Never Forgets: Traumatic Trace Within Public Space

Jan Descartes

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NEVER FORGETS:
TRAUMATIC TRACE WITHIN PUBLIC SPACE

by

JAN M. DESCARTES

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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Never Forgets: Traumatic Trace Within Public Space

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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Jan M. Descartes

Advisor: Patricia T. Clough

This paper will interrogate the ways in which ephemera from events affects the human and non-human environment and how the absence, manipulation or presence of traumatic trace weaves itself into the atmosphere of the past, present and future. It will look at space and the ways that trace manifests itself in hierarchal spaces and Lebbeus Woods’ concept of heterarchial spaces, which are organic and/or horizontally organized. A thread throughout is the question that if trace from trauma can exist in the visual field, i.e. the physical or digital landscape, in a way that maintains a discourse without perpetuating oppression. Works and spaces discussed to understand the implications of erasure, manipulation or spontaneous subjectivity span are pieces of art, museums, memorials and even an augmented reality game. Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc will be framed using Michel Foucault’s theories of social control and space from Discipline and Punish. Tilted Arc was erased, permanently eradicated from Lower Manhattan’s Federal Plaza in the dead of night after a contentious court battle. Mark Hansen’s work surrounding the future fee-
ding of information will support a critique of traces that are problematized through institutions or the state, specifically looking at the Killing Fields Memorial Museum and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia. This paper will culminate with an inquiry surrounding agentic trace and how that can create space for individual subjectivity, such as with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Pokemon Go’s memorial to Tamir Rice and Ghost Bikes, using Michael Foucault and Maurizio Lazaratto’s ideas of parrhesia, or spontaneous subjectivity. This is an investigation of loss, in terms of who has the privilege to be remembered and how we can find spaces to leave trace so we, she, he, they and I never forgets.
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Never Forgets:

Traumatic Trace Within Public Space

Preface

There is a presumption that there is a binary between bodies and the environment, that humans cause and environment is affected. Often it is only in dramatic and/or traumatic cases, the environment may cause - such as with devastating weather - and humans be affected. I challenge this presumption with affect theory and the turning critical theory to the non-human environment. I propose there is an interconnected web between humans and non-humans, moving from the world of biopower as described by Michel Foucault, and moving to the feeding forward of data or “propensities,” as Mark Hansen puts it. I do this in order to address landscape as a scene of trauma, of traces of what used to be there. How does the landscape carry trauma? How does the absence, manipulation or presence of trauma weave itself into the atmosphere of the past, present and future? How can trace of trauma exist in the visual field or physical or digital landscape in a way that maintains a discourse without perpetuating oppression? What are the potentialities of trace?

Introduction

On November 22, 2016, Rutgers University professor Marisa Fuentes spoke on Democracy Now to promote a book that she co-edited, Scarlet and Black, Volume 1: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History. She spoke about the largely untold story of Rutgers University’s long history that ties the institution to slavery and the mistreatment of Native Americans in 19th century New Jersey. Near the end of the interview, host Juan Gonzalez asked Professor Fuentes
what she recommended Rutgers University should do in light of these revelations. Fuentes suggestions were unsurprising for a college campus environment - diversity classes for undergraduates, scholarships for at-risk and underrepresented students. The last recommendation is of particular interest to me in that it argued for a maintaining a trace of the oppression in the infrastructure in order to facilitate ongoing dialogue.

“Some of the other recommendations also include making this history known in the kind of infrastructure of the university, so historical markers on some of these buildings. There was some—and we’re still open to having conversations about name changing. The difficulty about changing the names of some of these buildings is that once you do that, the history and the controversy is gone. And the idea that, you know, when one comes across one of these buildings named for a slave owner or the owner of Sojourner Truth’s family and that name is changed, then you can’t actually have a conversation, possibly, about that history. So, instead of, perhaps, changing names of buildings, putting really detailed historical markers on the buildings so that, you know, you’re confronted with the reality of who this person was and who the other people might be that were enslaved by them or involved in this particular story.”1 (italics mine)

If non-human visual markers tied to oppression are erased—names of buildings, roads, squares and space, public images such as murals, sculptures, architecture markings from events, symbols such as flags – in the visual environment, I will argue, what is also erased is potential meaningful conversations, thus manipulating potentialities. However, if we were to leave oppressive ephemera without framing it within a social justice and/or accountability context, it can read as a silent acceptance of an unjust history. For example, Professor Fuentes speaks in the quote above about a building on the Rutgers University campus named after one of the early presidents, Jacob Hardenbergh, who purchased slaves and whose family owned Sojourner Truth’s parents. Charles Hardenbergh freed Truth’s parents at the end of their lives because they were elderly and

it appears that the parents died soon after due to neglect.² Rutgers has been an institution for 250 years and the Hardenbergh name remains undisputed in the open visual field, i.e. at the site of the named building on the Rutgers campus, and therefore past and present behavior is left unchallenged. This report released by Professor Fuentes and her colleague Deborah Gray White is the first step in confronting past misdeeds, and the additional recommendations are the next steps-including altering the visual field to take accountability for the problematic history of Rutgers University. The recommendation refers to the power and impact that the non-human visual environment – and changes therein – have to shape the experiences, knowledge formation and discourses of our understanding of the world around us.

M. Christine Boyer discusses the impact changes in the visual environment can have in The City of Collective Memory: “…the change that the organizing group is making is not just the transformation of the particular aggressor, but also the transformation of our culture.”³ The visual environment- the public spaces that make up the everyday landscape of our everyday life has the ability to form and transform behaviors and opinions. It is useful to question public imagery or symbols and the subtextual meanings in the way that cities are architecturally laid out and decorated. Boyer talks about the use of city planning in the 18th and 19th centuries as a way to control or educate the masses. “To ensure acts of self-governance, citizens were presented with visual models to internalize, remember, and apply. Consequently, if a wise leader were to follow these directives, she or he would architecturally embellish a capital city to visually demonstrate what the order and organization of a well-governed state or society should be.”⁴ The notions of

² Fuentes, Marisa. “Sweeping New Rutgers Report Reveals University's Ties to Slavery & Displacement of Native Americans.”
obedience in architecture in particular are illustrated through the layout of squares and plazas. Squares and plazas are public spaces meant for congregation, so therefore on behalf of the city, there is a space for large group congregation and spaces for small group congregation. Squares and plazas also accentuate the buildings they are surrounded by; they are to be reified and internalized as respectful and necessitating obedience. Perhaps these are sometimes government bureaucratic buildings, churches, postal service, mass transportation, libraries, etc. Richard Serra’s sculpture, _Tilted Arc_, which I will discuss below at length, is a piece of public art that challenged the state’s authority in a public square just through its physical placement within the square. It was a site-specific piece in the east plaza of Manhattan’s Federal Building; through its placement in the square and the anti-state subtext it had the potential to create different knowledges and experiences for those who utilized the space.⁵

