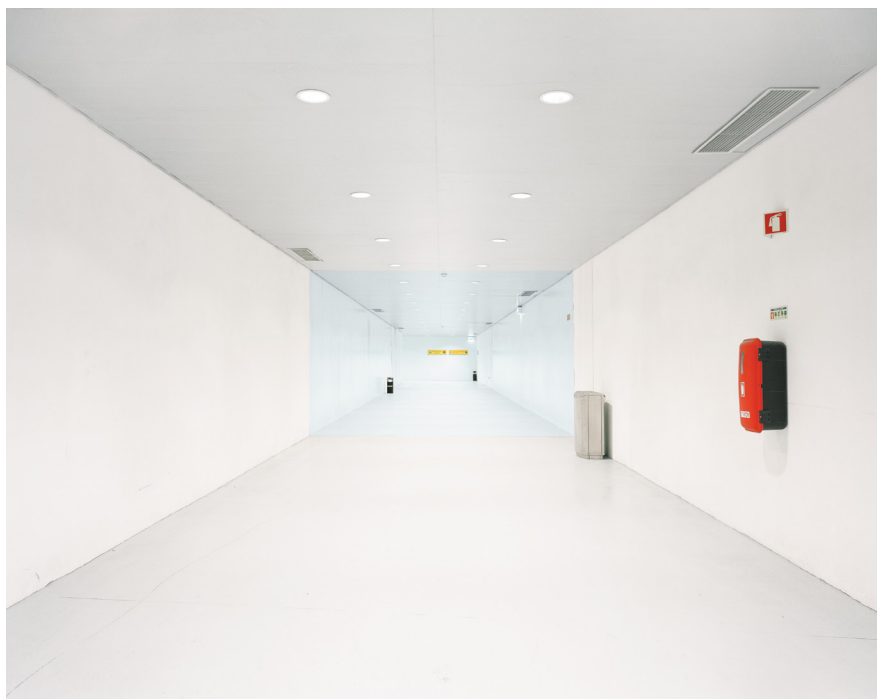
Figure 11.6: *Untitled*, 'When Light Casts No Shadow, 2008'. (© Edgar Martins, www.edgarmartins.com)

process sees the subject abstracted for the purpose of fulfilling the photographer's imaginative desires: the photographer takes a scene and empties it of context, making choices that fill the frame with ideas, associations, and emotions. John Berger states that when we photograph for public audiences, we purposely decontextualise to construct a new context.[69] In his view, photographs are often recontextualised in a unilinear way that conflicts with how memory functions; he explains the memory process as radial, with multitudinous associations reaching from incongruous points to construct memory events in a scattered and disordered way.[70] Therefore, new contexts honouring the experience and social memory of events should be constructed using imaginative approaches that respect the laws of memory to 'put a photograph back into the context of experience'.[71] Something of the original experience is kept and translated, elements drawn out and made accessible through the act of representation. Emptiness acts as a contextual tool for the photographer to translate the purpose of the original space into something else, something malleable and unfixed. The process of

representation broadens the gap between the actuality of the space indexed in the image and the meaning formed by the viewer, the photographic space opening multiple interpretive readings.

11.5 The Action of Photographing

Recently, I have been walking London's streets after dark with my camera, photographing fragments of local landscapes (Figure 11.7). Emptiness is produced more easily in the night-time and feels reassuring when photo-graphing, as if granting ownership; it creates the feeling that the scene in front of you is yours to inhabit and identify, yours to pass on and represent for others. When occupying and surveying environments to photograph, emptiness makes clear the raw structure of a site. This act can be part of a larger process, an effort to work out what needs to be isolated to connect with what makes that site a place. Deconstruction becomes a step towards reconstruction and representation.

   To photograph is to make choices and ask questions. What is included in the frame, and what is removed? When is the shutter pressed, and what is recorded? How long is the shutter open, and is movement recorded or the

Figure 11.7: *Signs*, 2021. (© Jessie Martin)

stillness of a pause? What is in focus? What does the exposure reveal or conceal through its balance of dark and light? What information will give the viewer an understanding of the scene that aligns with the photographer's intentions? Photography is an active process which is embodied: photographs are purposeful creations, the outcome of machines, operators, and editors. The act of observing an environment to photograph draws the photographer into new relationships with spaces. When purposefully photographing scenes without people present, architecture plays an increasingly active role as built forms reassemble around the self of the photographer and viewer. In urban settings, a representation of emptiness can be manipulated as the photographer becomes the architect of the space. Individuals are centred in the non-place, labelled and interacted with through their roles as users.[72] Photographers play an altogether different role as they exist in these spaces for the purpose of representation itself, giving thought to the body of space, its intricacies, and details.

