Chapter 4
Dispersed Truths and Displaced Memories: Extraterritorial Witnessing and Memorializing by Diaspora Through Public Art

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Introduction

Shortly after 6 p.m. on 2 October 2010, in a Toronto stadium usually reserved for soccer matches and the annual Caribbean Carnival, artists Diane Misaljevic and Allan Kosmajac opened their installation *Fragments* to the viewing public. *Fragments* was one programmed element of *Nuit Blanche*, a highly patronized, sunset-to-sunrise contemporary art event. From dusk until dawn, over a cold autumn night, a fluctuating stream of visitors walked around and amongst a grid of over four hundred wooden boxes, spread across the playing field. Each box contained artefacts lent or donated by a person who self-identified as a survivor of genocide, torture, war crimes or other international human rights violations. The Canadian Centre for International Justice (CCIJ), which works with survivors of human rights atrocities to seek legal remedy and bring alleged perpetrators to justice, publicly endorsed and funded Misaljevic and Kosmajac's project and also collaborated in the call for artefacts. The CCIJ stated that their support for *Fragments* was an attempt 'to raise public awareness of a significant issue that is largely invisible in Canada, despite its impacts on the lives of Canadians' and 'to generate understanding of the need to support efforts by survivors to seek justice'.[1]

[1] "The Installations: Sightings and Fragments", accessed February 16, 2012, http://www.ccji.ca/nuit-blanche/index.php#ccij.

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Misaljevic and Kosmajac's project thus coalesces two parallel trends in transitional justice: increased concern for engaging diaspora in post-conflict peacebuilding, particularly restorative justice[2]; and a proliferation in initiatives that mobilize post-conflict communities to participate in art-based healing.[3]

Drawing on the experience of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Young and Park have reinforced the significance of systematic programmes to engage diaspora in transitional justice processes, particularly given the following: the numbers of witnesses and alleged perpetrators known to be residing abroad; the economic and political influence of diaspora on conflict dynamics; and the right of refugees to contribute to collective truth narratives concerning gross violations of their human rights.[4] However, as Young and Park also note, financial and practical barriers severely compromise the extent to which diaspora have been able to access formal in-country transitional justice processes. Meanwhile Simić and Daly, have positioned informal, non-state memorializing projects as valuable components of a holistic transitional justice approach, arguing that such projects are uniquely placed to rebuild trust, cultivate solidarity and promote reconciliation, and crucially have the capacity to catalyse interaction beyond ethnic borders.[5] Misaljevic and Kosmajac's *Fragments* project offers fertile space for considering how an extraterritorial art intervention might expand opportunities for diaspora to participate in transitional justice processes. A critical feature of the *Fragments* project is that it was not conceived and implemented by an affected community group or non-profit organization, but rather was conceptualized and driven by Misaljevic and Kosmajac. This paper will therefore examine how certain decisions (explicit and implicit) taken by the artists during the design, development and production of *Fragments* structured the participation of diaspora and explore the implications from a transitional justice perspective.

The Collaborative Art Practice of Misaljevic and Kosmajac

An Enquiry into Personal and Collective Memory, Conflict and Trauma

Since the early 1990s, Misaljevic and Kosmajac have been creating public installations that explore cultural memory and reconciliation and bring attention to

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[2] See, for example, Laura Young and Rosalyn Park, "Engaging Diasporas in Truth Commissions: Lessons from the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission Diaspora Project," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* Vol. 3 (2009): 344.

[3] See, for example, Olivera Simić and Kathleen Daly, "One Pair of Shoes, One Life': Steps Towards Accountability for Genocide in Srebrenica," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* Vol. 5 (3) (2011): 489.

[4] Young and Park, 344.

[5] Simić and Daly, 489.

the experiences of survivors of conflict and human rights abuse. Their earlier collaborative works concentrated on the war in the former Yugoslavia and its aftermath. Kosmajac was born in Canada, but moved to Sarajevo as a child. He returned to Canada the summer of his eighteenth birthday, one year before the war broke out in the former Yugoslavia. He describes his compulsion to interrogate individual and collective memories of the war in terms of a sense of a responsibility as diaspora: 'I felt a duty, because I wasn't there, to accentuate it and not let it slip away.'[6] Misaljevic is of Bosnian/Croatian descent and was born and raised in Canada. She has discussed her interest in the Balkan conflict as the prerogative of second-generation survivors, akin to French artist Christian Boltanski's preoccupation with holocaust post-memory.[7]