What follows questions the implied hierarchy in the narrative of a public space and goes on to consider what spaces reinforce horizontal or non-hierarchal narratives, meaning narratives that allow for spontaneity, personal agency and subjectivity between the humans and non-human environments. This involves an analysis of power, proposing that a dominant ideology is reinforced through erasures in the visual field. In this I am supported by Boyer’s comment: “Not wanting to listen to these tales of terror or look at these visions of violence is an attitude of privatization that effaces our complicity in the perpetuation of public acts that hold the power to control narrations, to define subjects, to switch channels and codes.”⁶ Allowing this cultural amnesia of oppressions is to allow a whitewash or painting a dominant gloss over the experiences of the space. Visual traces of experiences in the visual environment are necessary to keep culturally

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⁶ Boyer, _The City of Collective Memory_ 493.
necessary moments present in the consciousness, which is more than apparent in this contemporary moment. How did such large swaths of America forget that we’ve already been through these campaigns of hate and we already decided as a culture it was wrong? How did we already forget? My thesis addresses these questions by focusing on five very different works of in public spaces.

The first piece discussed is Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc*, the most famous failed public art works. It is known in the public arts history as a failure for the cleavage between what the artist wanted and what the (perceived) public wanted. There now is nothing in its former home that harkens back to the piece that once stood there, which can be read as a piece of resistance against the state or institutions. The state turned Tilted Arc into refuse with its removal and with that destruction I argue they eliminated the dialogue that the work was meant to catalyze. With its complete removal, without placard, note card or foundations etched into the ground, the chance for continued dialogue has been taken away. The removal and erasure of where it stood is an attempt at *tabula rasa*, a fresh start, a deletion. *Tilted Arc* exists only in the archives and cannot influence the space in the way it was meant to do.

The second piece discussed are the memorials to the Cambodian genocide and the two spaces created to memorialize those who were victims of it- the Killing Fields Memorial Museum in Cambodia and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. These spaces maintain the trace of a devastating trauma suffered by the Cambodian people. Yet, I will question those traces: how they were curated and for which public and what was their purpose within the political climate of Cambodia?

The last of the works I will look at are those in the public sphere that resists erasure and manipulation of trace, while making space for continued dialogue. These very different and di-
verse pieces include Maya Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, where the viewer can literally see themselves reflected, horizontally framed between names of those who passed away without a nationalistic framework. Next I look at the murder of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old child from Cleveland, Ohio who was memorialized in Pokemon Go. I will discuss how the traces after a traumatic or otherwise negative event has been retained in the infrastructure at the physical or digital site. Lastly, I look at the global phenomenon of ghost bikes, though I point specifically to the experience of them in New York City. Ghost bike are anonymous memorials that exist in public space between legality and illegality, outside of commodity. Through these discussions, I hope to highlight what potential there is in maintaining a thread of information in the non-human environment can have in terms of knowledge production and maintaining dialogues, changing or redirecting potentialities to include the voices of the public, as opposed to state or institutional narratives.

**Part 1: Erasure**

*Tilted Arc*

Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* was a state-commissioned sculpture but due to the very manifestation within the planned city environment, it questioned the institution that commissioned it. It communicated interruption of the state through metaphor, in the way its body of raw steel was laid out in the space, cutting across an open square like a blockade across streets during the Paris Commune. It challenged hierarchy and eventually was eradicated.⁸ Hierarchal architecture, much referenced in this paper, is a space that supports institutional authority with its composition

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of buildings and open space, where there is a predetermined quality to movement and knowledge production on behalf of the humans inhabiting the environment. Lebbeus Woods argues against hierarchal architecture in his work, *Radical Reconstruction*:

“In classical terms, architecture is a socially significant synthesis of the old antitheses: public/private, art/science, capital/labor. As long as society is dominated by institutions of authority that require a basis external to themselves for their existence (divine right of kings, social contract), monumental, that is, institutional, hierarchal architecture is required to embody objective knowledge.”

As a spatial challenge to hierarchy, *Tilted Arc* poises itself in opposition to this and therefore in support of heterarchial spaces, which Woods argues for as a push to oppose spatial authority.

*Tilted Arc* was commissioned by the General Services Administration (GSA), referred by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1979 and was contracted to Richard Serra as a permanent installation for the Foley Federal Plaza, in front of the Jacob Javitz Federal Building in downtown Manhattan. After years of specs and research, it was installed in 1981. It was as “...a curving wall of raw steel, 120 feet long and 12 feet high, that carves the space of the Federal Plaza in half. Those working in surrounding buildings must circumvent its enormous bulk as they go through the plaza.” There was tension between the work and those who used and/or inhabited the space. At the time, the area was the home of employees of the federal buildings and courthouses by day and a sprinkle of artists and residents who lived nearby.

By 1984 the GSA had a new head, William Diamond, who opened the issue of tensions around *Tilted Arc* and set a public hearing to decide the work’s fate. Judge Edward D. Re, who worked in the adjacent courthouse, spearheaded a letter writing campaign for the elimination of

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11 Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, 61.
the piece. The trial included testimony from Richard Serra and Judge Re, as well as employees who worked in surrounding buildings and a number of notable artists of the time, such as Claus Oldenberg, Jenny Holt and Keith Haring. The trial pitted white-collar worker against artist in a dialogue that revealed tensions of intellectualism and elitism. This conflict floats to the

surface in times of change and perhaps is the scapegoat used by the state machine to distract the worker, such as with Nazi Germany, Cambodia, and the Trump Administration at the time of this writing. The alienation of the artist and culture in favor of state sanctioned aesthetics, which we will look at shortly, seems to be a device to keep the worker interacting and behaving within acceptable perimeters.

Fig. 1: *Tilted Arc*, 1977. From: General Services Administration, https://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/7_Introductory_essay.pdf.
Tom Finkelpearl writes in *Dialogues in Public Art* that while an argument in this trial was that the community was not consulted regarding the installation of the work, the entire community was not consulted in the battle over the work, which brings up the question of community and power. Who is the community and who has the power to designate what aesthetics and information the space will hold? Finkelpearl makes the point that the community of the space includes folks that outnumber the workers and the residents. “…people from all over New York who need a green card, a new driver’s license, who must meet a court date, or serve on jury duty. They were never consulted in the battle over Federal Plaza because they are temporary visitors.”¹³ The population that uses the square are considered to be outsiders and seemingly irrelevant to the decision-making process.

Richard Serra spoke with Jenny Dixon on WNYC’s Artists in the City, in 1985 when he was embroiled in the fight over the removal.

