*Katja Hock*
"Outside the frame",
a reflection on the invisible but imagined

« "À l'extérieur du cadre", une réflexion sur ce qui est invisible, mais imaginé »

Dans cet article, l'auteure fait appel à sa recherche où elle utilise la photographie et l'image en mouvement pour explorer les relations entre le lieu et la mémoire, se concentrant sur les mémoriaux liés à l'acte de mémoire et d'oubli. À travers son travail, elle vise à créer un espace pour que le spectateur s'engage dans ses propres expériences et souvenirs, allant au-delà de ce qui est montré ou seulement suggéré dans l'image et dans la limite de son cadre. En alliant différents médiums (photo et film) et contenus (villes et forêts), elle invite le spectateur à se déplacer entre des endroits géographiquement différents et séparés et à rapprocher ceux-ci à travers leur propre imagination, et possiblement leurs souvenirs personnels. Par le biais de la rencontre de ces éléments, une série de connotations est provoquée qui dépasse la signification de l'élément singulier et individuel. Montrant les photographies sans cadre-objet et plaçant le réfèrent d'une manière qui suggère une extension de signification au-delà de ses cadres-limite permet de faire une connexion plus facile entre les images, car celles-ci se réfèrent à ce qui se trouve de dehors de l'objet photographique, et permet de voir se dévoiler ce que Barthes a appelé la troisième signification, la signification obtuse. *Les films sont également sans cadre. Ici, la transition d'une image à la suivante est réalisée par un temps de transition prolongée laissant l'image qui disparaît aussi bien que celle qui apparaît dans un état de non-résolution. Cette expérience de ne pas savoir, de l'absence de forme demande au spectateur d'ajouter, de remplir l'interlude entre la perception et le souvenir.*
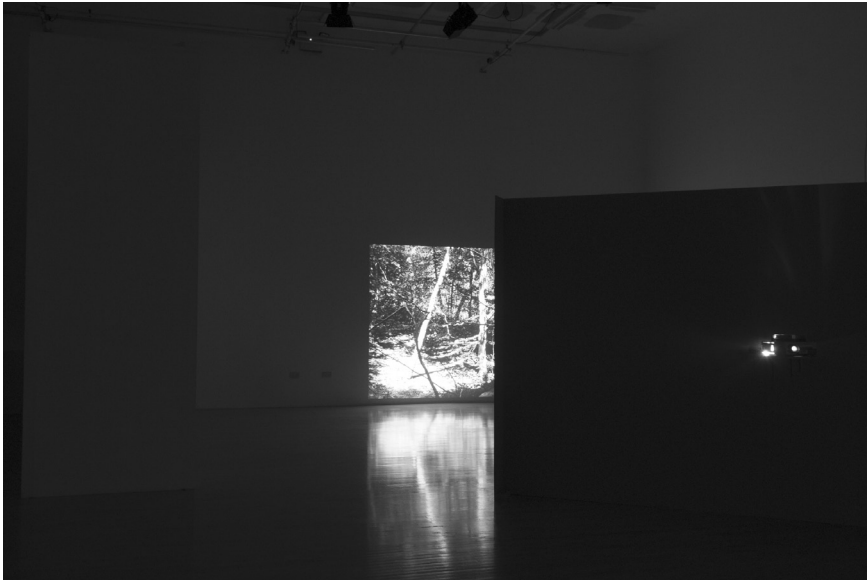
Historical framework and personal position

Through photographing and filming in and around sites in Berlin and the Grunewald, and the Serpentara Woodland near Olevano, Italy, my work explores the relationship between place and memory, focusing on 'deliberate' memorials and (in the woodlands) sites where a relation to the past is implicit or in suspense. In relation to the acts of remembering and forgetting, I am exploring the relationship between place and memory in and between Germany and Italy during WWII: two nations which have dealt with their related accountability in very different ways. By creating an awareness of what lies outside the frame – of what is not shown but only suggested in the image – I aim to create a space for viewers to engage with their own experiences and memories thereof, for questions to be asked that possibly remain unanswerable and for those to be formulated, which once were considered unspeakable. As Kraenzle reflects when referring to W.G. Sebald:

> "The invisible, Sebald reminds us, is often more compelling than the visible [...]. Every site is haunted by countless ghosts that lurk there in silence, to be evoked or not. These absences stimulate the imagination, encouraging the viewer to fill in the blank spaces in the landscape[1]."