In 2004, Misaljevic and Kosmajac presented *Memento Mori*, an immersive video and sound installation, in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Toronto.[8] *Memento Mori* critiqued the media's exploitation of the war in Sarajevo and underscored the media's reliance on sweeping explanatory narratives. In 2005, Misaljevic and Kosmajac deepened their inquiry into individual and collective memory through a mixed media installation, *Faith in Facts* (2005). Providing a poetic mimicry of the destruction of cultural memory, the artists projected a slide of books that had been damaged during the bombing of the National Library in Sarajevo. At the outset of the exhibition, the artists stained the slide with a fungal mould, cultivated from a soil sample from Sarajevo. During the course of the exhibition, the mould gradually disintegrated the photographic image, acting as a metaphor for the decay of civility and the temporal sullying of individual memory.[9]

In early 2010, Julie Stewart, a school friend of Misaljevic who worked for the CCIJ and had followed the artists' successive projects, approached them about developing a work that dealt with victims of atrocity and indicated that funding could be made available from the CCIJ.[10] Misaljevic and Kosmajac had periodically discussed expanding their work beyond a focus on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and therefore responded positively to Stewart's suggestion. Inspired by the post-memory installations of Boltanski and also Colombian artist Doris Salcedo, Misaljevic and Kosmajac conceptualized an ambitious series of interconnected artworks. The Canadian artists conceived of the *Fragments* installation as a temporary memorial site for grieving and the public acknowledgement of suffering and also proposed a companion *Sightings* project (in which billboard-sized images of *Fragments* participants would be mounted on public transit

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[6] Allan Kosmajac, email message to author, February 28, 2012.

[7] Ralf Beil, *Boltanski.Time.* Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006.

[8] "Memento Mori", accessed November 8, 2012, http://www.44art.ca/Site_11/Memento_Mori.html.

[9] "Faith in Facts", accessed November 8, 2012, http://www.44art.ca/Site_11/Faith_in_Facts.html.

[10] For her role in catalysing the project, facilitating funding and assisting implementation, Julie Stewart is credited on certain project documentation as a collaborating artist.

platforms) to act as a counterpoint to the normal invisibility of survivors' experiences in the public sphere. Misaljevic and Kosmajac also planned a website that would integrate and augment the two projects and act as a longer term virtual space, allowing participants and the broader public to engage with the works beyond the time frame of the physical installations.

Meta-structures and Micro-truths

In early 2010, Misaljevic and Kosmajac produced and distributed invitations to participate in *Fragments* in both physical formats (flyers and posters) and electronic formats (email, Facebook and website announcements). They invited survivors of genocide, torture, war crimes and other international human rights violations, as well as families of murdered or disappeared persons, to donate or loan up to five personal artefacts that could either 'represent their past experiences, or their experiences of living with these memories even now they have found refuge in Canada.'[11] The artists provided examples of suitable artefacts (such as clothing, documents and photographs) but also welcomed 'any object of personal relevance.'[12] The invitations explicitly stated that the artefacts would be displayed at Lamport Stadium as part of a 'collective art installation.'[13] The artists committed to return the artefacts after the exhibition had finished. Misaljevic and Kosmajac also offered to photograph any items that survivors felt were of too much sentimental value to lend or donate and include these photographs in the installation in place of the physical artefacts.

Stewart and a colleague from the CCIJ, Johanna MacDonald, volunteered to mobilize survivors and their communities to donate artefacts. In total, 418 individuals lent or donated artefacts to the *Fragments* installation including the following: a family passport photo used by a refugee to escape Chile's Pinochet dictatorship; a train ticket to Auschwitz (see Fig. 4.1); a necklace that a Mexican man was wearing the day he and his wife were kidnapped and tortured by Los Zetas cartel; a stone commemorating the murder of a family member in Colombia; a book that a Tamil man read repetitively while in a Sri Lankan prison; and a letter written by a concentration camp survivor from Bosnia-Herzegovina, delivered by the Red Cross to inform his family he was alive (see Fig. 4.2). Although Misaljevic and Kosmajac initially welcomed any artefacts of relevance, during the process of collecting the artefacts they imposed two strict constraints: the objects should fit within a box of 14 × 14 × 3 inches; and they should not contain explicit imagery of torture or violence, in order to avoid re-victimizing participants.

[11] Diane Misaljevic and Allan Kosmajac, "Fragments" (unpublished poster, 2010).

[12] Misaljevic and Kosmajac, "Fragments."

[13] Misaljevic and Kosmajac, "Fragments."