Do we want art by governmental dictate? If we have art by governmental dictate then we’re gonna have a particular kind of art and we know what, how that art looks like in various countries. If we really want soldiers on horses and politicians on pedestals and we really want a kind of symbolic mediocrity to pervade in this country I certainly think that we can have art by government dictate. However, if we have a degree of tolerance…if the government does in fact set up a process of/by the National Endowment or another board, of who they convene or who they think to be professional people, and maybe they need in the future to augment it more localize people, but that’s not the process that I answer to, that may be the way to go about it. I don't know how much local input is necessary. There’s a kind of art which either if you have too much local input will end up being social realism and will just resolve the political expediency at the time. There’s another kind of art that will then become the applied arts of our time where artists will be required to do something useful for a particular building and the artist will then revert back to the caste system. And that has come under the guise of a new functionalism where art then becomes subservient to or useful to the architects demands. That's not the kind of art that I make and not the kind of tradition that I relate it to.”¹⁴

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¹³ Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, 63.
During the trial, Judge Re describes how the Tilted Arc will disrupt the architecture: “The Tilted Arc totally obstructs the architectural beauty of the Court, the Jacob K. Javitz Federal Office building and detracts from the view of so many. From the beauty, simplicity and openness of the plaza and fountain…The plaza served as a pleasant and humane open space for federal employees, citizens of NY and visitors to this great city…contrary to the original intention and purpose, the wall now intimidates and prevents everyone from fully utilizing the plaza.”

Serra makes the point in interviews and in the trial that the plaza fountain, mentioned by Judge Re as a concerned area affected by Tilted Arc, was non-working as in the summer it was turned off to save water and otherwise it is turned off because of the season.

One could argue that Tilted Arc is a protest piece against the violence of the state, resisting state-sanctioned dominance over how spaces are designed to be used by the humans (and non-human animals for that matter) in the environment. The square, a wide-open space, is an intentional space to give aesthetic power and respect to the government buildings that surround it. The square is intended for casual, transient use, but not permanent use. With an open square, a fountain that doesn’t work, stairs and a few benches, the square was not intended architecturally for anything other than space to accentuate the authorial image of the state buildings through the importance a square or plaza signifies. The information we get from this space is to appreciate the power and authority of the buildings. M. Christine Boyer talks about the purpose and meaning behind the architecture of the public space of the city, in our case a plaza. “Before the end of the eighteenth century, ‘public space’ was usually designed as an honorific place celebrating the power of the king, queen, or aristocracy and used to recall and to invigorate their sover-

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eign conduct and responsible actions.”  

Boyer says the royal processions through the public spaces would show “not only the terms by which royal authority was accepted, but also reflected the city’s self-image of its own obligations. Eventually transcribed in stone, a memory system of public monuments and places arose, rearticulating these communal covenants and rehearsing their sovereign pledges.”  

A space like Federal Plaza would be the “rational bourgeois public sphere,” as Boyer terms it, a place that is coded, normalized and regulated. The public square is a place for public debate and gatherings to a degree that fits within the democratic institutional authority, as long as it follows the code. “…anything irrational and threatening disorder could be expelled from sight. Thus hospitals, cemeteries, poorhouses, and prisons were banished from the center of the city to reappear at marginal sites on the outskirts.”

Conversely and perhaps ironically, Tilted Arc subverts the theatrical illusions of the institutions that surround it and allow for a performative space of play for the community in the area.

“…There is no way you could ever move the Vietnam Memorial because its site specific, nor is there any way you could ever remove the Tilted Arc in the Federal Plaza. Both of those pieces are conditioned on the premise to create new spaces and new places within an existing context. I think the Vietnam Memorial is very successful in that not only making magnificent sculpture but it makes a sanctuary and it makes a spiritual sanctuary. I think the piece here in the Federal Plaza is successful because it creates a space and a place which was here before undifferentiated, and its relation to the steps almost creates a small amphitheater which anyone could use for performances or concerts.”

To validate authority, the spectacle needs to be state sanctioned, without public agency that would come from interacting with a work. Tilted Arc troubled the institution; it questioned the sovereign and gave some power to the public. Tilted Arc is not just an assault against the body of

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the government worker who was forced to walk around it to pass through Federal Plaza, it is also an assault against the capturing of the soul. As Michel Foucault argues control over the body goes hand in hand with control over the soul in order to indoctrinate dominate ideology and behavior.22

In a similar vein, psychiatrist Joel Kovel testified at the hearing regarding the homogenization of arts in conjunction to the swelling bureaucracy of the 20th century:

“In the 20th century this tension necessarily grows with the growth of bureaucratic forms of state operation and the massification of the state into a realm of total administration which tries to deny all oppositions. Serra’s work challenges that homogenization of contemporary bureaucracy…it represents the space of the plaza as divided instead of homogenized. It stands outside of the homogenization of bureaucracy, forcing active relationship between the passerby and the space of the plaza and necessarily the space of the building behind the plaza.”23

Kovel’s marking of bureaucratic space also is resonant with the arguments made by Lebbeus Woods. For Woods, a heterarchial space is “made up of complex layers of buildings and open spaces, of uses and reuses, woven over centuries and generations of living tissue of meanings, old cities absorbed into their complexity the hierarchies that governed them, that attempted to force them into rigid structures they had never been, or could ever become.”24 Heterarchy is resistance, heterarchy is personal agency. Heterarchy is connection with the community of objects, atmospheres and people in a horizontal beauty that shrugs the domination of state or capitalism. Woods offers heterarchial architecture as a means to rebuild from the devastation of war, to grow out of experiences, instead of erasing them with new hierarchies. Tilted Arc was an object in the non-human environment that through its positioning in the environment had the potential to cre-

ate heterarchial moments and spaces for the public. Instead, we look at Serra’s work as one erased and a space where potentialities have been lost, left to be filled by the state.

Similarly, Foucault deconstructs space and its value for the sovereign state, over the public masses. How is space involved in the economy of control? Foucault talks about the body’s relationship within the penal system with the evolution of the economy; together the space of punishment evolved in terms of the needs of industrialism.25

…the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination…the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body.26

The body created by the evolution of punishment, economy and the state is a docile body. “Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces in terms of obedience.”27

The docile body is surveilled and controlled through a lifetime of institutional organization and surveillance. But Tilted Arc interrupted the ability for the state to adequately surveil bodies, as it disarmed the gaze with its physical being in the square. It also challenged the institutional effort for obedience, with its potentials for spontaneity and anti-authoritarian usage of the space, such as to use the sculpture to support vagrancy, spontaneous theater or as a home base for assault.

There is also the parallel between Foucault’s public square being used for execution in order to control the masses and reinforce the power of the sovereign, and Serra’s piece, found

“guilty” at the public hearing and its body disassembled during an execution on the night of March 15, 1989. This date is also poignant, as it is the Ides of March, the day that Julius Caesar was killed by his comrades. *Tilted Arc* symbolizes the authority and surplus power of the sovereign (the state bureaucracy in this case); it’s body is eradicated secretly in the dead of night. As Foucault wrote, “Those who carry out the penalty tend to become an autonomous sector; justice is relieved of responsibility for it by a bureaucratic concealment of the penalty itself.” It’s also an accusation against agency of the public to use their body to behave outside of expectations. “In the darkest region of the political field the condemned man represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king.”

