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## Objects of Embodiment: A “Post-Material Turn” in Exhibiting Lost Material Culture

### Abstract

Exhibiting lost material culture goes beyond documenting, preserving, reconstructing, and staging material traces of the past. Museums, possessing modest collections of original historical objects, have to search for new ways of exhibiting material culture thereby replacing facts (original objects, documents, documentary media) by bodily experience similar to that evoked by mystical religious art addressing different human senses beyond the vision. Bodily sensations can be evoked by ambiances, following expressionist or constructivist architecture, by sculptural displays in tradition of the avant-garde, by soundscapes and large scale image projections evoking illusion and immersion. The “post-material turn” comprises thus not only virtual culture, but also new material approaches to the memory of the past, shifting from original historical artifacts to reproductions and substitutes, evoking an intense bodily experience. Although history gets space for embodiment, such ambiances evoke a strong sense of loss, because they avoid immediate contact with traces of the past by virtual and material “doubles”. The “post-material turn” will be discussed with the example of The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow, relating it to other contemporary “post-documentary” and “post-factual” phenomena in memorial culture.

**Keywords:** “post-material”, tactile eye, bodily sensation, senses, spectral, Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow

### Evoking the Lost

In institutions of memorial culture such as museums, collections, and exhibitions, objects might experience a “second life”, detached from their original place and function. They are transformed into auratic relics, fragments or traces of the past,

which narrate a plurality of stories about history, economy, aesthetics, everyday life, but also about politics, emigration and persecution. As agents of absence, its synecdoches or metonymies, they enable the absent to take place, take shape, and come to matter. Linked to other places and times, they recall the absent by conferring it a fragmentary, momentary presence. Detached from their original ambience, they do not only need to be identified and classified, but they also need stories to be understood.<sup>1</sup> They can be narrated by texts and also by practices of staging that can become an engaged political act,<sup>2</sup> such as Maria Eichhorn's installation of unlawfully acquired books from Jewish ownership at the 14<sup>th</sup> *documenta* 2017 at the New Gallery in Kassel, where the so-called "Accession Books J", confiscated in 1944–45 and brought to the City Library in Berlin, were staged in a tower made of bookshelves.<sup>3</sup> Her investigative project, Rose Valland Institute, named after the French art historian who recorded the expropriated Jewish artifacts during the Nazi occupation in Paris, was of a participatory nature.<sup>4</sup> Eichhorn widely published a call inviting private owners of orphaned items to bring them and help to reconstruct their object-"biographies",<sup>5</sup> testifying to their former, absent owners. The loss of ownership and "home" evoked the void and helped to reconstruct the life stories of emigration and persecution *in absentia*. The encounter with the books, material remnants and fragments of the past is connected to human bodies to which they

1 H. Steyrl, "Die Sprache der Dinge: Eine materialistische Sicht auf dokumentarische Praktiken", in: idem, *Die Farbe der Wahrheit: Dokumentarismen im Kunstfeld*, Vienna, 2015, pp. 139–150.

2 For the politics of objects see B. Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to make Things Public", in: *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. B. Latour, P. Weibel, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 4–31.

3 Rose Valland Institut Call for Papers [M. Eichhorn], "Verweistes Erbe in Europa", <https://www.documenta14.de/de/news/16099/rose-valland-institut>, 30 March 2017; A. Szymczyk im Gespräch mit A. Alberro, M. Eichhorn und H. Haacke, "Die unauflösliche Präsenz des Gurlitt-Nachlasses", [https://www.documenta14.de/de/south/59\\_die\\_unausloeschliche\\_praesenz](https://www.documenta14.de/de/south/59_die_unausloeschliche_praesenz) [accessed 31 October 2019].

4 <https://www.documenta14.de/de/news/23357/rose-valland-institut> [accessed 31 October 2019].

5 The Soviet journalist, writer and literary theoretician Sergei Tretyakov, representative of the so called "factual literature and art" (Russ. *literatura fakta, iskusstvo fakta*) already in 1929 – long before Bruno Latour – stressed the importance of things as agents, S. Tretyakov, "Biografiya veshchi", in: *Literatura Fakta/Faktographische Literatur*, reprint of the Moscow edition from 1929, ed. N. Chuzhak, Munich, 1972, pp. 66–70. According to his utilitarian, materialist view objects were main agents of transforming of material world; humans, on the contrary, were reduced merely to passive extras in the background, determined by objects or even replaced by them. In this period of the late avant-garde the hierarchy of the living and the dead was inverted. Avant-garde artists tried to merge objects and humans into utopian machine-men. In the wake of the totalitarian regimes during the 1930s, objects developed a new function: They became "orphaned things" moving in a "death dance", experiencing a "second life" in new surroundings. Eichhorn's exhibition of "Accession books J" belongs into this tradition of the "biography" of things.

had been attached.<sup>6</sup> In their “afterlife” in new surroundings, objects assume a new “identity” and become “bodies”, bearing a kind of “relics of touch”, similar to religious relics, containing invisible indexical footprints of the missing and gone.<sup>7</sup> The art historian W. T. J. Mitchell perceives such artifacts even as bearers of “stigmata of the personal and the soul”.<sup>8</sup> They invite the spectator to enter into an intimate dialogue and to experience affective closeness that goes beyond the scopic regimes of optical knowledge. The curator Werner Hanak-Lettner compares such dialogical situations between objects and spectators to an “interactive drama”.<sup>9</sup>

But what happens if there are no original historical items or forensic traces to be exhibited as “evidence” or “witnesses” of the past, as is often the case when people suffer emigration, expulsion or destruction? In his article, “Placing and tracing absence: A material culture of immaterial”, the sociologist Morgan Meyer perceives absence less as a missing object itself and more as something that exists through relations that perform absence and produce effects that are as strong as those of material presence.<sup>10</sup> Inspired by the volumes *An Anthropology of Absence: Materializations of Transcendence and Loss* (ed. by Mike Bille et al.) and *The Matter of the Death: Space, Place and Materiality* (ed. by Jenny Hockey et al.), both published in 2010, Meyer stresses that absence also “has a materiality and exists” and “has effects on the spaces people inhabit and their daily practices and experiences”.<sup>11</sup> According to Meyer, absence can produce effects of presence similar to phantom pains and can turn into matter, can be performed, materialized, and objectified. Therefore he proposes a “relational ontology of absence, conceiving absence not as a thing in itself but as something that exists through relations that gives absence matter”.<sup>12</sup> As examples of such embodied absence of lost material culture, Meyer mentions places like the Bastille in Paris, the city of Hiroshima, the Berlin Wall, the Twin Towers in New York, cemeteries and memorial places, where missing can be reconstructed by memory and imagination. Absence should therefore be, as Meyer claims, “placed” and “traced” to get the shape of the lost, missing or displaced. Tracing and placing the absent can be a spatial and performative act, following the “shape” of absence unable to reach it and to capture it, but only to “feel” its surroundings. Absence and

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6 K. Hetherington, “Spatial Texture: Place, touch and praesentia”, *Environment and Planning A*, 2002, 35, no. 11, pp. 1933–1944.