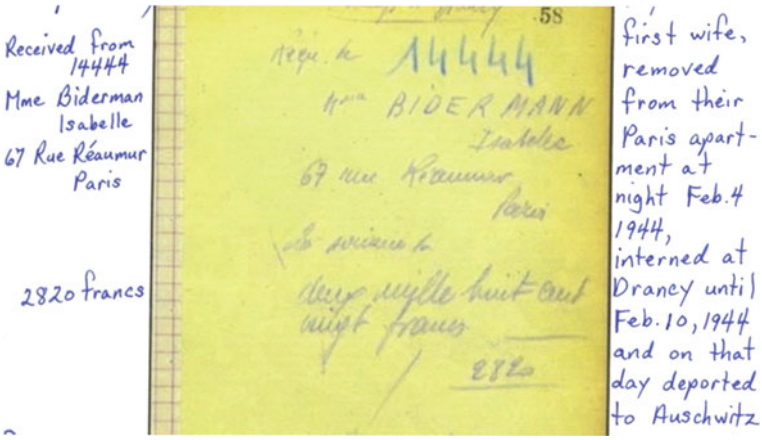
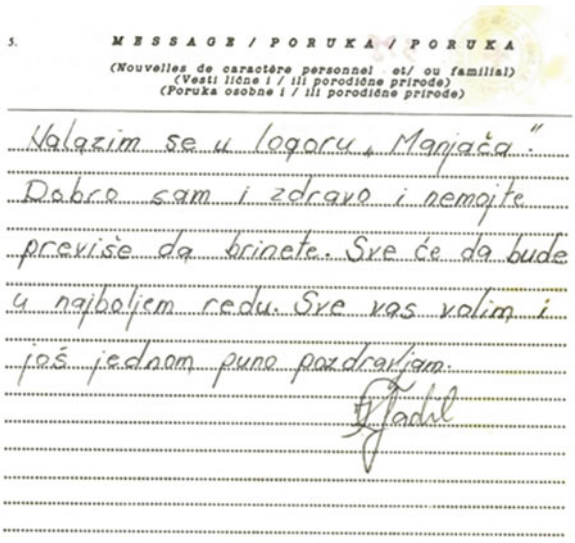


Fig. 4.1 Box 612: Train ticket to Auschwitz. Image courtesy of Allan Kosmajac


5. MESSAGE / PORUKA / PORUKA

(Nouvelles de caractère personnel et/ ou familial)
(Vesti lične i / ili porodične prirode)
(Poruka osobne i / ili porodične prirode)

Valazim se u logoru, Manjača."
Dobro sam i zdravo i nemojte
previše da brinete. Sve će da bude
u najboljem redu. Sve vas volim i
još jednom puno pozdravljam.
Fadil

Fig. 4.2 Box 492: 'I am in the Manjaca camp. I am good and healthy and don't worry too much. Everything will be OK. I love you all and send greetings once more, Fadil'. Image courtesy of Allan Kosmajac

In essence, through their invitation and subsequent instructions, Misaljevic and Kosmajac had presented a conceptual mechanism to place individual memory narratives, associated with specific traumatic events, within a collective framework. By inviting the submission of artefacts (rather than performative witnessing or audio–video recordings of testimony), the artists structured these micro-narratives as primarily object-based. Misaljevic and Kosmajac also asserted an egalitarian treatment of the object-narratives, by limiting the artefacts submitted by a participant to those that would fit within a single wooden box of a specified size,

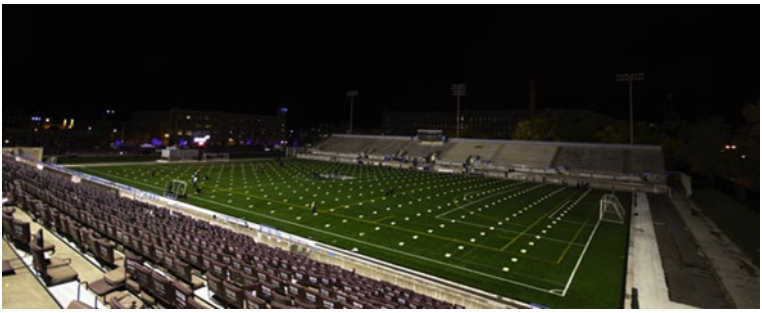


Fig. 4.3 *Fragments*, documentation of installation, Lamport Stadium, Toronto, October 2, 2010. Image courtesy of Allan Kosmajac

inferring that each participant's narrative would be accorded equal visual weighting.

Misaljevic and Kosmajac did not attempt to filter the submitted artefacts in terms of validity or merit, nor did they seek to confirm whether every participant had legitimate claim to identify as a victim of human rights abuse. Consequently, and in spite of the involvement of the CCIJ and organization's focus on the legal accountability of perpetrators of human rights abuse, the *Fragments* project cannot be considered as a mechanism for forensic truth recovery. However, Misaljevic and Kosmajac's project could certainly be regarded as part of a more holistic approach to truth recovery and reconciliation. Fischer has argued that due to the practical limitations to prosecution in instances where large-scale human rights violations have occurred, reconciliation and conflict transformation can only emanate from a holistic approach to truth recovery, in which forensic truth recovery is complemented by the following: narrative truth (storytelling by victims and perpetrators, in which personal truths are communicated to a wide public); dialogical truth (truth of experience is established by interaction, discussion and debate); and healing or restorative truth (documentation of truth and acknowledgement which accords dignity to victims and survivors).[14] As conceived by Misaljevic and Kosmajac, the *Fragments* project combined elements of each of these processes: the call for artefacts invited object-based storytelling of personal micro-truths; the exhibition context offered a concrete opportunity for interaction, discussion and debate; and the project meta-structure was explicitly intended to produce a temporary memorial site for grieving and the public acknowledgement of the experiences (and losses) of survivors (Fig. 4.3).