In Emperor Napoleon III’s Paris, there was a creation of the boulevards – open space because closed, interrupted space gives the advantage to the public/residents. This was infamously done by unexperienced urban planner Georges-Eugène Haussmann, who directed the tearing down of narrow streets that had been easily barricaded with each riot and revolution. The creation of large boulevards would not only support commerce, but a support of the docile body, as this body would not be able to find personal power in these new wide-open spaces. As author David P. Jordan writes in his article “The City: Baron Hausmann and Modern Paris,” “Pacification through the manipulation of urban space, social control by the artificial creation of real-estate values, all accomplished under the intimidating symbolism of Imperial authoritarian-

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http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/flashpoints/visualarts/tiltedarc_at.html
30 Foucault, *Discipline & Punish, 29.*
ism…” This supports the instigation that a work like *Tilted Arc* would inflict upon a space that was intended to support institutions - not question them.

In 1997 the square where Tilted Arc had stood was redesigned. What now stands there are two modern art works, *A Study in Five Planes/Peace* by Alexander Calder, and the *Manhattan Sentinels* by Beverly Pepper. These pieces, like Serra’s, are also minimalist art, but because of their size and verticality, they do not create the kind of space or obstruction or challenge to the space that *Titled Arc* did. The plaza was redesigned yet again in 2009 by architect WASA/Studio A. and landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

![Fig. 2: Jacob Javitz Building. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. http://www.mvvainc.com/project.php?id=15.](image)

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The lack of trace in this situation is troublesome, because in the space and for those that interact with the space, there is no dialogue regarding what was there and how it challenged the state. The potential for future divergence have been changed, to say the least.

**Part 2: Troubled Trace**

**Atrocity Tourism**

As we discussed in Part I, erasure of histories may leave an emptiness, a vacuum to be refilled without reflection, incorporation, a continuing dialogue, potentially leaving space to recreate oppression or trauma. Other sites may reflect its history but can be troubled; they may lack the reflection needed in order to maintain or further develop a discourse. This is the case with two sites that maintain traces of the past but do so in an extremely troubling way. These are the memorials commemorating the Cambodia genocide, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the Choeung Ek Center for Genocide Crimes located in Cambodia at the actual sites where atrocities took place on behalf of the Khmer Rouge regime.

To give context, the Khmer Rouge regime ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. The Khmer Rouge has a messy background that implicates many nations in the ensuing chaos and destruction that they carried out, including France, Vietnam, China and the United States. French colonial rule supported the monarchy of Norodom Sihanouk until they won liberation in 1953. Sihanouk was overthrown in a military coup in 1970, at which time he lent his support to the Khmer Rouge from exile. The Khmer Rouge had support from Vietnam, which pushed into Cambodia to fight against the Cambodian military. The United States, already in conflict with the Vietnamese and fueled by a Cold War fear of communism, proceeded with a heavy bombing of Cambodia, which in part drove the country into chaos. This chaos culminated in April 17,
1975 when the Khmer Rouge took over the country; at first there was celebration as citizens thought the fighting and chaos would be over. Unfortunately, they were very wrong. The Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, based their ideology loosely on Communism and largely on a nostalgia for the greatness of Cambodia from an earlier time- 802 BC, when the Angkor Empire rose to power and Angkor Wat was built- the largest temple in the world. Pol Pot, driven by an idealized notion of the peasantry and life from 802 BC, evacuated everyone from the cities and drove everyone to the country - killing almost all intellectuals along the way in brutal killing fields and prisons. Pol Pot’s ideology of extreme nationalism, xenophobia, anti-intellectualism was based on a nostalgic fiction of the past, a past that never was.  

1.7 million Cambodians died in years that the Khmer Rouge ruled from torture, state execution, starvation and disease, 21% of the population. Two most notorious death sites include Tuol Sleng, a former high school that was transformed into S-21, a prison used to torture and kill prisoners, and Choeung Ek, also known as the ‘killing fields’--the mass gravesites used to dispose of victims' bodies. Today, Tuol Sleng houses a genocide museum and Choeung Ek is the site of a Buddhist memorial park. Both sites receive one to two hundred visitors per day. These commemorative sites focus on violent crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge opportunistically, as opposed to paying homage or maintaining a discourse.

Cathy J. Schlund-Vials’ book, *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work* discusses atrocity tourism regarding a Cambodian memory project. “Despite al-

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36 “Cambodian Genocide Program.” Yale University. http://gsp.yale.edu/case-studies/cambodian-genocide-program
Legedly universal agendas, Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek are unique in that they exclusively involve the experiences of political prisoners, who constituted a relatively small percentage (less than 1 percent) of the total deaths during the Democratic Kampuchean era. Thus, though they function as emblems of the Killing Fields era, they are not representative of the hundreds of thousands who died as a result of starvation, forced labor, and disease.” Schlund-Vials goes on to discuss the nationalistic motivations for the museums. The Vietnamese, as mentioned, supported the Khmer Rouge in the beginning and later also forcibly entered Cambodia in 1979, forcing the Khmer Rouge to relinquish their power. The Vietnamese found the Tuol Sleng prison a day after the liberation, and would slowly discover the rest of the atrocities in Cambodia. The museums point the blame for the Cambodian war – not at Vietnamese, not the Americans, not the French, not the Chinese, but only the Khmer Rouge. That is the reasoning behind an atrocity site, versus a commemorative site that could give space for survivors, families of survivors and the world to reflect on what has happened and who was lost. “…what is remembered at sites like Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek in terms of Khmer Rouge atrocity informs the controversial ruling of the UN/Cambodian War Crimes Tribunal, which—via lenient sentencing and denial—privileged perpetrator over victim and criminality over reparation.”

What position does this trace put the viewer? Are we memorializing, or accusing? What is the desired outcome? I would say theoretically, a desired outcome of a memorial is subjective discourse, as opposed to a binary dialectic. Colette Copeland’s article “Madness and Mayhem: The Aesthetics of Dark Tourism,” includes a Freudian framework, explaining the desire to visit an atrocity sites. “In terms of closure, a visitor may travel to a site in order to confront the past, forgive the perpetrator, or mourn the victims. If the desire is for disclosure, a visitor's impetus

38Schlund-Vials, War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work, 57
might be to facilitate awareness and keep the tragedy or criminal act in the forefront of people's minds. The foreign visitor may come for educational or historical purposes. Most problematic is the voyeur—the visitor motivated by morbid curiosity.”39 Problematics for the Cambodian genocide museums are nationalistic political motivations, morbid curiosity and financial profit.