7 For the relics of touch see E. Koch, H. Schlie, “Einleitung”, in: *Orte der Imagination – Räume des Affekts: Die mediale Formierung des Sakralen*, eds. E. Koch, H. Schlie, Paderborn, 2016, pp. 9–18.

8 W. T. J. Mitchell, *Das Leben der Bilder: Eine Theorie visueller Kultur*, with a foreword by H. Belting, Munich, 2008, p. 46.

9 W. Hanak-Lettner, *Ausstellung als Drama: Wie das Museum aus dem Theater entstand*, Bielefeld, 2011, pp. 9, 10.

10 M. Meyer, “Placing and Tracing Absence: A Material Culture of Immaterial”, *Journal of Material Culture*, 2012, 17, no. 1, pp. 103–110.

11 Ibid., p. 103.

12 Ibid.

presence, materiality and immateriality, therefore should not be considered a dualism and opposition, but has to be put into mutual relation to each other.<sup>13</sup>

Some museums, especially those dealing with the Jewish history of the Holocaust, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem or the Ghetto and the Holocaust sections in the Polin in Warsaw, also try to evoke the spirit of place by architecture or ambiances, where we can “feel”, “see”, and “hear” the absence of the lost – of dead people and their vanished material traces. This absence can be exemplified by claustrophobic, narrow corridors with inclined walls, which seem to be inspired by expressionist architecture, such as in the scenes of the film *The Cabinet of the Dr. Caligari* (1920) by Robert Wiene, evoking an insane, meta-psychical space. Such ambiances recall the feeling of tension, oppression and of being captured, conjuring a substitutive bodily “experience” of the Ghetto and the Holocaust.

## Replacing the Lost

In other cases, as for example in the Jewish Museum and Tolerance center in Moscow, virtual images as well as newly fabricated material substitutes of the lost, objects and spaces, can offer an alternative place to materialize imagination in phantom-like embodiments. But how can museums, exhibiting “post-material culture”, deal with absence, when the lost has already been replaced by replicas and virtual media? How can artificial materiality give bodily evidence as powerful as original historical objects or spaces staging absence and void? What happens to the senses of the spectator, confronting such “fake” material culture? In the following I want to analyze some examples of how the Moscow museum, opened in November 2012, solved these questions in a very original way, evoking strong bodily sensations. Although the Moscow museum is less educational than the Polin, which opened at almost the same time, and although it has been criticized for glorifying the Russian master narrative of the Great Patriotic War, it is still a very interesting example of a “post-material” approach to lost material culture, which deserves attention in the broader context of the “post-documentary” and “post-factual turns” in media dealing with history and memory in recent decades.

13 Meyer’s “tracing the absence” has a lot in common also with the phenomenological tradition of the ancient topic of the “spirit of place” (*genius loci*), which describes the uniqueness of a location, attributing to it a specific atmosphere that awakens strong moods and feelings in visitors. The spirit of place can be attributed to material, visible (architecture, site) as well as immaterial, invisible components (experience of energy, power or mystery). Such “spirits” are often attached to locations of important historical events, which entered into collective memory, cf. R. J. Kozljanič, *Der Geist des Ortes. Kulturgeschichte und Phänomenologie des Genius Loci. 1. Bd.: Antike – Mittelalter*, Munich 2004, pp. 145–148; T. Zimmermann, “The Spirit of Place and Nation Building: Kosovo and Bosnia from Imperial to Post-Communist Times”, in: *Entangled Religions: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Religious Contact and Transfer* 2019, 9 *The Changing Landscapes of Cross-Faith Places and Practices*, ed. M. Sing, pp. 79–107.

In the special issue of *East European Jewish Affairs* from 2015, dedicated to the numerous newly-founded Jewish museums in post-communist Eastern Europe, the editors Olga Gershenson and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett underline the extraordinary place of the Moscow museum in the East European context, being a result of Jewish and non-Jewish donors, of private as well as state support.<sup>14</sup> Although Gershenson praises the museum for integrating the Jewish memory of the Holocaust in its thematic program, which is fairly rare in Eastern Europe, she also criticizes it for harmonizing the history of the Jews with the Russian national master narrative of the Great Patriotic War and for presenting the Jews as an exemplary model of co-existence in the multinational empire without properly discussing the persecutions in the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> In the following issue of *East European Jewish Affairs*, published in 2016, Gershenson’s statements caused a heated debate. The Russian historian Oleg Budnitsky objected that the Jews in Russia were not a minority at all, but “on the whole the most Soviet of all Soviet people”, who “considered themselves above all to be Soviet people and only after that as Jews”.<sup>16</sup> Along with Benjamin Nathans, Budnitsky disagreed with Gershenson that the museum program contributes to the political-ideological agenda of the Kremlin.<sup>17</sup> A year earlier, immediately after the opening, Ewa Bérard came to a similar conclusion as Gershenson, remarking that Jewish history is presented in a non-confrontational way into Russian history, avoiding the subjects of local collaborators with the Nazi regime, of the Stalinist gulags, where Russians as well as Jews died, and the campaign against (Jewish) “cosmopolitanism”. At the same time, she stated that the museum paid respect to the central narrative of suffering during the anti-fascist war, which was a uniting element of the Soviet nations and became a symbol of power in contemporary Russia.<sup>18</sup>

14 President Putin donated one month of his salary, as media reported.

15 O. Gershenson, B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Introduction: New Jewish Museums in Post-Communist Europe”, *East European Jewish Affairs. Special issue: New Jewish Museums in Post-Communist Europe*, 2015, 45, no. 2–3, ed. O. Gershenson, B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, pp. 153–157, here: p. 154; O. Gershenson, “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow: Judaism for the masses”, *East European...*, op. cit., pp. 158–173; idem, “How Russia Created a Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center Even Vladimir Putin Can Tolerate”, *Forward: Jewish Affairs*, 8 January 2016, <https://forward.com/culture/art/328682/how-russia-created-a-jewish-museum-and-tolerance-center-even-vladimir-putin/> [accessed 31 January 2020].