To find concrete answers is not the aim; what is important is the *recognition of the necessity for such a space to exist*.

Being of German nationality and having grown up on the Dutch/German border in a village adjacent to a British NATO base, I am part of the generation whose grandparents remained silent about their experiences and memories of WWII. Sebald describes this as a "conspiracy of silence [that] still lasts. It is something which people in other countries can scarcely imagine. [...] It was just a taboo zone which you didn't enter[2]."

In this exploration, I use my own practice as an example. I reflect on how the medium of photography and film, both having historically been associated with the representation of the real, can be used in order to address personal and cultural memories. I enquire how the artist's personal and cultural memory becomes interwoven with the live encounter with a particular place, and how this experience can operate within the process of making the work and also as part of the final artwork itself. The use of these types of media is essential: it allows for fragments to be collected which would otherwise remain separated. Through the encounter of those fragments a series of connotations are prompted that go beyond the meaning of any individual element of the work; creating a space for possible narratives between those individual fragments and frames. In so doing, I aim for a journey and a series of physical connections to take place which otherwise stay theoretical, inviting the viewer to move between geographically discrete and separate places and to draw them closer together through their own imagination.

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1 - Kraenzle Christina, « Picturing Place: Travel, Photography, and the Imaginative », in Lise Patt (éd.), *Searching for Sebald*, Los Angeles, The Institute of Cultural Inquiry, 2007, p. 138.
2 - Wachtel Eleanor, « Ghost Hunter », in Lynne Sharon Schwartz (éd.), *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W.G. Sebald*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2007, p. 44.

The Places: the cities

The work focuses on two seemingly opposing environments: the city and woodland. However, both types of space address the notion of memory and remembering in distinct yet very connected ways. The two cities of the Rome-Berlin Axis formed in 1936 are testimonies to their own history. Berlin one could argue is a memorial itself: it is impossible to escape its marks and scars of twentieth-century history. As Andreas Huyssen points out:

> "Berlin now finds itself in a frenzy of future projections and, in line with the general memorial obsession of the 1990s, in the midst of equally intense debates about how to negotiate its Nazi and communist pasts[3]."

Describing Berlin, Huyssen argues that the city "remains first and foremost historical text, marked […] by the visible presence of its past, from prominent ruins […] to World War II bullet and shrapnel marks on many of its buildings[4]." Being confronted by these traces as well as the memorials it is almost impossible to escape its meaning and purpose – Germany's role during and after WWI and WWII. The 'Stolpersteine' (stumbling stones) put in place all over the city, and now recently being introduced to Rome, makes one almost stumble over and walk on monuments. Huyssen, drawing on Freud, underlines that "memory and forgetting are indissolubly linked to each other, […] memory is but another form of forgetting, and forgetting a form of hidden memory[5]." Paul Ricœur, referring as well to the psychoanalyst, elaborates by recalling:

> "Freud's remark at the start of the first text: the patient repeats instead of remembering. 'Instead of': repetition amounts to forgetting. And forgetting is itself termed a work to the extent that it is the work of the compulsion to repeat, which prevents the traumatic event from becoming conscious[6]."

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3 - Huyssen Andreas, *Present Pasts*, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 52.

4 - *Ibid.*, p. 52.

5 - *Ibid.*, p. 17.

6 - Ricœur Paul, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 445.