Schlund-Vials talks about the commodification of atrocity and genocide in regards to how much capital is pulled in from these atrocity museums and who benefits from that. “On average, two million tourists annually visit the UNESCO World Heritage site, which—under the corporate auspices of Sokha Hotel Company, Ltd., a subsidiary of the Cambodian petroleum company Sokimex—maintains a healthy profit margin charging a minimum entrance fee of $20 (U.S.) per person.”40 Also, in this global late-capitalist economy, at a time when education, prisons, public transportation and even water are privatized, it can be noted that even atrocity museums can and are privatized by foreign investment. “This morbid venture capitalism is epitomized by the privatization of Choeung Ek, Cambodia’s largest killing field. In 2005, the Japanese owned company JC Royal was given a thirty-year contract to manage the memorial site, allowing it to raise admission from $0.50 to $3.00 (U.S.) for foreign tourists, with the concomitant annual agreement that $15,000 would be paid to the municipality of Phnom Penh.”41 This connection between commodity and memory in venues such as these implicate goals for remembering with particular institutional perspective. The subjectivity of those in the space of these museums becomes troubled, when the knowledge production of the space is influenced by state, commerce and global politics.

40 Schlund-Vials, War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work, 60.
41 Schlund-Vials, War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work, 62-63.
Fig. 3: Toul Sleng Prison, Cambodia. Source: Graham Stinnett, 2017.

Fig. 4: Toul Sleng Prison, Cambodia. Source: Graham Stinnett, 2017.
The relationship between these museums and the viewer remind me of experiences I had when in Seoul, South Korea. I visited the Seodaemun Prison History Hall in the summer of 2013. The prison was active from 1908 – 1945 during the Japanese occupation of South Korea. Those who were imprisoned at Seodaemun were referred to in the museum and in the literature as “patriotic martyrs.”

I was drawn to the prison museum as a way to understand the historical conflicts between the Koreans and Japanese, as a guest and outsider. I felt that the museum wanted me to remember those who perished, as exhibited by the wall of photographs, (Fig. 7), which is reminiscent of the Tuol Seng prison museum. The displays in the basement with wax figures in various scenarios of torture also mirror the Cambodian memorials with the very real traces of the trauma that was held there (Fig. 8). I also felt that this museum was highly nationalistic, which perhaps reflects South Korea’s current situation with North Korea. The Seodaemun Prison History Hall Introduction on the website for the space says, “The project aimed to honor and pay tribute to the spirit of our patriotic ancestors who bravely devoted their lives to resisting the Japanese, despite imprisonment, harsh torture, and threat of death. The site is utilized as a living history education site to remind future generations of their noble spirit of independence.”

While these aims were understandable, I wondered about the nationalist motivations. Could it be that the nationalistic aims of the prison hall are a matter of survival? Could it have a role in the maintaining of a standing army against North Korea, with which there are constant and long-lasting tensions? It seems to not be a mistake that the website and placards are translated into Korean, English, Chinese and Japanese. At the time of this writing, the US is allied with South Korea in an arms race of sorts against North Korea, with Japan as an ally and China attempting to broker a compromise to the situation. It might be proposed that in this case, the trace or the memorial delimit the potentiality of ongoing discourse on past traumas.

Fig. 6: Seodaemun Prison History Hall, South Korea. Source: author, 2012.

Fig. 7: Seodaemun Prison History Hall, South Korea. Source: author, 2012.
Mark Hansen takes up potentiality in terms of prediction and probability, focusing on information gathering—metadata, human and non-human information, bodily information that transcends our own knowledge. He argues that data is future-feeding:

‘Real potentiality’ designates the potentiality of the settled universe that informs the genesis of every new actuality along with the incessant renewal of the “societies” that make up the world’s materiality (worldly sensibility); as such it instigates a *feeling of the future in the present*: an experience of the future exercising its power in anticipation of its own actuality. Because this power remains that of potentiality—and indeed of an incredibly complex network of potentiality, a network inclusive of the potentiality of *every* datum comprising the universe’s current state—it can only be fixed or arrested probabilistically, though to be sure in a quite singular sense. The force of the future—the future force of every single datum informing the universe at a given moment—is felt in the present in a way that can only be represented probabilistically and where such representation designates neither a purely abstract likelihood nor a statistical likelihood relative to a provi-
tionally closed dataset, but a properly ontological likelihood: a propensity, which is to say, a likelihood that is, paradoxically, real.\textsuperscript{52}

Hansen’s work shows us that the information and statistics that exist can shape the future/present, as well as potentialities it creates. The key point is that the connection between future and present proceeds by way of efficacy, or better, propensity, and not prediction. The connection is real and not just statistical, or, in Whitehead’s terms, actual without being actualized.\textsuperscript{53} “...the real potentiality of the future is already felt as intensity in the present—is felt, that is, prior to its actualization and in its full force of potentiality: this feeling of potentiality for the future generates—indeed, simply is—the subject.”\textsuperscript{54} These institutions produce the knowledge that will ensure how those at the prison will interact with the atrocities memorialized there.

The system of information that is created by the Cambodian genocide memorials is not impartial. It is not neutral information. It has a purpose to create knowledge production with a specific trajectory, with advantages to certain states, countries and capitalism. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, through their actions, favored systems over the Individual, communism versus capitalism. “The Khmer Rouge’s wheel of history fulfilled its promise, crushing virtually all facets of prerevolutionary Cambodian society.”\textsuperscript{55} The memorials also favor the Systemic over the granular; telling a specific narrative. “…we no longer confront the technical object as an exterior surrogate for consciousness or some other human faculty, but rather as part of a process in which technics operates directly on the sensibility underlying-and preceding-our corporeal reac-

\textsuperscript{52} Hansen, Mark. “Predictive Condition.” \textit{The Nonhuman Turn}. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 120-121
\textsuperscript{53} Hansen, “Predictive Condition,” 121.
\textsuperscript{54} Hansen, “Predictive Condition,” 122.
\textsuperscript{55} Schlund-Vials, \textit{War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work}, 1
tivity and, ultimately, our conscious experience.” Even in the age of big data, this is what must be questioned when we are struggling with memory and also struggling with disrupting cycles of violence.

Cathy J. Schlund-Vials argues in *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work* for individual subjectivity as opposed to state-sanctioned remembrance. Her work looks at the work done by Cambodian-American activists as an agentic alternative to incomplete and strategic institutional narratives, which she describes as the Cambodian Syndrome. “Imbued with the enormous charge of genocidal remembrance, further complicated by the politics and actualities of location, Cambodian American filmmakers, writers, and artists labor to make whole…a historical truth the moves beyond the amnesiac registers and politicized reached of the Cambodian Syndrome.” Schlund-Vials work progresses the conversation and pivots away from the troubled traces of Tuol Seng prison and the Killing Field and looks to people and places that work at remembering a cultural atrocity while maintaining personal subjectivity and cultivate the nuances of a messy communal memory.