16 O. Budnitski, “Oleg Budnitskii responds to Olga Gershenson’s ‘The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow: Judaism for the Masses’”, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2016, 46, no. 2, pp. 211–213, here: p. 212.

17 B. Nathans, “Benjamin Nathans responds to Olga Gershenson’s ‘The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow: Judaism for the Masses’”, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2016, 46, no. 2, pp. 213–216.

18 E. Bérard, “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre in Moscow”, *Témoigner: Entre histoire et mémoire*, 2014, 118, pp. 12–15, <https://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/1226?lang=nl> [accessed 28 January 2020]; M. D. Shrayar, “The Prospect for Russia’s Jews”, *Mosaic: Advancing Jewish Thought*, 6 March 2017, <https://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/history-ideas/2017/03/the-prospect-for-russias-jews/> [accessed 28 January 2020].

However, in 2016, the UNESCO granted the museum a distinguished award for its efforts in spreading tolerance and understanding.<sup>19</sup>

Together with the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw that opened some months later in April 2013, the Moscow museum is as a pioneer in multimedia and interactive design proposing new solutions in a “post-material” approach.<sup>20</sup> Inside the round tower with a metal covering at the entrance, which slightly resembles constructivist architecture such as Talin’s model for the monument of the III international, 4D virtual animations are displayed on immersive circular screens in the ambience of the so-called Origins Theater, where bodily sensations are induced by sprinkling water drops and by rocking the seats of the spectators to simulate the biblical stories of the Flood and of the destruction of the Second Temple. A spiral staircase leads upstairs to the reading platform with avant-garde books, from where the spectators get an overview of the huge exhibition hall (Fig. 1). In the middle, in spectral architectural ambiances, Jewish life is presented in an exemplary “shtetl”, composed of fragments of a synagogue, of a market and a typical Jewish home, inhabited by sculptures and virtual projection of people in Jewish *habitus*. At the far end of the exhibition, immense real objects such as a T-34 tank and a Po-2 airplane are staged in front of a panoramic cinema showing large-scale videos with scenes from the Second World War, accompanied by testimonies of witnesses.<sup>21</sup>

The historian Benjamin Nathans, one of the members the international group of experts from different fields of knowledge for the museum, gives insight into the concept of the museum, which was designed by the American Ralph Appelbaum Association, working on major Holocaust and Jewish museums.<sup>22</sup> They had to find a way to transpose scientific narratives into effective media representation, in which the bodily experiences of spectators played an important role: “It was remarkable to see the variety of ways a given story could be represented or embodied for senses. [...] Visitors standing in the midst of this grove experience a powerful feeling of ‘you are there’”.<sup>23</sup> Another academic consultant, Risa Levitt Kohn from religious studies, who developed the content for the Origins Theater, underlines the importance of

19 “Tolerance Center got a prize of UNESCO”, 16 November 2016, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/tolerance-center/news/tolerance-center-got-the-prize-of-unesco/> [accessed 24 October 2019].

20 “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center: from Idea to Realization”, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/museum-history/> [accessed 28 October 2019]; B. Gorin, “The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center”, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2016, 46, no. 2, pp. 217–220.

21 O. Gershenson, “The Jewish Museum”..., pp. 162, 163, 167; see also the homepage of the museum: “Beginning Cinema”, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/permanent-exhibition/> [accessed 28 October 2019]; A video tour through museum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCUcN0dLits>, 13 October 2013 [accessed 25 January 2020].

22 B. Nathans, “Inside the Museum: Torahs, Tanks, and Tech: Moscow’s Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center”, in: *East European Jewish Affairs* 2015, 45, no. 2-3, pp. 190–199; For the academic board of the museum see <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/academic-board/> [accessed 28 October 2019].

23 Ibid., p.191.



**Fig. 1.** Permanent exhibition, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

her previous theater experiences.<sup>24</sup> The historian Jonathan Dekel-Chen, who gives insight into dealing with documentary photographs and film footage, also welcomes the cutting edge technologies that can be – compared to physical artifacts and printed texts – easily and inexpensively revised.<sup>25</sup> Renowned scholars and journalists, who visited the museum shortly after its opening, praised the exhibition not only for addressing topics that had been taboo in Soviet times, but also for its multimedia approach, although they sometimes used expressions like “Jewish Disneyland”, “adventure show” or “gimmick”.<sup>26</sup> Ewa Bérard, who vividly describes the bodily experiences facing the combination of virtual and material culture in the “shtetl”, compares it with a surrealist encounter:

What makes this universe of screens completely surrealist, are the poet Iossif Brodski’s words, engraved above... the Museum boutique: “The objects that we produce with our hands say more about us than our confessions.” [...] Indeed, visitors are here invited to dress up in virtual traditional Jewish costumes, to touch virtual herrings floating in real barrels, to recognize their ancestors among plaster figures, like the one who is sat on

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 192, 193.

<sup>25</sup> J. Dekel-Chen, “Between myths, memories, history, and politics: Creating content for Moscow’s Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center”, *The Public Historian*, 2018, 40, no. 4, pp. 91–106, here: pp. 96, 97, 101, 102.

<sup>26</sup> E. Barry, “In Big New Museum: Russia has a Message for Jews: We like you”, *The New York Times*, 8 November 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/09/world/europe/russias-new-museum-offers-friendly-message-to-jews.html>; S. Meier Zur, “Ein jüdisches Museum für Moskau”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/ein-juedisches-museum-fuer-moskau-1.17897959>; N. Shalina, “Review: Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow”, *Russian Art + Culture*, 9 February 2019, <https://www.russianartandculture.com/review-jewish-museum-and-tolerance-centre-in-moscow-by-natasha-shalina/> [accessed 24 October 2019].

a bench at a synagogue, immersed in the reading of the Book, their head covered with the Tallit (inexplicably forgotten, this old Jew in plaster is not interactive and does not swing from side to side). The best find, without contest, is the virtual scroll of the Torah that unfolds at the desired speed from the pressure of an electronic stick.<sup>27</sup>

As an in-depth study of the display has not yet been done, I am going to analyze some of its aspects in the context of the “post-material turn”, which started with the Museum of Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv in 1978,<sup>28</sup> but has developed new features, intensifying the sensual experience.

## The Tactile Eye

The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center is located in the former Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage designed in 1926 by the constructivist avant-garde architect Konstantin Melnikov and the engineer Vladimir Shukhov.<sup>29</sup> In 2007, the building was restored on behalf of the businessman Roman Abramovich. In 2008, it opened to the public as The Garage Center for Contemporary Culture to exhibit contemporary art, managed by Dasha Zhukova, Abramovich’s girlfriend at that time.<sup>30</sup> In 2012, the center moved to Gorky Park, first to the pavilion of the architect Shigieru Ban and then to a new building constructed by Rem Koolhaas in 2015.<sup>31</sup> In November 2012, the old Garage by Melnikov und Shukov opened as The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, which houses a permanent exhibition along with outstanding temporary presentations of Jewish literature, avant-garde (Lissitzky, Chagall, Eisenstein, etc.), and contemporary art (Anish Kapoor et al.).