Martins observes runway markings, fluorescent painted signs, and the effects of these elements when combined with darkness, artificial light, and viewpoint.[73] This conscious concentration on the space defies common purpose to create a lasting representation of the subject punctuated by the photographer's presence. Photographing in darkness and emptiness is an intimate experience, as the artificiality of ambient light distorts natural rhythms and time feels suspended. The form of a place gains clarity as light illuminates structures against the blackness of the night (Figure 11.7). Highlighting the built landscape brings the artificial nature of spaces to the foreground, but such meaning is created through close observation and connection. The act of photographing is both personal, as the photographer's viewpoint determines representation, and collective, as photographs are duplicable and shareable documents. Because of this duality, while the concept of the non-place is illustrated and reinforced through photographs, the actual act of photographing defies it.

These photographs (Figures 11.8–11.9) were taken on a research trip to Stockholm, on late-night wanderings around the city. Photographing empty spaces at night, I experience the environment as less threatening when viewed through the camera. When the process of photographing is slowed down, I find the act draws me closer to a space, as I navigate its shape and configuration, its entranceways, exits and viewpoints. The photographic process becomes a form of reclamation, as Sontag states, 'As photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help

Figure 11.8: *Rift Valley: Stockholm Research*, 2019. (© Jessie Martin)

Figure 11.9: *Rift Valley: Stockholm Research*, 2019. (© Jessie Martin)

people to take possession of space in which they are insecure'.[74] Photography becomes a conduit for the viewer to possess the space depicted and for the photographer to do so in the moment; the acts of looking and inhabiting interweave to form a connection through representation. Contained within the frame, darkness intensifies meanings associated with emptiness, extending the area of absence within the image space. This can be helpful as a photographer when trying to represent hidden histories and particularities of environments. The photographs I took in Stockholm were part of research into the geology of Stockholm's unique built environment. Emptiness and darkness strip away associations of everyday routine, enabling alternative readings. At the same time, the act of capture secures the environment and makes it safe to access. By giving space for viewers to build associations into images, such photographs become spaces where obscure meanings can be accessed and explored at a remove.

I took this photograph (Figure 11.10) in my workplace after everyone had left for the evening. It depicts an empty corridor, darkness edging in from the sides as the perspective lines and pattern of light guides us to a centre point of distanced blue light. Feelings of dislocation are highlighted. The viewer is not shown a way of belonging to this landscape; instead, they must form

Figure 11.10: *Workplace*, 2020. (© Jessie Martin)

this alone, decoding the photograph to determine a way to access its space. Emptiness becomes a pause in function; the image can be read as unsettling or disturbing both because of the lack of activity in a space which requires it and because of artificial lighting selective in what it illuminates, hiding parts of the scene which would otherwise be visible. This understanding of the visual space is a construction, with the photograph acting as a threshold; psychological and conceptual responses become accessible through viewing of the image. By emptying the scene, decontextualisation expands meaning by facilitating the viewers' entry into the image in a way which centres the self and anonymises the space depicted. Emptiness becomes a tool enabling the photograph to act as a portal to new imaginary worlds. Such worlds don't need to be aligned, because the act of photographing allows the photographer to do something they are unable to do in the moment, extracting and imprinting their impression, idea, and imaginary of place in the creation of an external document.

Through photographing, you can draw on a specific quality of a space, or a feeling that arises in response to it, and isolate and possess it in an image. Photography becomes a tool for play in the creation of the imaginary, a way of exploring psychological relationships with environments and different ways of belonging. The imaginary can make the real more exciting or respond to realities and psychologies not physically visible. What the photograph does is make this state of in-betweenness, the absence that occurs when the mind is elsewhere, visible for all to see.