Part 3: Agentic Trace

**The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Cudell Gazebo, and Ghost Bikes**

**The Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

While in a program for a study of art in 2006 in Belgrade, Serbia, I noticed that several of the buildings had blemishes, marks and gouges. We met folks who lived there, mostly in their

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56 Hansen, “Predictive Condition,” 117-118.
young adulthood, late teens and 20s, who informed us that the marks were left by NATO bombings in the 1990s. They said there had been a conscious effort to keep the gashes and ruts in the visual space so as not to forget, not to erase. In readings I’ve encountered since, this has been framed as a financial decision, that it was too costly to fix or destroy the buildings, but there has been hint of what folks had told us, that there is a deliberate effort to leave these scars in order to encounter the past. As BBC’s Helen Fawkes wrote at the 10-year anniversary of the bombings, “most of the war damage has been repaired, but some bomb sites have proved too costly to repair or demolish. Some are military facilities and the process is highly contentious and complicated, while other bomb-damaged buildings appear to have been left as a reminder of the past.57

Here, traces are heterarchial in nature as opposed to hierarchal. I have pointed to the potentialities that Tilted Arc created- that through its material form, it created possibilities to subvert space-imposed obedience. I also pointed to the troubling use of trace by institution or state entities to promote a certain viewpoint on the Cambodian genocide museums. Here, I’d like to highlight entities that offer possibilities through form that embraces a heterarchial point of view or agency to maintain a dialogue and influence the future in a horizontal manner. I have chosen three works to discuss, to offer a range of possibilities and trajectories - Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Pokemon Go’s memorial to Tamir Rice, and Ghost Bike Memorials. All offer different articulations of heterarchy and agency that I have been focusing on in terms of knowledge production and in resisting subjugation in the aesthetic field and non-human environment. All three approach parrhesia, which Foucault describes as sudden, unfiltered free speech and is an act that involves the subjectivity of the speaker and receiver, regardless of the

I’d like to frame Foucault’s parrhesia with Maurizio Lazzarato’s interpretation of it in *Signs and Machines*. “Parrhesia constitutes a rupture with the dominant significations, an ‘irruptive event’ that creates a ‘fracture’ by creating both new possibilities and a ‘field of dangers.’”

In Part I, Richard Serra mentioned Maya Lin’s Vietnam memorial sculpture in regards to its site specificity and its intention. “There is no way you could ever move the *Vietnam Memorial* because its site specific, nor is there any way you could ever remove the *Titled Arc* in the Federal Plaza. Both of those pieces are conditioned on the premise to create new spaces and new places within an existing context. I think the Vietnam Memorial is very successful in that not only making magnificent sculpture but it makes a sanctuary, a spiritual sanctuary.”

The *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* was the project of veteran Jan Scruggs, who was a wounded Vietnam veteran at the age of 19. Scruggs spoke with NPR about his idea for the design of the memorial, which is two identical pairs of black granite walls that meet at an angle with a complete listing of those killed in action and were missing in action. “I had a theory that we could put all the names on the wall. This is based on the thought of Carl Jung, a student of Freud. [He] writes about collective psychological states, and how we're all sort of drawn together,’ he says. ‘Certain things hold us together. People who die in wars for a country, this is something we all agree on — you can't forget them’…”

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There was pushback against the design that came from Maya Lin, “Why is it that every monument in Washington is white but this one's black,’ he recalls. ‘Why is it that every monument in Washington is rising into the air and this one is buried beneath the ground?’” The monument caused controversy at the time, as much Tilted Arc did. It did not favor the white, vertical statue that makes clear the audience’s physical and emotional relationship to the sculpture in terms of hierarchy. This piece is indeed interesting in its ability to bring the audience into its reality, with a literal reflection of the audience, juxtaposed against the names of the dead. The piece rises out of the ground, like a cut or a gash, again mirroring the minimalism that Richard Serra offered in Federal Plaza.

There is a mythology about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that Maya Lin conceived of its material nature. But Daniel Abramson writes that Lim was actually following very strict guidelines in the design competition, set out in part by Jan Scruggs and the project’s architectural

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62 Inskeep, “Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Founder: Monument Almost Never Got Built.”
adviser, Paul Spreiregen. Lin’s big conceptual offering was to list the names chronologically on the monument, the earliest deaths and the last deaths meeting in the middle at the joint of the two walls. Abramson interrogates this component of the piece for its radical and institutional qualities:

“Like a social historian, Lin also uses statistics and other hard facts to objectively quantify historical experience, and she rejects grand, dramatic narrative form in order to relieve historical representation of its explicitly political burdens. In many ways then it seems appropriate for Lin to use the time line and social history to chronicle the contemporaneous events of the 1960s. Yet the irony of Lin's monumental time lines is that instead of challenging authority, in the way that social history and the events of the 1960s did, her monuments do just the opposite.”

The piece claims a neutrality with the names of the dead in chronological order but certainly nothing is neutral. Information gathering and exhibiting has and gives a viewpoint, even if it’s obfuscated as data, as Maya Lin shows us. The data that Maya Lin gives lends itself for a temporal understanding of the loss of life, coupled with the reflection of the onlooker, could perhaps fit this loss of life within a subjective narrative. Abramson deconstructs the aesthetic narrative that Maya Lin’s piece creates; it does not question the US’s role in the Vietnam War, only centers the US loss within it. The angled sides of the piece project out to encompass the rest of the Washington Mall, almost like open arms, bringing in the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. It certainly doesn’t question the validity of those monuments in terms of its spatial relationship to it. It draws them in, creates the corner of a picture frame, an American story. As Abramson says, “Thus the lost war its uniqueness symbolized by the memorial's unprecedented form appears connected to American history.”

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This certainly contrasts in the disruption of *Tilted Arc* in Federal Plaza, that did not embrace its surroundings as a slight arc, but created new space in spite of the government buildings and plaza. So why include Maya Lin’s piece if its embodiment would seem to reinforce the power of authority? I include it as an example of an institutional trace or memorial that does not impose so wholeheartedly a narrative of obedience. It’s a piece that is past-feeding/future-feeding, a confluence of different information in one moment is always becoming new. While it feigns neutrality, it leaves a great deal of space for the viewer’s subjectivity. This space is both heterarchial and hierarchal, as it seems to toe the line, but it does deal with trauma in a manner that brings moments, people, objects, weather, and ephemera together in one moment. “…Lin’s monument addressed the beholder, not with a rhetoric of exclusion and domination…but with a rhetoric of inclusion and healing. The reflectivity and tactility of the design effectively engage visitors profoundly therapeutic acts of communion, as so many have testified through word and deed. Rituals of touching, taking rubbings of and leaving behind messages and mementos attest to the humanity of the memorial.”65 The body remains docile and is not quite allowed “liberty,” but the information and information production within the experience of the space differs widely from the narrative-heavy memorials in Cambodia.