The renovation and rebuilding of the large exhibition hall (ca. 7000-8000 m<sup>2</sup>), which took place from 2009 until 2012, was inspired by the avant-garde displays, especially by Lissitzky (Fig. 2), who in the late 1920s transformed exhibition spaces into dynamic installations and sculptural constructions, reaching their peak in the Soviet Pavilion at the *International Press Exhibition* in Cologne in 1928, called *Pressa*.<sup>32</sup> The avant-garde artist and his collaborators merged different media of architecture, large immersive photographs and typographically designed political paroles on display boards inclined into space and on sculptural constructions in the middle of the exhibition space into a total art work, following the idea of a tactile eye, proclaimed

27 E. Bérard, op. cit., pp. 12, 13.

28 I thank Diego Rotman (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) for this information.

29 See the homepage of the museum: Museums Building, <https://www.jewish-museum.ru/en/about-the-museum/museum-building/> [accessed 24 October 2019].

30 O. Gershenson, “How Russia Created” ..., op. cit.

31 For the history of the Garage see W. M. Bayer, *Moscow Contemporary: Museen zeitgenössischer Kunst im postsowjetischen Russland*, Vienna, 2016, pp. 37, 38, 117–137.

32 For the *Pressa* exhibition see S. Marten-Finnis, M. Nagel eds., *Die Pressa: Internationale Presseausstellung Köln 1928 und der jüdische Beitrag zum modernen Journalismus*, Bremen, 2012.





**Fig. 2.** Entrance in the exhibition space, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

by leading avant-garde artists such as Vladimir Tatlin<sup>33</sup> and Lissitzky himself.<sup>34</sup> The Cologne exhibition presented not only the Soviet newspapers, journals, books, publishing houses, and advertisements, but also glorified industrialization and the collective life of the proletarian masses under communism. The dynamic, space-seizing presentation tried to give evidence about the success of the new communist state that was not only founded on statistical facts, but also on the bodily experiences of spatial and tactile qualities of the display. At the same time, the Soviet late avant-garde representatives of the so-called “factual art” (*iskusstvo fakta*) proclaimed everyday-life objects for art and pushed their staging to the center of artistic creativity. One of them, Sergei Tretyakov, published a programmatic text in 1929 called “The Biography of the Thing”, where he demanded that things have to be perceived as dynamic agencies, which, like humans, lead their own lives and determine the lives of humans.<sup>35</sup> Lissitzky collected his experiences in creating stage design in collaboration with theater directors as well as through working on his *proun* forms, opening multiple perspective axes into space. He developed them in his *Proun room*

33 L. Shadova ed., *Tatlin*, Weingarten, 1987, p. 258; M. Tupitsyn ed., *El Lissitzky: Jenseits der Abstraktion: Fotografie, Design, Kooperation*, with texts by M. Drutt, U. Pohlmann, Munich, Paris, London, 1999, p. 69. In a collage, showing Vladimir Tatlin working on the *Monument to the Third International* (1922), Lissitzky replaced the missing eye of the artist by a compass. Tatlin’s mechanic eye does not perceive the world, but projects suprematist-constructivist forms into space.

34 M. Tupitsyn ed., op. cit., p. 81. In a photographic self-portrait with a double exposure, Lissitzky pictured himself with a hand holding a compass, laid over his eye like a mask, alluding to the expanded, upgraded capacities of the tactile eye.

35 S. Tretyakov, op. cit., pp. 66–70.

at the Great Berlin Exhibition in 1923,<sup>36</sup> in his “demonstration spaces” (*Demonstrationsräume*) exhibited in Dresden in 1926, and in the Provincial Museum in Hannover in 1928,<sup>37</sup> as well as at the *Pressa* in Cologne in 1928 and at the *International Fur Trade Exhibition* in Leipzig in 1930.<sup>38</sup> In his dynamic spaces, the perception changing at every step was puzzled in order to liberate artifacts from their static attachment to the wall and spectators from their passive, exclusively optical perception. The avant-garde “new seeing” (*novoe videnie*) required a moving, bodily sensation in interaction with spaces and objects, redefining the relationship between space, viewer, and object. The art critic Sigfried Giedion described in his article “Living Museum” (1929), dedicated to Lissitzky’s *Space of the Abstract* in Hannover, this new form of exhibiting as the animation of material culture:

It’s no longer sufficient to exhibit objects in a cultivated manner, even the bold, image-conscious and the happy hands who discover masterpieces in forgotten depots have no longer exclusive entitlement today. We also ask the museum to do the rest: “Bringing culture to life!” [...] New museums should become a living chronicle of time and show things while they are still in motion and not only when they start lying in the historical coffin. [...] It turns out that even museums do not have to be a dead affair; it depends only on the hand that has the power to animate matter.”<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, spectators were stimulated to move in different directions and thus participate more actively in the exhibition, which was intended to transmit the feeling of the new utopian world of the future.<sup>40</sup> Contemporary visitors, such as the filmmaker Dziga Vertov, compared the perception to intense contact with space and objects: “I sat there for a long time, examined and touched/groped (*oshchupyyal*).”<sup>41</sup>

36 E. Forgács, “Definitive Space: The many Utopias of El Lissitzky’s *Proun Room*”, in: *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow*, ed. N. Perloff, B. Reed, Los Angeles, 2003, pp. 47–78.

37 M. Gough, “Constructivism Disoriented: El Lissitzky’s Dresden and Hannover Demonstration-räume”, in: *Situating El Lissitzky...*, op. cit., pp. 77–125.

38 M. Hartmann, “Internationale Pelzfach Ausstellung (IPA), Leipzig 1930”, in: *Räume der Kunst: Ausstellungspraktiken im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Heiler, J. Krah, T. Zimmermann, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig [Vera Lauf], Leipzig, 2017, pp. 19–23.