While trauma can be hidden, covered, shielded and repressed by substitution, at the same time forgotten past has the ability to return. Triggered by what Barthes refers to as the *Punctum*[7], it can pierce through the protective shield and return to the surface. Introducing the element of time, Ricœur continues:

> "This was even one of Freud's strongest convictions, that the past once experienced is indestructible. This conviction is inseparable from the thesis that the unconscious is *zeitlos*, timeless, when time is understood as the time of consciousness with its before and after, its successions, and coincidences[8]."

This principle is not only valid in relation to the experiences made by individuals, but also in relation to the collective memory of a nation, shared geographically as well as chronologically by generations.

Returning to Huyssen and focusing on Berlin as monument:

> "it seems striking that a country whose culture has been guided for decades now by a deliberate anti-fascist anti-monumentalism should resort to monumental dimensions when it comes to public commemoration of the Holocaust for the reunified nation. […] recalling Robert Musil's observation that there is nothing as invisible as a monument, Berlin – and with it all of this memorial-crazed Germany – is opting for invisibility. The more monuments there are, the more the past becomes invisible, and the easier it is to forget: redemption, thus, through forgetting[9]".

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7 - In *Camera Lucida, Reflections on photography* (1980), Barthes distinguishes between the 'Studium' and the 'Punctum' when describing the main factors of a photograph. The Studium, developed/coded by the photographer, shows the intention of the photographer and it creates interest in the spectator. The Punctum on the other hand is experienced by the spectator through a detail in the photograph, it jumps out of the image, pricks the viewer. The photographer has no influence on what that particular detail might be. The Punctum can exist alongside the Studium, but it will interrupt the Studium through creating this strong subjective reaction from the spectator.

8 - Ricœur, P., *op. cit.*, p. 445.

9 - Huyssen, A., *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Having been brought up within this culture and having inherited a cultural memory[10], questions such as 'Do I have to speak of the past and if so, how do I address it, the unspeakable?' arise. Has a space by now started to emerge – opened up – where a state, which could be described as melancholic, an automated chain of reactions, may unfold and transform into an engaged and more conscious process of mourning?

While Germany's place within the history of WWII is clear and undeniable, and Berlin functions almost as its main and most monumental memorial site (successfully or not), Italy's way of addressing its place with regard to its position towards Germany and the Nazis is somewhat less clear. As suggested by Philip Morgan, "one could say that the initial post-war forgetting of the war in Italy prevented, or postponed, Italians assuming some kind of collective awareness of and responsibility for Fascism[11]."

In Rome, I am exploring how this particular part of its history has found, or not found, its way into the surface as well as the substance of its architectural presence. I started similarly to how I began my work in Berlin, by photographing the most pressing memorials, such as the Fosse Ardeatine (Ardeatine Graves) and Via Rasella and Via Boccaccio. Here I am employing these specific recording devices, the cameras, still as well as moving, trying to focus on what is not visible. The gaps, the absence of clear descriptive information, is at the centre of the images, leading the viewer to the outside of the frame. The period between June 1940 and July 1943 and the resistance to Italy's Fascist war have not featured much in Italy's historical consciousness. As Morgan states:

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> "It was best, and natural, to forget, or rather to highlight, the positive and affirmative message of the events of 1943 to 1945, when the nation led to ruin and defeat by Fascism had remade itself in the glorious resistance to and liberation from Nazi occupation[12]"

Remembering and honouring Italy's resistance to Italy's own alliance with Germany before 1943 would mean Italy would have to acknowledge its role in Nazi fascism; it could be said that it is easier to mourn the dead resulting from being occupied, being the victim, than those having fallen due to being the oppressing force oneself.

The places: the woodlands

Apart from those few sites that are clearly marked, woodlands, such as the Grunewald outside Berlin, and the Serpentara woodland, east of Rome allow for a more ambiguous engagement compared to the cities.

A large woodland adjacent to the village of Elmpt, where I grew up, was partly used by a NATO base for training purposes. Most of it, however, formed the space between two national borders: Germany and the Netherlands. It is referred to as 'no-man's land'; an undefined interspace belonging to neither of the two nations.