[14] Martina Fischer, "Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Theory and Practice," in *Advancing Conflict Transformation: The Berghof Handbook II*, ed. B. Austin et al. (Opladen/Framington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2011), 411.

Materializing Memory

Narrative accounts of identity argue that a coherent self-narrative enables a person to order experiences, create meaning and exercise agency, and that trauma can shatter this self-narrative, leading to a feeling of estrangement and impeding one's capacity for effective agency.[15] French writer and Auschwitz survivor Charlotte Delbo described this estrangement with eloquence: 'Auschwitz is so deeply etched in my memory that I cannot forget one minute of it… I live next to it. Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self… The skin enfolding the memory of Auschwitz is tough. Even so it gives way at times, revealing all it contains… the suffering I feel is so unbearable, so identical to the pain I endured… and I feel death fasten onto me.'[16] Psychoanalyst Dori Laub, also a survivor of the Holocaust, contends that a person who has experienced the trauma of a concentration camp is not naturally capable of extricating himself or herself from the event in order to describe it from the perspective of an external observer.[17] Following Laub's argument, witnessing is necessary not only so that others come to know what took place, but also more fundamentally, so that the witness can come to know and process the experience.

Extending Deleuze's theory of encountered signs, Bennett suggests that witnessing functions as an interface: 'a process of coming into view… bound up in a dynamic encounter with a structure of representation'.[18] Since diaspora by definition live in cross-cultural settings, one of the critical structural challenges of extraterritorial witnessing is that participating diaspora will tend to be operating within unfamiliar social and linguistic codes. As diasporic author Vikram Seth noted, 'this can heighten the sense of a derivative existence, in which one's tongue is perpetually "warped"'.[19]

In relation to the experiences of diaspora visiting Western museums, Lynch has observed that handling objects from a museum collection can enable diaspora to overcome the initial feelings of intimidation, to work through anxieties and alienation, to exercise remembrance, to process emotions stirred by the events remembered and to negotiate new narratives of self. In her analysis, Lynch recounts Klein's theory of internal object relations, which established the significance of the internalization of early relationships in the formation of the self, and

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[15] Jacqui Poltera, "Self-narratives, Story-telling, and Empathetic Listeners", *Practical Philosophy* 10:1 (2010): 65.

[16] Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory* (Evanston: The Marlboro Press: Evanston, 2001), 2.

[17] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History,* ed. S. Felman and D. Laub, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57–74.

[18] Jill Bennett. *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 31.

[19] Vikram Seth, *A Suitable Boy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 68.

traces the expansion of Klein's theory to external objects.[20] In particular, she highlights Winnicott's investigation into the importance of manipulating external objects for symbol formation in children and Winnicott's determination that adults 'continue throughout life to use objects to develop, review, and redevelop a sense of self'.[21] Lynch's research was motivated by a concern that traditional museum norms may amplify the innate disconnection felt by diaspora, and also by a conviction that museums have a responsibility to use their collections to build ethical and social relationships. She urges museums to adopt constructivist approaches to learning and to develop opportunities for diaspora 'to 'do' things with objects… to use what is available to us in exploring the world—to 'play', in much the same way as an artist does.'[22] In this context, Lynch quotes Ybarra-Frausto's (1994) observation (based on the strategies of so-called Rasquachismo or Chicano diaspora artists) that sorting through objects allows 'syncretism, juxtaposition and integration… self-conscious manipulation of materials or iconography… the manipulation of… artefacts, codes and sensibilities.'[23]

Adapting Lynch's analysis, it could be argued that by emphasizing object-narratives and privileging a visual lexicon, Misaljevic and Kosmajac lessened some of the structural impediments associated with cross-cultural verbal witnessing. The artists provided a framework that allowed diaspora to review their sense of self and their feelings and recollections related to trauma and survival through the handling and manipulation of objects; significantly, this process was carried out in private, prior to the submission of the artefacts. Echoing Lynch's treatment of Ybarra-Frausto, Misaljevic and Kosmajac could be considered as artist–curators (and as artist–archivists, as will be discussed presently). Although Misaljevic and Kosmajac maintained artistic proprietary over the project, their conceptual framework delegated certain artistic decisions to the participating diaspora, who sorted through objects, sifting and handling, processing juxtapositions, and isolating materials and iconography to convey, through a visual lexicon, a selected self-narrative to a public audience.