39 S. Giedion, „Lebendiges Museum“, *Der Cicerone: Halbmonatsschrift für Künstler, Kunstfreunde und Sammler*, 1929, no. 4, pp. 103–106. „Es genügt nicht mehr, Gegenstände kultiviert aufzustellen, ja selbst die kühnen Bildbestimmter und die glücklichen Hände, die Meisterwerke in vergessenen Depots entdecken, haben heute keine Alleinberechtigung mehr. Wie verlangen auch vom Museum noch ein Übriges: Lebendig machen des Kunstbesitzes! [...] Die neuen Museen sollen zu einer lebendigen Chronik der Zeit werden und die Dinge zeigen, so lange sie noch in Bewegung sind und nicht erst, wenn sie anfangen, im historischen Sarg liegen. [...] Es zeigt sich, dass auch Museen keineswegs tote Angelegenheiten sein müssen, es kommt nur auf die Hand an, die den Griff hat, die Materie zu beleben.“

40 Landesgalerie Hannover ed., *Das abstrakte Kabinett: In memoriam Alexander Dorner*, Hannover, n.d., p. 15.

41 M. Gough, “Constructivism Disoriented: El Lissitzky’s Dresden and Hannover Demonstration-räume”, in: *Situating El Lissitzky...*, op. cit., pp. 109, 110.

Whereas the movement of chairs in the Origins Theater recalls the *Mareorama* effects employed at the World’s Fair in 1900 in Paris, where the seats were mechanically moved to evoke the sense of being in a boat on the sea,<sup>42</sup> the design of the exhibition display with zigzag boards is inspired by the constructivist avant-garde aesthetics, which reformulates the Lissitzky’s *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne in retro-avant-garde style (Fig. 3). One part of the display alludes to the construction of a large communist star in the Soviet pavilion, which in the Jewish museum in Moscow is attached to the ceiling and has got its twin in the Star of David at the bottom (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 3.** Oblique display boards, reminding of Lissitzky’s design for the Soviet Pavilion at the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne 1928, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

The spectator is invited to move in different rhythms through the history of Russian Jews from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, which reaches its climax in front of a huge panorama cinema showing scenes from the Second World War. It is reminiscent of patriotic battle panoramas,<sup>43</sup> and the heroic exhibition *Road to Victory* with its huge panoramic photographs, shown in 1942 in New York, when the USA entered the war.<sup>44</sup> In the Moscow museum, landscapes with soldiers invite the beholder to enter the screen and to be absorbed by it, like the hero in Buster Keaton’s slapstick detective film *Sherlock Junior* (1924). A narrow strip of “real” landscape in front

42 B. Comment, *Das Panorama: Die Geschichte einer vergessenen Kunst*, Berlin, 2000, p. 73; M.-L. von Plessen, “Die Abbildung von Realität in Panorama des 19. Jahrhunderts”, in: *Sehnsucht*, ed. M.-L. von Plessen, Frankfurt am Main, 1993, pp. 12–19.

43 B. Comment, op. cit., p. 8.

44 N. Doll, “*Road to Victory* als demokratische Propaganda-ausstellung”, in: *Kunst und Propaganda im Streit der Nationen 1930–1945*, eds. J. Czech, N. Doll, Dresden, 2007, pp. 374–379.



**Fig. 4.** The exhibition space, dedicated to the Avant-Garde period, inspired by Lissitzky's design for the Soviet Pavilion at the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne 1928, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



**Fig. 5.** Panorama cinema with a snowy, foggy landscape, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

of the screen in traditional dioramas functions like a *trompe l'oeil* effect in paintings that helps the tactile eye immerse itself into the snowy, foggy landscape (Fig. 5). This effect also invites the tactile eye to bow in front of war ruins, being afraid that they could crash down like stones in the *Sala dei Giganti* by Gulio Romano in Palazzo del Tè in Mantua (Fig. 6). Immersive scenes are intercepted by spoken testimonies of witnesses that transform the spectator into a second witness of narrated history.



**Fig. 6.** Panorama cinema with war ruins, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

A T-34 tank and a Po-2 airplane, which decisively influenced the victorious outcome of the war, demand a bodily response of the visitors due to their size and weight. The memory of war is embodied not only in large cinematic panoramas, but also in objects whose physical presence evokes the feeling of fear.

## Spectral Ambiences and Figures

Whereas informative texts, videos and films narrate the history of the Jews in Russia from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the post-communist period along illuminated sloping walls and display boards, the middle part of the exhibition space is sunken into darkness. It is separated by different ambiances, in which architectural fragments of a Jewish *shtetl* with a synagogue, a market and a Jewish room are staged. Moving through them, the visitor perceives history as a spatial experience in different environments. Figures made of white plaster, imitating marble, are placed beside or in architectural fragments: a prayer in a synagogue (Fig. 7), working women at the market (Fig. 8), musicians and a (grand)father with a little boy passing by in a typical Jewish *habitus* (Fig. 9, 10), as we know it for example from Isaak Babel's *Stories from Odessa*. The spectator is less brought into the past than the figures of the past are transposed into the present, haunting the fragmentary ambiances. The aim here is not the immersion of the spectator into the past, as in the case of the panoramic cinema with scenes from the Second World War, but a material embodiment of the past in the present. Ambiances and figures do not try to hide their artificial character. Figures do not recall individuals from the past, but only their typical representatives, embodied in white silicon-marble. Coming out of the darkness, their white shapes evoke a ghostly presence, which corresponds to





**Fig. 7.** Architectural design of a synagogue with a sculpture of a prayer, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



**Fig. 8.** Architectural design of a *shetl* with working women, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

the “spectral turn” in post-communist Soviet and Polish literature, film, and popular culture, dealing with traumatic memory of the past such as massacres, gulags, and the Shoah. Alexander Etkind and Zuzanna Dziuban depart from Jacques Derrida’s political “hauntology”, understood as a form of resistance against social exclusion, invisibility, and erasure. They interpret this phenomenon as a reaction to the



**Fig. 9.** A (grand)father with a little boy coming from the dark, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



**Fig. 10.** A (grand)father with a little boy passing by, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

traumas of the past, which were taboo and remained excluded from public discourse and official memory during communism, but also in the post-communist period.<sup>45</sup> Disturbing “after-effects” of displacement, violence and repression are a resistance

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<sup>45</sup> A. Etkind, “Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror”, *Constellations*, 2009, 16, no. 1, pp. 182–200; Z. Dziuban, “Memory as Haunting”, *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity, and Identities*, 2014, 12, pp. 111–135; Idem., “Haunting in the Land of the Untraumatized”, in: *The ‘Spectral Turn’: Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire*, ed. Z. Dziuban, Bielefeld, 2019, pp. 7–47.

to historical “amnesia”, confusion and doubt about state crimes. In literature and film, ghosts returning from the past to the present tell their stories and demand that those in the present remember. Dziuban, who focuses on the Jewish ghosts in Poland, links their appearance with a trans-generational “post-trauma”, from which not only the successors of victims suffer, but also those of the Polish witnesses or bystanders. In the Jewish museum in Moscow the phantom-like sculptures reside in fragmentary spectral ambiances, which, due to their whiteness, recall monuments to the fallen or sculptures on cemeteries. Standing beside visitors, they seem to live in a parallel world of materialized memory.