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10 - For a definition of cultural memory, see Jan Assmann's essay « Collective Memory and Cultural Identity » (*New German Critique*, n° 65, Spring-Summer, 1995, p. 125-133, trans. John Czaplicka).

11 - Morgan Philip, *The Fall of Mussolini*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 5.

12 - *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Walking through those woods, I would enter one country by leaving another but without being aware of it, thereby demonstrating in the simplest of ways that borders are artificial. Borders are fabricated by men and having to be manned and managed by men, through fences and other obstacles in order to be maintained. Walking through those woods, I would occasionally find remains of old fences or military equipment like bags, making me aware of this woodland's particular historical context as well as my own personal encounter with this exact part of Germany's history.

The Grunewald, west of the city of Berlin shares part of this particular history as it is adjacent to the S-Bahnhof Grunewald Gleis 17 (platform 17) from where thousands of members of the Jewish community in Berlin were deported, sent on trains to their death in the Ghettos and extermination camps in the east. It is difficult to escape this part of history when travelling to the Grunewald using public transport, having to pass Gleis 17 when exiting the station on the way to the woods, or passing the memorial when picking up a doughnut from the bakery next to it.

The history of the Serpentara woodland in Olevano is somewhat different. German and Danish artists travelled to the woodland to paint and draw for generations before "in 1873 the painter Edmund Kanoldt discovered, to his horror, that the ancient oakwood [...] was doomed to be felled." Money was raised and "their forest home-away-from-home" was bought outright and "presented to the Kaiser, who established it in perpetuity as the Estate of German Artist"[13]. The woodland to this day is property of the Art Academy of Berlin. It is not clear which role - if any at all - the house, Villa Serpentara, which was built next to the woodland, featured during WWII. Taking into account its history and Italy's relationship with Germany before as well as during WWII, a space for speculation opens up beyond the visible.

Woodlands have historically been and still are to this day places of danger as well as safety. They are sites of mass executions and mass graves as well as places of sanctuary and strong holds for the résistance, opposing and fighting the oppressing regime. They can be understood as a place where one can follow ones thoughts, as well as tarry, hover for a while, get lost, metaphorically as well

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13 - Schama Simon, *Landscape and Memory*, London, Harper Perennial, 2004, p. 116.

as literally. However, this particular romantic and almost fairy-tale like idea of woodlands has by now been impregnated with the knowledge of the atrocities that have happened and are still happening in woodlands all over the world, creating a more ambivalent space, an idea explored by Simon Schama:

> "if a child's vision of nature can already be loaded with complicating memories, myths, and meanings, how much more elaborately wrought is the frame through which our adult eyes survey the landscape[14]."

The woodlands create a space where one's imagination is infiltrated by facts and facts are fused with fiction. Being in the woodlands, moving from the cities, allows for an initial escape, only to be caught up by one's own thoughts and imagination. The images in this body of work, still as well as moving, taken of those woodlands, present a lot of detailed information about the trees and undergrowth but at the same time they provide very little with regard to their meaning. As suggested by Kraenzle when writing about Sebald's use of photographs in his book *Rings of Saturn*,

> "these images – which offer little factual information about the time, location, or condition of their creation – are perhaps more compelling as depictions of a particular view of landscape, one which values landscape for its evocation of the intangibles, the mysteries of human existence that cannot easily be figured in language. Here the photographic medium is enhanced by its subject. Both function as 'incitements to reverie,' invitations to fantasy and projection by the observing mind[15]."

The richness of detail provides the possibility to be submerged within the layers of lines and light only to be led beyond what lies within the frame, to linger or wander off to what might be behind, in front or either side, to what until then remained unveiled. It is the viewer's imagination, made up of different ingredients like personal experiences, cultural circumstances and heritage that make up the images, fill the space outside the frame; of what is not shown, but only suggested.