11.6 Conclusions

Non-place is a palimpsest; place is not erased in its composition but rather exists beneath the surface. Similarly, in Martins's photographs, the located site isn't erased but lies under the surface to influence readings of the image space. Contradictions are embedded in the arguments I've laid out here. Visual imagery aids understanding of the non-place, but the act of photographing defies the concept as much as it strengthens it. Emptiness is not about emptiness; it is a manipulation of space and perception which points the viewer elsewhere while drawing the photographer closer to a place in the moment. Emptiness, darkness, and symmetry are used as reference points to disturb perception, creating a separation between a space and its obvious readings. In terms of the index, there is a link between the original

sites which are photographed and the eventual understanding we take from their representations, but it is malleable, flexible, and unfixed. Emptiness is space waiting to be filled; when contained within a frame and recontextualised in galleries, photo-books, web pages, and so on, it takes on a variety of meanings corresponding to its new context and the proposition set out by it. An understanding of it accumulates to influence and augment real relationships with environments and those of imaginary possibility.

Emptiness has a disjunctured relationship to the non-place. These are sites defined by their ability to connect people in a modern globalised world, yet conceptualisation renders them empty. The meaning created through this dichotomy between connection and disconnection thrives through representation, our brains associating emptiness with a lack of human significance at a level which creates meaningful belonging. Because a distancing of presence is central to the non-place, the theory lends itself to the photographic process and an approach which emphasises detachment and removal. Martins states: 'My images depend on photography's inherent tendency to make each space believable, but there is a disturbing suggestion that all is not what it seems'.[75] His scenes are recognisable yet indistinct, unsettling in the way their viewpoint and sense of place accumulates. The photograph both complicates and reinforces notions of belonging and fixity in relation to place experienced through visual perception. An opening up of meaning stems from indistinctness, yet the universalism of the image space is inverted through the personal act of looking. The subject extends beyond what we can see. Our sense of place and belonging is undergoing a seismic shift; by breaking down ways of experiencing environments, photographs of empty transitional spaces prompt us to confront emotions, ideas, and memories associated with place, as we access and view them at a remove.

Notes

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6. Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*: 89.

7. Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.

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10. Gunnar Sandin, 'Dealing with Non-Place in Exploitation, Belonging and Drifting', *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning* 12, no. 2 (2003): 77, http://arkitekturforskning.net/na/article/view/275.

11. Sandin, 'Dealing with Non-Place in Exploitation, Belonging and Drifting': 77.

12. Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*: 63.

13. Sandin, 'Dealing with Non-Place in Exploitation, Belonging and Drifting': 77.

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A Visual Essay:
Documenting Emptiness

Chapter 12
Distance, Proximity

Luca Nostri

April 2020, first lockdown. A few days before the first pandemic peak, I was asked by the Lazio region if I was willing to document the Intensive Care Unit of the Covid 3 Hub in Casal Palocco near Rome, a high-tech medical centre created to research and fight the virus. They told me that the photographs would not be published in newspapers but would be kept in the regional archives, as documentation. I took a day to decide. I was simply overwhelmed by the request, and I'm not a photographer who runs towards crisis. Being on the front line has never been part of my practice, nor what interests me. Besides, I was quite scared. However, I talked to my family, and I accepted the job. I went to Rome with a twenty-four-hour special permit to go to and from the hospital. At that moment, little was known about the virus, and the sensations I felt were what I expected: tension, fear, adrenaline, and the constant uncomfortable thought of whether it was right to be there to photograph the pain of others.

A few days after my return, unexpectedly, I received a new assignment from the Italian government, in which I was asked to photograph Italy in lockdown, with a new special permit by the ministry that allowed me to explore the landscape around my hometown, Lugo di Ravenna. This time, of course, I immediately accepted the request, which was really 'my thing' as an assignment; moreover, it gave me the freedom to go outside.

Thinking about which places to photograph, I decided to start from the Pavaglione, an eighteenth-century four-sided portico and one of my favourite places, a very popular place rarely seen without people. However, after mounting the field camera on the tripod and starting to look into the ground glass, I was quite confused. I am one of those photographers who embrace the limits of the ordinary, along with its aesthetic and conceptual challenges. At that moment, I was doing what I have always done in my photographic practice: photographing my surroundings, photographing the ordinary, yet it was like doing it in a new world where the ordinary

had somehow disappeared. Everyone in the world was photographing their surroundings at that moment – not by philosophical or artistic choice, but because they were forced to by the lockdown and as a reaction to it. I admire photographers who work at home and teach us how to be observant of our own lives. But during the lockdown, this attitude became something different, and any photograph 'of the ordinary', 'of nothing', had become a response to the crisis.

I continued to photograph, progressively moving away into the surrounding countryside, trying to understand what it would mean for me to be a photographer in whatever new world comes out of this. As a photographer and as a walker, I see the landscape inwardly, as an expression of layers of meanings, and in that case, more than other times, I realised how much the act of photographing can be centring and therapeutic.