In their invitation text, Misaljevic and Kosmajac had urged survivors to submit artefacts that represented either past experiences or contemporary experiences of living with memories of the past. In this way, diaspora were directed to select objects that could serve as mnemonic devices; artefacts that would materialize memory, providing a connection both physical and existential to a remembered past. Some participants submitted objects that they had brought to Canada as mementos of their past, such as a raincoat with distress marks from shrapnel, a

[20] Bernadette Lynch, "The Amenable Object: Working with Diaspora Communities through a Psychoanalysis of Touch", in *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, ed. Helen Chatterjee (London: Berg, 2008), 266.

[21] Lynch, "The Amenable Object," 266.

[22] Lynch, "The Amenable Object," 268–269.

[23] Lynch, "The Amenable Object," 269.

school report card, teaching medals, or a child's book covered in scribbles.[24] Others submitted objects that acted as signifiers of a commitment to a present identity and agency that had evolved beyond victimhood. For example, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide submitted a pamphlet for Shelter Them, a charitable organization for Rwandan orphans that she had founded with her sister after arriving in Canada.[25] Thus, through the initial instructions guiding participation, diaspora were encouraged not only to frame their object-narratives in terms of the trauma endured, but also to contextualize their pasts, thereby integrating their traumatic past 'into a life with a before and after.'[26]

Archiving Trauma and Indexing Survival

Around fifty of the participating diaspora volunteered to assist in receiving, cataloguing, transporting and installing the submitted artefacts in Lamport Stadium. Misaljevic and Kosmajac had initially considered more intimate venues for the installation and originally favoured a church setting for its resonance with contemplation and memorializing.[27] However, the artists ultimately determined that a more expansive site would allow for wider participation and potentially provide greater impact. Misaljevic and Kosmajac realized that locating their installation in a stadium would evoke references to the adaption of stadiums in varied civil conflicts as structures for detention, torture and execution. Given the artists' cultural backgrounds, they were also aware that their plan to install white pine boxes (containing the artefacts) en masse in a grid across the stadium floor would introduce a reference to grave markers and heighten a connection to the conversion of Sarajevo's Olympic stadium into a cemetery during the wartime siege.

When the *Fragments* installation opened to the public at dusk on 2 October 2010, volunteers were still placing the final rows of boxes of artefacts. Once complete, a visitor could enter the stadium from the level of the bleachers and look down upon a spatial drawing of white grid points contained within the perimeter markings of the football field.

As the visitor descended to the stadium floor, the functionality of the grid points as receptacles emerged, but it was not until the visitor stooped or kneeled beside a

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[24] "Fragments Box Index", accessed 17 September 2012, http://www.fragments.ca/Site_16/Box_Index.html.

[25] "Josephine Murphy", accessed 17 September 2012, http://www.fragmentsandsightings.ca/Site_14/Josephine.html. Also see "Shelter Them", accessed 26 January 2012, http://www.shelterthem.com.

[26] Susan Brison. "Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory and Personal Identity," in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. D. Meyers (Colorado:Westview Press, 1997), 23.

[27] Descriptive details of the installation and artists' recollections of audience response are drawn from electronic communications with Diane Misaljevic and Allan Kosmajac on 28 February, 2012, and 17 September, 2012.

specific box that the artefacts inside came into clear view.[28] Through their choice of site, their consideration of spatial relationships and their use of artefacts and receptacles, Misaljevic and Kosmajac structured an encounter with an architectural archive. While individually, each box suggested a personal visual narrative, collectively, they offered an index of trauma and survival. In this sense, Misaljevic and Kosmajac manifested an archival impulse prevalent in post-war contemporary art, as varied artists have appropriated the archive to critique its status as the official repository of historical memory and its role in entrenching dominant narratives of state power.[29]

By inviting survivors to submit personal artefacts, by choosing not to filter the artefacts other than in terms of size and explicit imagery, and by electing not to verify identities, Misaljevic and Kosmajac allowed an archive to form with a decentred subjectivity. En masse, the boxes reinforced an account of society as constructed of multiple rationalities and context-dependent identities. If as Foucault and Derrida argued, control of the archive is the manifestation of power through the control of memory, then fragmentation of the archive assists in the structural breakdown of assertions of power.[30] From a transitional justice perspective, this splintering opens space for reconsidering the recorded histories and social memories—and indeed, the preserved mnemonic objects—pertaining to a conflict and its aftermath.

However, and crucially, rather than collating plural memories of a singular territorial conflict, the structure of representation of the *Fragments* archive was fundamentally deterritorialized. Wary of politicizing the installation, Misaljevic and Kosmajac had insisted on randomizing the placement of the boxes and took care to avoid ethnic or geo-political segregation. By employing this randomizing strategy and involving diaspora from diverse backgrounds (and also aboriginal survivors of abuse), Misaljevic and Kosmajac encouraged a decoupling of collective memorymaking from national geographies. As the *Fragments* meta-structure prompted participating diaspora to situate their object-narratives alongside those of exiles who had experienced similar traumas, but who came from other conflict settings, the archive provided an index at once sub-national (personal self-narratives) and supra-national (human solidarity).