The material

The notion of remembering is to a certain extent shared between these objects: photographs, the very 'still' moving images that I have been working with, and memorials. All function as a form of vehicle where memories can be experienced, referring to what has been.

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14 - *Ibid.*, p. 6.
15 - Kraenzle Christina, « Picturing Place », *art. cit.*, p. 142.

By bringing these different elements together I aim to draw the viewer's attention to the relationship between nations, memories and experiences. Films and photographs taken in Rome are shown next to those taken in Berlin, woodland images are mixed with ones showing the cities.

The photographs are presented without object-frames. In *The Image*, Jacques Aumont points out that:

> "All images have a material base. They are all objects. The frame is first and foremost the edge of this object, its material, tangible boundary. Very often, this edge is strengthened by the addition of another object to the object-image, which we will call an object-frame[16]."

16 - Aumont Jacques, *The Image*, London, BFI Publication, 1997, p. 106.

Not being framed, flattened and contained, the photographs are touching the wall they are presented on, the edges of the photographs being in close contact to the wall. However, in some instances, due to the nature of the photographic paper, the images are lifted slightly off the surface of the wall, unveiling the now visible space that is to be found between the photographic surface and that of the wall.

The material edge of an image is its perceptible limit and Aumont refers to it as the limit-frame, "which is where the image ends, defining its field by separating it from what it is not; in this way, it constitutes an out-of-frame[17]."

Here the edges of an image are what limits the image, but more importantly in this work, it builds a connection between the interior of an image, its field with its imaginary extensions 'off-screen'.Showing the photographs in this way, leaving gaps between the individual sheets of paper, draws attention to their own materiality as well as their limits. Through that they are reflecting the place where the photographs are shown and what is to be seen in its close proximity, here and

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17 - *Ibid.*

now. As well as that, this particular hanging arrangement draws attention to the place of the imaginary, that which is connecting the individual images, their content and that which is brought towards the image by the viewer.

Through lifting itself in parts off the wall, the photographic paper inscribes its own physical being onto the viewer. They almost physically 'face' the viewer, rounding their edges towards him or her. This creates a greater awareness of the wall behind the photographs, through which the wall itself becomes part of the physical environment of the here and now of the viewing process.

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However, the here and the now merge with the past, the experienced past being the present 'present'[18]. And vision, as suggested by Juhani Pallasmaa,

"reveals what the touch already knows. We could think of the sense of touch as the unconscious vision. Our eyes stroke distant surfaces, contours and edges, and the unconscious tactile sensation determines the agreeableness or unpleasantness of the experience. The distant and the near are experienced with the same intensity, and they merge into one coherent experience[19]."

18 - Deleuze Gilles, *Difference and Repetition*, London, Continuum, 2004, p. 103.
19 - Pallasmaa Juhani, *The Eyes of the Skin*, Sussex, Whiley-Academy, 2005, p. 42.

The viewer is asked to move through the exhibition space, walking along walls while viewing the photographs. The journey thereby becomes a physical as well as metaphorical one. In the case of the films, this is even more emphasised as they are presented in a way which makes a simultaneous viewing of the work impossible. Due to a wall separating the individual screens, the viewer has to move from one area of the space to another, thereby again incorporating the space the work is shown inside within the body of the work itself.

While moving within the space, the viewer becomes part of the projection as he/she will create a shadow within the image. This draws the viewer's attention not only to the projected image but also to the place from where the image originates as well as the space between projector and the surface the light falls upon, be that the viewer's body or the wall. The viewer's body wanders in and out of the image's frame. Through that, attention is drawn to the relationship between that what is inside the frame and that which lies outside: the invisible – which is not shown, but suggested through what is visible inside the frame. Walking through the space of the projections, being projected upon, casting a shadow onto the screen by absorbing the light from the projector not only creates an awareness of the materiality of the work but also of the viewer's body.