The beholder animates the figures by restituting, in her imagination, the tactile, haptic and other bodily qualities to them. The distance, mostly inevitable in a museum, at the same time suppresses and evokes the synesthesia of non-optical qualities. In this process of rapprochement and repulsion, the eye assumes tactile qualities, replacing the hand, and becomes a touching eye.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, a kind of “bodily perception” of “feeling” is activated, as already anticipated by avant-garde (and minimal) art. Objects are involved into the process of anthropomorphism and meta-psychology, in which the spectator animates them and transforms them into agents.<sup>47</sup> Their human bodily dimensions and proximity evoke an effect of increased tension and presence, which goes beyond that of other objects. The spectators are involved in a “conversation” of gestures and movements with them.

The tension between material and immaterial, between presence and absence, is also reinforced by interactive digital touch screens inside the objects, like the interactive Torah or the barrels with herrings and fruits on the market, where images of objects appear by touch, evoking their material qualities. However, the gesture of touch remains on the flat surface without reaching the haptic materiality. In front of an interactive mirror the beholder can observe herself as a Jewish double, wearing traditional Jewish clothes. For a moment, she is offered a new identity, which is detached from her real body. The dialogical situation in front of the mirror recalls the so-called psychoanalytical “mirror stage”, described by Jacques Lacan as a form of subjectivation and of a jubilatory, narcissistic self-approval of identity.<sup>48</sup> However,

46 A similar tension between the desire to touch and its prohibition is observed by the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in the motif *Noli me tangere* in painting. Painters, such as Titian, Pontormo and Bronzino, embodied the gesture of forbidden touching through the intrigue of hands, depicting closeness without intimacy, combining tenderness and distance. Mary Magdalene’s hand makes a gesture through the air without touching, but its proximity to the resurrected Christ provides the distance with intense bodily sensation. Emptiness itself in the in-between of figures materializes into an almost haptic presence, cf. J.-L. Nancy, *Noli me tangere*, Zurich 2019, pp. 33–36, 47–54.

47 Georges Didi-Huberman, departing from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, describes a bodily perception as a process of meta-psychology and anthropomorphism, in which the spectator attributes to objects human qualities animating them and transforming them into agents, as for example Tony Smith’s *Black Box (Die)* or Robert Morris’ *Box for Standing*. G. Didi-Huberman, *Was wir sehen, blickt uns an: Zur Metapsychologie des Bildes*, Munich 1999; Fr.: *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*, Paris 1992.

48 J. Lacan, “Das Spiegelstadium als Bildner der Ichfunktion (1949)”, in: Jacques Lacan, *Schriften I.*, ed. N. Haas, Frankfurt am Main, 1996, pp. 61–70.



the split between the spectator and the mirror image can be experienced as a joyful masquerade or as a challenge to one’s identity by seeing the (other) self as a double.

Voices, too, have an important part in producing spectral effects. Aside from voices, which belong to concrete people like interviewed witnesses or historians, there are also voices of people of different ages and genders – laughing, screaming, whispering, chatting, crying, declaiming poetry and singing in different languages – that have no body, but are floating and vibrating through space. Their extension and resonance mediate social interactions and produce bodily effects. Therefore, voices are also an important means of different mnemonic techniques in literature, as Aleida Assmann observes in various rhetorical traditions.<sup>49</sup> Through its eventfulness and scenic performance, the voice as a physical trace of presence, reanimates bodies and transform absence into presence. Talking from the dark, they give space and sound to the absent and dead, similar to the rhetorical figure of *prosopopoeia* in literature, which possesses the power to reanimate objects by voices.<sup>50</sup>

Whereas the ghostly sculptures wandering through different fragmentary ambiances seem to have no permanent housing, a hologram projection of Jewish families in a furnished room, who appear and vanish in certain time intervals, seems to be lost in time, not in space (Fig. 11, 12). Whereas photos as bearers of memory give us access to the past by re-temporalizing and re-spatializing history,<sup>51</sup> the artistic strategies of the hologram projection into the real space of a room, on the contrary, enable the past to enter the present and confront the spectator with its spectral presence. Family members perform their daily activities in the room – preparing a meal in the kitchen, reading a book on a sofa or just sitting in an armchair absorbed in thought. Their projection into space on transparent boards produce a *trompe l’oeil* effect that Jean Baudrillard links with the sense of loss and death: Objects or figures presented in a *trompe l’oeil* manner appear without syntax isolated from history and suspended from social life, therefore they can be compared with “the ghosts that haunt the emptiness of the stage”.<sup>52</sup> The rhythmical exchange of presence and absence intensifies the perception of space and objects, their arrangement and materiality. If the room is empty, things evoke a strong sense of loss, associated not only with the flow of time and the exchange of generations, but also with other reasons for no longer being there, such as migration, expulsion or violent death. However, the rhythmical returning of the missing on the loop finally gives the impression that they are not lost forever. The exchange of presence and absence seems to employ the

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49 A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich, 2006, pp. 27–29.

50 B. Menke, *Prosopopoeia: Stimme und Text bei Brentano, Hoffmann, Kleist und Kafka*, Munich, 2000, pp. 489–610, pp. 657–723; S. Weigel, “Die Stimme als Medium des Nachlebens: Pathosformel, Nachhall, Phantom, kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven”, in: *Stimme: Annäherung an ein Phänomen*, eds. D. Kolesch, S. Krämer, Frankfurt am Main, 2006, pp. 16–39.

51 E. Edward, “Grasping the Image: How Photographs are Handled”, in: *The Book of Touch*, ed. C. Classen, Oxford, New York 2005, pp. 421–425, here: p. 423.

52 J. Baudrillard, “The Trompe-l’Oeil”, in: *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France*, ed. N. Bryson, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 53–62, here: p. 54.