Levy and Sznaider have proposed the concept of 'cosmopolitan memory' to understand collective memory within the context of a de-territorializing of politics and culture.[31] They suggest that when issues of global concern (such as ethnic cleansing) become part of extraterritorial local experiences (for example, through media representations), new memoryscapes emerge that transcend national

[28] Telephone interview by the author with Dr. Christine Conley, 25 January, 2012.

[29] Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October,* 110 (Fall) (2004): 3–22.

[30] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* [Oxon: Routledge, 2002 (1969)]. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[31] Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(1) (2009): 88–89,100–102.

boundaries and appeal to shared morality, common responsibility and universal human rights. Of course, cosmopolitan appeals of this sort counteract the decentring strategies discussed previously; fragmentation of the archive is displaced by reintegration. By grounding the *Fragments* project within an international human rights discourse, Misaljevic and Kosmajac shepherded the plurality of participants towards mutual identification through survivorhood, and in so doing, asserted their overarching control of the archive.

The Audience and the Spectacle

As discussed previously, Delbo and others have observed that in the aftermath of trauma, a survivor may feel estranged from their own self. Brison proposes that this estrangement can be understood in terms of a breakdown of the survivor's subjectivity in relation to others: 'Victims of human-inflicted trauma are reduced to mere objects by their tormentors: their subjectivity is rendered useless and viewed as worthless.' Accordingly, Herman suggests, 'the traumatic event… destroys the belief that one can be *oneself* even to oneself, in relation to others.' If the self is seen as fundamentally relational, there are important implications not only for understanding the repercussions of trauma but also for considering the role of an audience, which is of particular relevance to a discussion of public art projects such as *Fragments*.

In order to regain subjectivity in the wake of trauma, Brison maintains that survivors need 'an audience able and willing to hear us… Fortunately, just as one can be reduced to an object through torture, onc can become a human subject again through telling one's narrative to caring others… It is not sufficient for mastering the trauma to construct a narrative of it. One must (physically, publicly) say or write (or paint or film) the narrative, and others must see or hear it, in order for one's survival as an autonomous self to be complete.'[32] Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, drawing on observations from his clinical work with Vietnam veterans suffering PTSD, similarly finds that although a new self-narrative can rebuild the fragmentation of consciousness caused by severe trauma, 'narrative heals… only if the survivor finds or create a trustworthy community of listeners.'[33]

Laub argues that because trauma disrupts conscious remembering, an empathic listener is a pre-condition for the survivor to come to know the traumatic event: 'While the trauma uncannily returns in actual life, its reality continues to elude the subject… [A] process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, of *re-externalizing the event*… has to be set in motion. This… can occur and take effect only when one can articulate and *transmit* the story, literally

[32] Brison, "Outliving Oneself," 23, 25, 29.

[33] Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Atheneum, 1994), 188.

transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again'.[34] While Brison and Shay frame an audience as necessary for effective healing, Laub more radically casts the listener as a participant in, and co-owner of, the witnessing process: 'Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to *somebody*.'[35] Laub also cautions that 'the absence of an empathic listener or… the absence of an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story… Moreover, if one talks about the trauma without being truly heard or truly listened to, the telling might itself be lived as a return of the trauma.'[36]

A critical question that emerges from these accounts is how the structural framework of the *Fragments* exhibition may have affected the empathic character of the audience, thereby facilitating or hindering the effectiveness of witnessing and memorializing processes.[37] Although audience numbers were not tracked, Misaljevic and Kosmajac estimate that a few thousand people visited the installation during its twelve-hour life.[38] Misaljevic and Kosmajac recall people entering and exiting the stadium and wandering amongst the boxes of artefacts, some hugging and crying.[39] The artists recognized many participants amongst the visitors, standing beside their own object-narratives in the field of boxes, or watching the reactions of other visitors, or examining the object-narratives of other diaspora. A number of visitors (participants or family/friends/acquaintances of participants) therefore had prior awareness of the conceptual premise of the exhibition and appreciated that the displayed artefacts had been donated by survivors of genocide, torture, war crimes and other human rights violations. However, many visitors had no such contextual knowledge and simply happened across the installation while touring the smorgasbord of exhibitions on offer during *Nuit Blanche*.

Nuit Blanche is a key feature of the City of Toronto's annual programme of events, marketed as a fun, engaging and accessible contemporary art experience:

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[34] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 69.

[35] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 70, 71.

[36] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 57, 68.