**The Cudell Gazebo**

Tamir Rice was a 12-year-old boy playing with a toy gun in a Cleveland park gazebo on November 22, 2014. Someone in the park that day called 911 to report a black male juvenile with a gun at the park, though he said it was probably a toy gun. The dispatcher left out the words “juvenile” and “toy gun” and sent the call out to police. Within less than two seconds of

the police cruiser pulling up feet away from Tamir. Rookie Officer Timothy Loehmann, who had been described as emotionally immature, shot twice at Tamir Rice, who wasn’t given the chance to explain or put his hands up. Tamir died of his wounds and the police officers who murdered him that day were never indicted for the crime. Tamir Rice’s name became synonymous with the Black Lives Matter movement, alongside the names of other people of color who have been murdered by police, such as Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Akai Gurley, Sandra Black, to name but a few.

In the time that has passed since the murder, Cuddel Gazebo, the gazebo where Tamir was shot, had become an unofficial memorial to Tamir where community members and passerbys would leave notes and toys in remembrance. It has since been dismantled and donated to the Tamir Rice Foundation, the dismantling starting on September 14, 2016. The Tamir Rice Foundation is loaning the gazebo to the Stony Island Arts Bank in Chicago, founded by artist Theaster Gates, Jr. “Tamir’s mother, Samaria Rice, originally wanted the gazebo to be destroyed because it was a painful reminder of what happened to her son. The City of Cleveland

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67 I would like to make the comment that I’ve struggled over the decision to include the following memorial to Tamir Rice or not within this paper. My hesitation is to write about the loss of a young African-American boy, possibly for my own advantage, which of course participates in the history of white folks benefitting from the bodies of people of color in the US. For example, writing about Tamir Rice within this paper as a fulfillment for my academic degree, to possibly get jobs because of that degree, to personally process my own feelings about loss. At the time of this writing, Dana Schutz’ abstract-expressionist painting in the Whitney Biennial of Emmett Till in his casket has sparked outrage and hurt within communities of color and within the arts community. I’ve settled on telling the story of this memorial, because I think heterarchial ways of remembering are important, but I will be conscious of the problematics of me telling this story, as a white female academic, and will try to be respectful of the loss of Tamir’s life to his family and community.

also wanted it destroyed because it was a reminder of what their police force had done, [Rice family attorney Billy Joe] Mills said.‘69 There is a memorial for Tamir in the works for the space where the gazebo was, but that process is still in the beginning stages of planning between the city and the Rice family. While the physical space is a site of discussion between the community. and while it is unknown when an official memorial will go up, in the interim, Pokemon Go, an augmented reality game, has memorialized Tamir Rice as a Pokestop. The text for the Cudell Gazebo where Tamir was shot reads:

“Community memorial for Tamir Rice, shot and killed by CPD officers who shot him in under 2s after breaking department policy regarding escalation of force.”70

Digital trace does more than augment the physical world. With a game like Pokemon Go, which uses GPS tracking in order for gamers to play on mobile phone devices, there is instead a new becoming, a mix of play and reality, ruled by technics and code and algorithms. Pokemon Go players try to “catch” creatures that appear in their environment, located through the use of internet access and GPS. The game functions through the local environment in that the places where players can refuel, or get more Poke Balls or other treats are Pokestops. Pokestops can be churches, murals, museums, notable local physical spaces.

There is an image of the local space, such as you can see in Figure 9; the game gives local history and gives geographical information, drawing on research by the parent company, Niantic, or through online submission. As Rebekkah Rubin has written: “While Pokemon Go players seek-


ing fictional creatures flock to monuments and plaques, to statues and memorials, what they’re encountering in reality is a new way of recording history—a kind of history that is shaped by those who are actively choosing which story is important to them and their communities and sharing that story with the world, or at least, other Pokemon Go players.”


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As discussed, Maya Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* is an institutional creation; here, the traces of a tragedy are created by Pokemon Go, which is a commodity. While the game is free to download and play, players can purchase coins to enable them to play the game with an advantage, as well as any other investment that takes place that makes Niantic successful. That said, both engage in a relationship with the public and whom they are memorializing, despite their ties to capitalism and the state. As Pokemon Go is an augmented reality game, it creates a space that is both digital and physical and reinforces bonds between players in those two spaces. “When people share information through technology, it can also contribute to a sense of commonality among strangers, a process called parochialization.”

There is a granular connection that players experience with one another and with their visual environment.

Lee Humphreys argues in their article “Involvement shield or social catalyst: Thoughts on sociospatial practice of Pokémon Go,” that there are several advantages to the new media technology, or the technology of Pokemon Go. The technology that is used to play Pokemon Go is a mobile phone, as opposed to a laptop or computer. The phone is lightweight, created for social engagement, especially now with location-based mobile apps, such as OKCupid and Tinder. Players go out and play together, reinforcing social bonds, as well as forging social bonds with non-players they interact with while in play.

A trace that is felt in the world of Pokemon Go is temporal - the experience as described can only last as long as the game lasts. It’s a commodity, much like atrocity memorials that benefit others financially through high attendee engagement. But there is something else here. Augmented reality is a new composite world, that includes all of the digital information about

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which Mark Hansen writes: “Twenty-first-century media, including data gathering and analysis, furnishes a crucial and largely unprecedented means to access this broader environmental surround-the superjectal subjectivity of objectified concrescences of ‘data’-and to translate its data (which I call ‘data of sensibility’) into a form that can be presented, or more precisely ‘fed-forward’ into (future) perceptual consciousness.”74 Pokemon Go has access to the user’s email and contacts, location information and frequency of routes. The phone’s camera will capture images of the environment with the creatures of the game superimposed. We can’t really know the extent of the metadata that is collected through a game like Pokemon Go; we cannot know the future feed of data created by referencing a young boy’s murder. There is an uncertainty regarding what the long-term effects will be in the present and future. “By furnishing a speculative account of the total situation informing the genesis of every new actuality, Whitehead’s account in effect foregrounds the impossibility for any empirical analytic system—no matter how computationally sophisticated and how much data it can process—to grapple with the entirety of real potentiality, or anything close to it.”75

A Grand Jury refused to indict the two officers for murder. Therefore, institutionally, the police officers involved were never named as murders of Tamir. This murder in the eyes of the state is justified. Within institutional history, there is a narrative that this killing, a result of a history of systemic violence, was appropriate. Parallel to this, I critique Pokemon Go for the soft verbiage used in the memorial.

“Community memorial for Tamir Rice, shot and killed by CPD officers who shot him in under 2s after breaking department policy regarding escalation of force.”76

74 Hansen, Predictive Condition, 117.
75 Hansen, Predictive Condition, 127 - 128.
76 Morris, ‘Pokémon Go Memorializes Tamir Rice, 12 Year Old Shot by Cleveland Police.”
This text also fails to name the police officers as murders, though it certainly tries and attempts to create a space where there is an implication of murder or an unjustifiable death with the details “killed by CPD officers who shot him in under 2s after breaking department policy regarding escalation of force.” While the legal system did not create a space to remember the illegal murder of Tamir Rice, Pokemon Go’s digital playscape does attempt to create such a space even as it falls short. It falls short of naming a murder as murder, an injustice as an injustice. While the space that Pokemon Go is an interesting space, it’s also a space that functions within capitalism in a neo-liberal manner that supports the hierarchy it’s a part of. It is not a shocking alarm with the goal to politicize the public. As such, this trace is both hierarchal and heterarchial, allowing both for personal subjectivity and corporate commodification.