Individual segments of film morph very slowly into each other, creating moments where the image becomes unclear and almost ghostlike, which again draws attention to the process and material used. Through the process of one image emerging almost through that of the one that is merging into the background until it disappears, the flat screen or surface of the projection gains an almost three dimensional existence. Here another sense of depth is introduced apart from the one suggested by the content of the images themselves. The space in front, as well as behind, the projection surface is introduced as another place for the imaginary.

As pointed out above, photography and film are commonly associated with the representation of the real, that which happened in front of the lens. Both media single out fragments, select a particular 'duration of time and place' and hold onto it, freeze it or/and contain it. By identifying and collecting fragments, in this case moments and places encountered while being in Rome and Berlin, the photographs and films coalesce segments which share a certain period of history but are separated geographically. This juxtaposition of individual jet connected fragments allows for what Barthes describes as a *third meaning* to be sculpted, prompting connotations that go beyond the meaning of the individual ones. When reflecting on the *third meaning* Barthes observes that:

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> "I am not sure if the reading of this third meaning is justified – if it can be generalized – but already it seems to me that its signifier (the traits to which I have tried to give words, if not to describe) possesses a theoretical individuality. On the one hand, it cannot be conflated with the simple *existence* of the scene, it exceeds the copy of the referential motif, it compels an interrogative reading (interrogation bears precisely on the signifier not on the signified, on reading not on intellection: it is a 'poetical' grasp)[20]".

20 - Barthes Roland, « The Third Meaning », in *Image-Music-Text*, London, Fontana Press, 1977, p. 53.

Inviting the viewer to accompany me on a metaphorical journey, moving between different places and times – moments in history and cultural memory – allows for a space to be created where, similarly to the woodlands, one can linger and spend time. It creates an opening, a *fold for the imaginary*, informed by personal memories, which goes beyond the expected and already identified. Describing "the other meaning, the third, the one 'too many'", Barthes states that:

> "the third meaning also seems to me greater than the pure, upright, secant, legal perpendicular of the narrative, it seems to open the field of meaning totally, that is infinitely. I even accept for the obtuse meaning the word's pejorative connotation: the obtuse meaning appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information[21]".

The viewer experiences physical as well as metaphorical space, and the photographs "insist on their status and identity as objects rather than simply as photographs of objects[22]". The paper does not hang flat. It absorbs the humidity from its surrounding conditions, making it stand away from the wall, exposing a space behind, and thereby drawing attention to the space in front, and to that which has not been shown in the photograph. Here I am interested in particular in the way the photographic surface itself shares elements with the surfaces represented; the granite of certain memorials is reacting to the elements, fissures are becoming visible and fluids are decolouring the stone. By using a particular paper and showing the objects without a frame, the photographs emphasise the physical qualities and material production, drawing attention to porosity, the notion of decay and duration. Exposing the photographic object to its environment without protection, its material will react and change, like the memorials, whether publicly sanctioned or involuntary. And like memories, the surfaces of both the memorials and the photograph are porous: they are like a living membrane, they are imperfect. Like the fading and recurring images of the film, they change over time, they become and they go.

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21 - *Ibid.*, p. 55.

22 - Fer Briony, « The Space of Anxiety », in G. A. Johnson (éd.), *Sculpture and Photography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 238.

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Katja Hock is a German practicing artist working mainly with still and moving image. After her studies in Bielefeld she undertook her MA in photographic studies at the School of Art & Design in Derby (DAAD scholarship). With an AHRC research scholarship, she continued her studies at Central Saint Martin's College of Art & Design London, completing with a PhD in Fine Art. She currently teaches Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University where she runs the Master of Fine Art (MFA). In her work Katja aims to develop a practice, which is a reflection on the medium of photography and film itself while at the same time creates a place for the viewer to be drawn into the image at an imaginative level. Space is itself considered as being formed by people through their occupation of it and the artist aims to show how still and moving image frames and refers both to human presence and to transience.

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