These photographs were processed and printed months after they were taken. I have selected them only recently, for this specific publication, without which they would have probably remained in an archive drawer. I have looked at them and selected them with a crucial temporal and psychological distance: the photographs depict a landscape that I know, that feels close, but somehow it is as if someone else has taken them. They were taken over the course of a year, between the first and third lockdowns, often exploring the landscape with a close friend of mine, artist Andrea Salvatori: we would place ourselves somewhere in the countryside; he drew en plain air, and I photographed with an analogue field camera. A mode of work reminiscent of the nineteenth century, when landscapes and cities in photographs were empty because the slowness of the photographic process did not allow people to be captured.
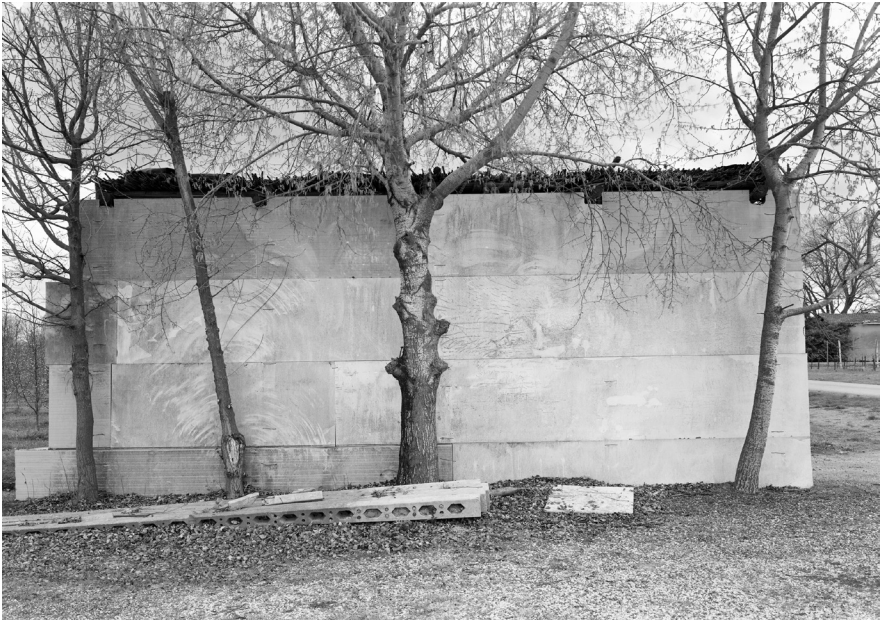
Solarolo (Ra), Italy, 2020–2021 (© Luca Nostri)

About the Contributors

Ruth Baumeister is an architect, historian, researcher, and writer, specialising in the post-war European avant-gardes in architecture and art. Her recent research interests include gender studies, work futures, activism, and civil disobedience in architecture. Since 2014, she is a professor (MSO/Associate) of architecture history and theory at the Aarhus School of Architecture. She received a PhD in architecture history from TU Delft with a thesis on the Danish Situationist International artist Asger Jorn's concept of architecture. She has taught at the TU Delft, Bauhaus-University in Weimar, the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam, and she has held the position of a visiting professor at the University of Cagliari, in Italy. Her research on Scandinavian modernism, the 1920s avant-gardes, and globalisation in architecture has been published internationally in eight languages.

Isabelle Catucci is an artist and researcher, and she has been a professor of sculpture and three-dimensional poetics at the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil, since 2013. She has a degree in sculpture and a master's degree in social anthropology, with an ongoing PhD in sculpture-fine arts at the University of Lisbon. She has held and organised exhibitions since 2004, with an emphasis on sculpture and ceramics. She is a researcher of VICARTE (Glass and Ceramic for the Arts) and CIEBA (Centro de Investigação e Estudos em Belas Artes). Her works have been published in several languages and, in recent years, have been dedicated to spatial discussions, mapping, territorialities, and devices and systems for controlling land, or ways of life in relation to the land.