[37] In-depth interviews with a comprehensive sampling of participants/audience would be useful to gain insight into this question, but are beyond the scope of this chapter. The present discussion focuses on a theoretical consideration of specific structural conditions in relation to audience empathy. With the assistance of Misaljevic and Kosmajac, the author attempted to interview a range of participants/viewers (non-exclusive categories), but as detailed records of participants and viewers were not kept, only six diaspora (four of whom were from the former Yugoslavia) and one non-diaspora viewer were located who agreed to be interviewed. The author would like to acknowledge and thank Patricio Bascunan, Irfan Cehajic, Midhat Cehajic, Dr. Christine Conley Josephine Murphy, Aldina Muslija and Fadil Kulasic for their willingness to share their recollections of the event.

[38] Diane Misaljevic and Allan Kosmajac, electronic communication with the author, 28 February 2012.

[39] Allan Kosmajac, telephone interview with the author, 28 February 2012.

'a playful sunset-to-sunrise celebration'.[40] The total economic impact of the 2010 festival is estimated at $34.7 million.[41] Being accepted as part of this high-profile public event enabled Misaljevic and Kosmajac to access the stadium for their installation, but also resulted in *Fragments* being integrated into the *Nuit Blanche* publicity campaign. While this expanded the potential public audience for the installation, it also enmeshed *Fragments* as part of a mass public spectacle, introducing several perils to the cultivation of an empathic audience. Firstly, there is the risk that a visitor touring the *Nuit Blanche* offerings in the spirit of revelry, and unaware of the premise of the exhibition, might have been disinterested or been dismissive or recoiled from the subject matter.[42] If participating diaspora observed such a reaction to their own object-narrative (or even other object-narratives resembling their own), then following Laub, there is a risk that they might have experienced a denial of their subjectivity, and potentially, retraumatization.

Secondly, there is the risk that a visitor who contextualizes *Fragments* as public entertainment might immerse in the aestheticization of trauma, trivializing the witnessing and memorializing processes.[43] It is certainly conceivable that, for some viewers, the theatricality of the *Fragments* installation might have been heightened by the dusk-to-dawn setting, the stadium location and its political references, and also the resemblance of the rows of artefact boxes to an abstracted cemetery. In his analysis of spectator responses to distant suffering, Luc Boltanski proposes that a spectacle of suffering is distinguished by a politics not of action but of 'observation of the unfortunate by those who do not share their suffering, who do not experience it directly and who, as such, may be regarded as fortunate or lucky people.'[44] He also argues that an enthusiasm of sentiment from a spectator may entrench identification of the perceived sufferer as a victim, and may also distract: 'The affected spectator is in danger of swamping the statement, of being too prominent… We no longer know anything about the unfortunate who takes second place as it were, but we know all the feelings he provokes in the spectator.'[45]

While it is possible that some visitors may have responded to the *Fragments* installation with the extremes of emotion described earlier (on the one hand, dismissal or revulsion; on the other, a perverse fascination or exploitative fetishism), it should be emphasized that nearly five hundred diaspora participated in the project. Consequently, and as reported by the artists, a significant proportion of the visitors were either participants or friends/relatives of participants, which provided a pool

[40] "Nuit Blanche," http://www.scotiabanknuitblanche.ca/about/event-history.html, accessed 4 September 2012.

[41] "Nuit Blanche."

[42] Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12.

[43] Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 12.

[44] Boltanski, *Distant Suffering,* 3.

[45] Boltanski, *Distant Suffering,* 98.

of viewers more likely to be caring and empathic. As a result, there was considerable scope for interaction amongst diaspora during the exhibition, acknowledging one another's object-narratives and sharing in in situ reflection on memories and experiences (manifesting Fischer's notions of dialogical truth and restorative truth[46]). However, in this context, a separate risk arises if, following Laub, an empathic person acting as a witness-to-witnessing becomes a co-owner of the traumatic event: 'through his very listening he comes to partially experience trauma in himself.[47]' Laub cautions that a conscientious listener can be subject to a flood of affect, which can stimulate defensive reactions such as a sense of paralysis, outrage, anger, withdrawal, numbness, awe, fear and/or hyperemotionality.[48] In situations where the witnesses-to-witnessing have experienced past trauma, as with the inter-diaspora audience interaction in *Fragments,* there thus exists real potential for the witnessing process itself to re-traumatize. This introduces a key limitation of public art projects as witnessing processes, since in most cases, due to pressures of time and finance, coupled with inadequate human resources (and principal actors proficient in art practice rather than psycho-social services), such projects are ill suited to precautionary and/or reflexive management of participant retraumatization.

Against Closure

After Auschwitz, Adorno decried the making of art as barbaric: 'too metaphorical… and too beautiful to confront history'.[49] Adorno's position was challenged by Joseph Beuys, who utilized abstraction and performative propositions to process a personal critique of trauma and to challenge the conventions of monumental memorialization.[50] Successive generations of artists have expanded the counter-monument discourse, arguing in favour of the absent memorial, the disembodied memorial and the unrealizable memorial. Underpinning such proposals have been concerns that traditional monuments, in attempting to provide a locus for public memory, bury events beneath layers of national myth and iconography, and perversely, divest the public of the obligation to remember: 'rather than preserving public memory, the monument displaces it altogether, supplanting a community's memory-work with its own material form.'[51]

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[46] Fischer, "Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Theory and Practice," 411.