**Fig. 11.** A hologram of a family, projected in time intervals into an empty room, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow



**Fig. 12.** An empty room, The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow

psychical principle of repetition, analyzed by Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, who distinguished between a psychotic-pathological and a self-therapeutic form, the repetition can help to overcome a traumatic event.<sup>53</sup> The perpetual and perma-

<sup>53</sup> In his psychoanalytical writings, "Remembering, Repeating, Working Through" (1914) and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), Sigmund Freud distinguishes between two forms of repetition: a psychotic-pathological and a self-therapeutic one, Sigmund Freud, "Jenseits des Lustprinzips (1920)", in: *Sigmund Freud: Psychologie des Unbewussten: Studienausgabe* 3, ed. A. Mitscherlich, A. Richards, J. Strachey, Frankfurt am Main, 1982, pp. 213–272. In the psy-

nent acts of the inhabitants vacating of the room alludes to different reasons for no longer being there, such as emigration or death. But the “trauma” of vanishing is at the same time cured by a permanent returning. Both re-enactments of coming and going narrate the universal story of Jewish families.

The different sorts of intangible presence throughout the exhibition evoke strong material effects. In her book *Vibrant Matter* the political scientist Jane Bennett helps us understand the agency of immaterial things better. Building off of Bruno Latour, who sees things as agents, she introduces the idea of “vital materiality”, defined as the “capacity of things [...] not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own”.<sup>54</sup> According to Bennett, “vital materiality” can also be transformed into immaterial agents, who have efficacy and produce strong effects, despite not being tangible.

### “Post-Memory” – “Post-Documentary” – “Post-Material”

The phenomenon of the “post-material turn” in museums seems to be closely related to the concepts of “post-memory”,<sup>55</sup> “post-trauma”,<sup>56</sup> “post-catastro-

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chotic form of repetition, as in the case of a war veteran who repeatedly cleans his weapon for the next battle, the traumatized produces the action automatically and does not have the power to stop it. In the self-therapeutic form of repetition, as in the case of a child imitating the feared farewell and the confidently awaited return of the mother through the game of throwing away and pulling back a coil attached to a thread (*fort – da*), the action becomes conscious and willingly reproduced to cope with the inevitable separation. The child overcomes the pain of being left alone by an active act of throwing away the substitute for the mother and after some time fetching it back. The reflection about the mechanism of repetition accompanying a traumatic event became the central method of psychoanalysis, in which the traumatic primal scene was evoked and re-enacted in order to make it conscious.

54 J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A political theology of things*, Durham, 2010, viii. I want to thank William F. Condee (Ohio University) for drawing my attention to this book.

55 M. Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”, *Poetics Today*, 2008, 29, no. 1, pp. 103–128. The term “post-memory” was introduced by Hirsch in visual culture dealing with the trauma of the Holocaust in the second (and in the meanwhile third) generation. Having no immediate experience of the past, the successor generation is confronted with the memoirs of the previous ones as well as with the media ‘icons’ of the Shoah, such as documentary photographs that became canonized representations not only of the singular crime, but of a symbol of the whole Holocaust. Hirsch gives the example of Art Spiegelman’s early comic panels published in 1972 in the series *Funny Animals*, which were later extended into the two-volume graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (1986, 1991). One of the panels shows human mice standing behind the barbed wire, imitating a famous photograph of the Buchenwald prisoners taken in April 1945 by Margaret Bourke-White and published in *Life* magazine. Spiegelman also added his father to this famous group. Hirsch interprets this strategy of alteration as working through the “inherited” trauma.

56 Meanwhile, several other Holocaust graphic novels not only modify the memory of the Holocaust, but also Spiegelman’s graphic novel: Wilhelm Sasnal’s wall panels with balloons, but

phe<sup>57</sup> and the “spectral turn”<sup>58</sup> in literature and visual arts, dealing with traumatic historical events and lost material culture in later generations, producing “after-effects” such as the haunting of the past in “iconic” visual formulas in the present. They all narrate history by replacing original, documentary material by poetical transformed material, in which history is relocated, narrated from another viewpoint, supplemented or even rewritten. In the process of a personal or a collective working-through, artists abandon documentary representations in order to inscribe their own experience of a belated “post-memory”, “post-trauma” or “post-catastrophe” into art works. These artistic concepts of the psychoanalytic Freudian afterwardsness (*Nachträglichkeit*) are reinforced by postmodern meta-fictional historical narratives and appropriation art, using images of the past to narrate the conflicts of the present. The dialogue with the past takes place in a plurality of competing voices and perspectives, evoking an irritating palimpsest of discourses.<sup>59</sup> “Post-memory”, “post-trauma”, “post-catastrophe” and the “spectral turn” in literature

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without figures in the Bielska Gallery in Bielsko-Biała (2001) transform spectators into protagonists, M. Marszałek, “Einleitung”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen: Rakurse auf den Holocaust in Ostmitteleuropa nach 1989*, eds. M. Marszałek, A. Molisak, Berlin, 2010, pp. 7–23; C. Winzer, “Polnische Gegenwartskunst und die Erinnerung an den Holocaust im globalen Zeitalter. Zbigniew Libera, Mirosław Bałka, Wilhelm Sasnal”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen...*, op. cit., pp. 137–160). Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz’s and Krystian Rosenberg’s *Achtung Zelig! Second War* [*Achtung Zelig! Druga wojna*], 2004, redistribute the role of animals and their attributions to nations, K. Kupczynska, “Im Gerangel der Genres und Diskurse – über Aspekte der historiographischen Metafiktion in Comics”, in: *Geschichte und Mythos in Comics und Graphic Novels*, ed. T. Zimmermann, Berlin, 2019, pp. 269–287. Michel Kichka’s *Deuxième Génération* (2012) tries to rewrite the meaning of negatively connoted objects, which trigger the remembrance of the Holocaust, N. Heindl, V. Sina, “Comics der ‘zweiten Generation’: Geschichte und konstruierte Erinnerung in Art Spiegelmans *Maus* und Michel Kichkas *Deuxième Génération*”, in: *Geschichte und Mythos...*, op. cit., pp. 245–268.

57 A. Artwińska, A. Tippner, “Postkatastrophische Vergegenwärtigung – eine Positionsbestimmung”, in: *Nach dem Holocaust: Medien postkatastrophischer Vergegenwärtigung in Polen und Deutschland*, eds. A. Artwińska, A. Tippner, Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, 2017, pp. 15–39.