Stella Fatović Ferenčić, MD, PhD, is the head of the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, Croatia. She taught history of medicine at the School of Medicine in Zagreb from 1990 to 2000, while from 2005 to 2009, she was the chair for the

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Martin Kuhar, MD, PhD, graduated from the School of Medicine in Zagreb in 2008. At the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, he finished his undergraduate studies in philosophy and anthropology in 2013. In 2015, he obtained a PhD at the School of Medicine in Zagreb with a thesis on Croatian eugenics. Currently, he is working at the Division for the History of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts as a research associate. He publishes papers in international and domestic biomedical and medico-historical journals, while also regularly attending international conferences dealing with various topics in the history of medicine. He teaches pharmaceutical ethics and deontology at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry. He is a collaborator on *Exposition* [*Ekspozicija*]*: Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today*, a project financed by the Croatian Science Foundation.

Sandra Križić Roban holds a PhD in art history and is a critic, curator, lecturer, and writer. She is a senior scientific advisor in tenure at the Institute of Art History (Zagreb), and she was the editor-in-chief of the art journal *Život umjetnosti* (2000–2017). Her research focuses on contemporary art, history and the theory of photography, post-war architecture, and politics of public space and cultural memory. She is the principal investigator of *Exposition* [*Ekspozicija*]*: Themes and Aspects of Croatian Photography from the 19th Century until Today* (2020–2024), a project financed by the Croatian Science Foundation. Currently, she is an assistant professor of culture of memory at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and an assistant professor of photography and visual culture at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. She was a fellow at the Styrian Provincial Government (Graz), DAAD (Berlin), Institute Adam Mickiewitz (Poland), and CAA Getty International Program. She is the head of the Office for Photography, a non-profit association dedicated to contemporary photography (Zagreb). She has authored

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Catlin Langford is a curator, writer, and researcher, specialised in photography. She is currently a curator at the Centre for Contemporary Photography in Melbourne/Naarm. She was previously the inaugural Curatorial Fellow in Photography, supported by the Bern Schwartz Family Foundation at the Victoria and Albert Museum and has held positions at the Royal College of Art, Guildhall School/Barbican, and the Royal Collection Trust. Her debut publication, *Colour Mania: Photographing the World in Autochrome* (Thames & Hudson and V&A), was released in 2022.

Luca Nostri is a photographer, researcher, and teacher. He holds a PhD in photography from Plymouth University. His work explores notions of landscapes, place, memory, and belonging through an interdisciplinary approach that revisits the tradition of documentary photography. His photographs are included in the collection of Linea di Confine in Rubiera, the American Academy in Rome, the MAXXI Museum in Rome, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. His first book, the monograph *Anselmo*, was published by Linea di Confine in 2020. Since 2014, he has been a member and teacher for the AA faculty – the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London.

Jessie Martin is a photographer, educator, and researcher based in London. Her work is driven by a curiosity to understand the environments we live in, how they are formed, and how we belong to them. She is interested in the interplay between places, people, politics, and culture, and she uses interdisciplinary visual approaches to reimagine the potential of the spaces we live in. She has a BA in photography from the University of Westminster and an MA in photography and urban cultures from Goldsmiths, University of London. She teaches photography at the University of West London and at the Richmond upon Thames College.

Stuart Moore is a film-maker and sound artist whose work screens internationally; he has won awards from London Short Film Festival and two

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Kayla Parker is an artist film-maker who creates innovative works for cinema, gallery, public, and online spaces using film-based and digital technologies. Her research interests centre around subjectivity and place, embodiment and technological mediation, from post-human feminist perspectives. She is a lecturer in media arts at the University of Plymouth, where she super-vises doctoral researchers and is a member of the arts and humanities ethics committee. She has convened several symposia and curated programmes of artists' moving image, and her publications include chapters and essays on film-making. She gained her PhD in 2015 for a thesis examining gender and women's creative practice in direct animation.

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Anna Schober is a historian, art historian, and visual culture specialist. Currently, she is Professor of Visual Culture at Klagenfurt University. She gained her PhD in 2001 and her contemporary history postdoctoral habilitation in 2009 at Vienna University. She was a fellow at the IFK (International Research Centre for Cultural Studies) Vienna; the Centre for Theoretical Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Essex, Colchester; the Jan Van Eyck Academy, Maastricht; and the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen (Innsbruck). She acted as a Marie Curie Fellow at Verona University (2009–2011) and as a Mercator Visiting and Deputy Professor and leader of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft project *Everybody. A Transnational Iconography* at Justus Liebig University Gießen (2011–2016). She published on the aesthetic and political dimensions of the public sphere, political iconology, cinema, and film movements since the 1960s, images as mediators of society, popularisation practices and populism, audience research and methodological questions of visual culture studies. Among her recent publications is *Popularisation and Populism in the Visual Arts: Attraction Images* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

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