[47] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 57.

[48] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 72–73.

[49] Eric Kilgerman, "Reframing Celan in the Painting of Anselm Kiefer," in *Visual Culture in Twentieth Century Germany: Text as a Spectacle*, ed. Gail Finney (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 269.

[50] Gene Ray, "Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray, (New York: D.A.P., 2001), 60.

[51] James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 94.

James Young, a member of the German commission guiding the design of a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, has traced the charged debate over the selection process, including accusations that the government's support for the citizen-driven initiative stemmed from a desire to 'unshoulder their memorial burden… A finished monument would, in effect, finish memory itself.' The design ultimately selected, and approved by the Bundestag, was a modification of a proposal by architect Peter Eisenmann and artist Richard Serra that shares certain aesthetic features with Misaljevic and Kosmajac's *Fragments*. In its original form, Eisenmann and Serra's design comprised a field of four thousand pillars, sized from ground level to sixteen feet high. Young notes that the proposal 'at once echoed a cemetery, even as it implied that such emblems if individual mourning were inadequate to the task of remembering mass murder.'[52] Eisenmann and Serra's design was particularly praised for its response to the closure dilemma, as it 'proposed multiple, collected forms arranged so that visitors have to find their own path… not an answer to memory but an ongoing process, a continuing question without a certain solution.'[53] However, the commission also expressed concerns that the taller pillars would dwarf visitors, enveloping them in a 'labyrinth maze' and thus would be unsuited to contemplation. As Young relates, Eisenmann[54] responded to this feedback by downscaling the size of the pillars to human-proportioned forms, such that '[v]isitors and the role they play as they wade knee-, or chest- or shoulder-deep into this waving field of stones will not be diminished by the monumental but will be made integral parts of the memorial, now invited into a memorial dialogue of equals.'[55]

Similar to Eisenmann's design, Misaljevic and Kosmajac presented visitors with a field of individual, geometric markers, collated within a mass grid through which a visitor could weave their own path. In this sense, *Fragments* echoed the functionality of Eisenmann's proposal; structuring decentred, personal memorializing processes that counter closure. Indeed, it is arguable that *Fragments* went further than Eisenmann's design by offering a memorializing format that privileged fluidity, multiplicity and subjectivity. First, rather than permanently fixed concrete forms, Misaljevic and Kosmajac supplied wooden boxes that were placed by hand and removed at dawn. Second, not only were visitors able to enter the installation from any side of the grid, but they also had expanded vertical/horizontal lines of approach, such that they could enter or exit the arena from either the height of the stadium bleachers or from the stadium floor. Third, the *Fragments* boxes were sited at ground level, and in contrast to Eisenmann's blank stone pillars, each box contained an individual's object-narrative. To inspect the contents of a box, a visitor was therefore required to bend or kneel, effectively assuming a

[52] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 206.

[53] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 206.

[54] Richard Serra withdrew from the process once modifications were requested, citing a threat to his artistic integrity.

[55] Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 210.

contemplative stance in relation to the subjective narrative, which provided for a dialogic encounter between the visitor (with their own historical memories or perceptions) and that particular object testimony.

Of course, the temporary nature of *Fragments* proscribed a discrete memorializing event, and as such, the structure precluded the on-going access to revisit and re-engage that Eisenmann's permanent memorial allowed. However, extending from Young's argument that the meanings ascribed to a monument are mutable ('contingent on the political, historic and aesthetic realities of the moment'), perhaps an opportunity exists for a recursive restaging of *Fragments*. In this way, at certain temporal intervals, participating diaspora might have an opportunity to rearticulate their shifting self-narratives, so that they and the broader public could reconsider the individual and collective narratives of conflict, trauma, survival, exile and social integration, as these evolve over time.

Most initiatives directed at expanding the participation of diaspora in transitional justice processes focus on integrating specific diaspora communities within national or regional frameworks. This norm of engagement structurally excludes diaspora who lack financial resources, political will or the personal capacity to take part in activities outside of their host settlement country and effectively imposes a territorial boundary on memory work. Through their *Fragments* public art project, Misaljevic and Kosmajac have provided a de-territorialized alternative: a mechanism for contextualizing micro-truths within a meta-structure, reinforcing participants' simultaneous identification as survivors, as diaspora and as members of a cosmopolitan social and cultural community. In so doing, Misaljevic and Kosmajac have presented a challenge to the field of transitional justice, opening space for critical reconsideration of prevailing delimitations, in favour of an expanded concept, which better accommodates the fragmentation and dispersal of communities that ensues in situations of mass conflict and violence.

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