58 Z. Dziuban ed., *The ‘Spectral Turn’...*, op. cit.

59 Since the middle of the 1990s, a grotesque, distorted “post-memory” has also become a leading strategy of Polish artists dealing with Holocaust, starting with Zbigniew Libera’s *KZ-Lego System* from the series *Correctional Devices* (1996), Artur Żmijewski’s video *Game of Tag* (*Berek*, 1999), and the video trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007–11) by the Israeli-Polish group *Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland*. For these phenomena see M. Marszałek, “Anamnese: Exploration des Gedächtnisses in der gegenwärtigen polnischen Literatur und Kunst (eine intermediale Perspektive)”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen: Rekurse auf den Holocaust nach 1989*, eds. M. Marszałek, A. Molisiak, Berlin 2010, pp. 161–179; C. Winzer: “Polnische Gegenwartskunst und die Erinnerung an den Holocaust im globalen Zeitalter”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen...*, op. cit., pp. 137–160; T. Łysak, “Strategies of Recall in Post-1989: Polish Documentary and Artistic Films About the Holocaust”, in: *Nach dem Vergessen...*, op. cit., pp. 115–135, here: p. 115–120; T. Zimmermann, “Polen und Israel als Resonanzräume der Erinnerung: Polnisches Exil und jüdische Emigration in der Videokunst Artur Żmijewskis und der Gruppe Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland”, in: *Jüdische Räume und Topographien in Ost(mittel)europa: Konstruktionen in Literatur und Kultur*, eds. K. Smola, O. Terpitz, Wiesbaden, 2015, pp. 221–245, here: pp. 231–241.

and art reveal the impossibility of erasing history, which leads a “second life” in deterritorialized, phantasmatic visual images. Meanwhile, strategies of appropriation and replacing documents by fictive art are not reduced only to Jewish history, but are employed also in other “post-traumatic” and “post-catastrophic” narratives, which recall interethnic- and interreligious conflicts and wars, as for example in the successor states of former Yugoslavia.<sup>60</sup>

Nostalgia can also be perceived as a phenomenon of afterwardsness, of retroactive rewriting of the past that is present in private life as well as in political discourses in post-communist Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.<sup>61</sup> Cultural anthropologist Sharon Macdonald designates it as an emotional, affective turn to the past, which faces history by “feeling” it.<sup>62</sup> Nostalgic memory is, as Macdonald observes, triggered especially by a phenomenological, sensorial approach to objects or spaces, which are perceived as embodiments and emplacements of history. Nostalgic objects must not be antiquated or “old timers”, but can be also substitutes or imitations, replacing the lost by alluding to it.

Similarly, museums of “post-material” culture seek to give the spectators an opportunity to make their own “post-traumatic” or nostalgic experience of the past work through history with their own senses. They need not travel back in time by reading archival documents, tracing the paths of original historical objects or following documentary photographs and films, because they can encounter the past in “post-material” embodiments in the present. Such a re-created past can be resurrected in huge panorama cinemas, hologram projections in space, soundscapes, spectral sculptures in ghostly ambiances, belonging neither to the past nor to the present, but existing isolated from the flow of time and history. Mowing through the exhibition spectators can experience the tactile eye, haptic touch as well as

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60 Stephanie Young, doing research on new forms of forensic art, observes that some artists dealing with mass murders that happened during the Yugoslav dissolution wars erase any clear difference between a forensic document of evidence and a product of artistic imagination, but still speaks of them as “documents”. Such “post-Yugoslav documents” try to create a public discourse on memory of the dead and missing beyond the courtroom, but at the same time question and upset the authority of the document. Whereas original historical objects serve as documents or auratic relics of the past, substitutes can fill the gap by evoking intensive physical sensations. Although such substitutes have lost an immediate (indexical) contact with the past, they replace it by addressing different human senses. S. Young, “The Forensic Imagination: Evidence, Art and the Post-Yugoslav Document”, in: *Mapping the ‘Forensic Turn’: Engagements with Materialities of Mass Death in Holocaust Studies and Beyond*, ed. Z. Dziuban, Vienna, 2017, pp. 309–327, here: p. 316.

61 S. Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, New York, 2001; M. Velikonja, *Titostalgia – A study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz*, Ljubljana, 2009; C. Raudvere ed., *Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe: Political and Cultural Representations of the Past*, London, 2018.

62 S. Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*, London, New York, 2013, pp. 79–108. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this book as well as for many other suggestions for improvement.

full-bodily emersion, similar to watching movies at the cinema.<sup>63</sup> Through their own movement, gestures of touching surfaces and screens, they animate and enact objects, enter with them into an intimate, close relation. Although “post-material” culture has lost the aura of the original, the interplay of newly created material and immaterial elements replaces the old form of “remoteness” and “authenticity” with a new one that is founded on an interplay of immaterial and sensual bodily experience.

The phenomena of the “post-material turn” can also be enforced by efforts to draw a large number of tourists and to attract visitors of different generations through the sensual approach and animated displays, enacting “post-traumatic” strategies of a grotesque-phantasmatic distortion as well as of a more pleasant nostalgia. Already in 2002 Ruth Ellen Gruber observed how some memorial places of Jewish culture and history, even that of the Holocaust, have been transformed into pop culture and tourist consumerist products, addressing spectators of non-Jewish origins.<sup>64</sup> Such “virtual Jewry” serves, according to Gruber, as a replacement for the vanished Jewish culture and can often be encountered in European countries where Jewish culture was totally destroyed, such as in Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Today, farther Eastern and South-East European countries can be added to this long list. Sharon Macdonald links this phenomenon to the shift from social to cultural memory of the Holocaust, as well as to the broad public commemoration and heritagisation of the Holocaust.<sup>65</sup> The visitors of The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow are less transformed into “victims” as into “neighbours”, “witnesses” or “bystanders” in close proximity. They are invited to rethink their relationship to the haunting Jewish neighbors<sup>66</sup> as well as the relation of their national histories to Jewish histories.

The “post-material turn” in museums is thus a product of different “post”-phenomena, of “post-memory” and its further developments to “post-trauma”, “post-catastrophe”, and the “spectral turn”, or to “nostalgia” as their counterpart, harmonizing conflicting histories. It goes hand-in-hand with postmodern, appropriation art, dealing with history and with commercial strategies of creating “events” and personal emotional “experiences”. At the same time, the “post-material turn” reflects a broader medial “turn” in telling history, including contemporary history, from factual documentary to the emotional media of affective experience and closeness, as observed in war photography and graphic novels, reporting from a personal standpoint about (contemporary) history.<sup>67</sup> Finally, it also helps to create attrac-

63 J. M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, London, Los Angeles, 2009, pp. 1–4, 143–161.

64 R. E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, Los Angeles, London, 2002, pp. 25–71.

65 S. Macdonald, op. cit., p. 191.

66 For the figure of the next resp. the neighbour see S. Žižek, E. L. Santner, K. Reinhard eds., *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, Chicago, 2005.

67 T. Zimmermann, “Einleitung”, in: *Geschichte und Mythos...*, op. cit., pp. 11–54.

tion and spectacle, as an indispensable part of an attractive education for young generations and part of a tourist offer for visitors of different ages, ethnicities and religions. All these shifts and “turns” are connected by sensual experience, which makes the past more tangible and sensible.

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