To follow this line of thinking, the Pokemon Go Cudell Gazebo memorial raises questions regarding the relationship between trace and meta data. Hansen speaks about the culling of data to create the future. This futurity or the actualizing of potentialities using metadata shows the economic relevancy of Pokemon Go. As Hansen puts it, “…today’s data industries operate on the basis of a system of information gathering an analysis designed to leave citizen-consumers out of the loop. A case in point is contemporary social media, where the affordances of particular platforms are ultimately nothing other than ‘lures’ to generate activity, and hence data, that fuels a predictive engine for the production of surplus value. The key point here is that this ‘system’ combines ideology and operationality in order to secure ever more effective command over the future, or more precisely, over the future’s agency in the present.”

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77 Morris, ‘Pokémon Go Memorializes Tamir Rice, 12 Year Old Shot by Cleveland Police.”

ing, the information of/about/from a space is pertinent in the way that it not only remembers, but also contributes to a present-future, as well as to potential futures.

Pokemon Go is a new space, the clean screen of a smart phone, the 21st century technology connecting smart devices to satellites and internet access. Augmented reality brims with the new and the cutting edge and will probably continue to progress as technology does. That said, this veneer of newness, the clean prefab plasticity is a nuanced and complicated tissue, a moving, burping, becoming and uncoming concoction of the current and old physical space, names of spaces and written histories. It becomes different every time it is experienced by a different individual within the system, and also becomes different every time any of the specificities change.

Pokemon Go is also horizontal in the player’s ability to go anywhere theoretically to play, although not quite parrhesia or spontaneous subjectivity. It’s not a cleavage or an explosion. It’s organic in the way that it’s played and experienced and in the way that it grows out of the history of a geographical area. The players can or cannot approach a Pokestop; it is their choice to interact. There is a certain amount of agency involved, despite the fact that the game itself is preplanned – preplanned cities, created Google maps created Pokestops to match those Google maps. Why is this important? What does this mean as a trace?

To put a piece of the tragedy of Tamir Rice’s murder into a global game, played by anyone with a smartphone, is to keep his name on mouths, screens, thoughts. It’s to concretize a reality that Tamir was murdered by two police officers. It is to make space for discourse among players, among communities, among communities with other communities. Pokemon Go is a digital game played and interacting with the public physical world, as opposed to another form of play that could memorial Tamir, such as a board game, which would be experienced within private space. The public aspect of this game, while not without its problematics, will leave a trace
of the injustice done onto this child that will continue exist in a grassroots manner, a scar in the tissue of experience.

**Ghost Bikes**

Ghost bikes are a global phenomenon to memorialize those killed while bicycling, generally in vehicle or pedestrian accidents. Here I will focus on the New York City Ghost Bike project, as that is where my experience lies. In August of 2015, I was biking south on Dekalb Ave in Brooklyn, NY, crossing Franklin Avenue, when a group of bikers came en masse down Franklin, turning left against traffic onto Dekalb. I paused to observe, having participated in Critical Mass in the early 2000s, which were bicycle protests that involved in a mass of bicycles blocking traffic as an eruptive moment of interruption in daily life. I remember that this mass of people was largely dressed in black, tans and browns; among them they carried a white bike. It took me some moments to understand what was happening in the middle of a weekend day; this was a memorial service, with different attendees speaking about a lost loved one on the sidewalk of Dekalb Avenue, as other the white bike to a pole. This was a ghost bike, created for David Rodebaugh, who was killed in a pedestrian bicycle accident on July 23, 2015.79

The NYC Ghost Bike website, ghostbikes.org, gives basic information about the history of the project, the scope of the project and instructions on how to create a ghost bike. “A bicycle is painted all white and locked to a street sign near the crash site, accompanied by a small plaque. They serve as reminders of the tragedy that took place on an otherwise anonymous street corner,

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Fig. 11: *Ghost Bike for David Rodebaugh*, Brooklyn, NY. Source: author, 2017.

and as quiet statements in support of cyclists’ right to safe travel.⁸⁰ There is no ownership of the idea or continuation of ghost bikes and the website gives instructions on how to create ghost bikes, hoping “…to inspire more people to start installing ghost bikes in their communities and to initiate changes that will make us all safer on the streets.”⁸¹

Ghost bikes are painted white, which stands out in the greys and tans of an urban environment. It can be jarring in a world of dark greys, beiges and brown to see a white object such as this, painted white down to the tires. Whiteness as a color is tied with purity and death, due in part to the history of lead white paint slowly killing artists and artisans or its association with angels or Godliness.⁸⁵ The tires, which we know ought to be black and are the means of movement

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⁸⁰ “How To.” *Ghost Bikes*. http://ghostbikes.org/howto
⁸¹ “Ghost Bikes.” *Ghost Bikes*. http://ghostbikes.org
for the bicycle instead are white and calcified, a monument against a visual field of colors. The whiteness of the bicycles, specifically the whiteness that has spread to include the blackness of the tires, informs us that their purpose has changed from a tool of mobility and has transitioned into a stationary alter. Steven Shaviro argues for allure and metamorphosis of “tool-being” outside of its own qualities in his essay “The Universe of Things.” Allure draws you in, forces you approach an object’s being, its aesthetic entity. A bicycle that is completely white has an aesthetic thingness that draws in the eye, pulling you to the sidewalk, rupturing the understanding of the tool-being of a bicycle. Juxtaposed with allure is metamorphosis, our realization that the entity is unstable and meaning has changed. “Metamorphosis is a kind of wayward attraction, a movement of withdrawal and substitution, a continual play of becoming. In metamorphosis, it is not the thing itself that attracts me, over and above its qualities; it is rather the very unsteadiness of the thing that draws me onward, as it ripples and shifts in a kind of protean weaving.” When a ghost bike is seen as a tool that has changed we are shaken by it. We are shaken by the memorial, but also the unsteadiness of the tool-being, manifesting itself in its new actuality, a different vitality then we have beforehand assumed.

While all of the memorials discussed in Part III have characteristics of hetarchy, the point was made that neither the Vietnam War Memorial or the Pokemon Go Tamir Rice Memorial are parrhesia, or spontaneous cleavages that support individual subjectivity. In contrast, ghost bikes exemplify parrhesic, agenic memorials. They don’t benefit the state or a business. They are meant to be a community remembrance and as a subtle resistance. The purpose of this trace is to literally remember who was killed and serve as a trigger for the present/future.

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related deaths do not have a record of who was killed; there is no name available. For these
deaths, ghost bikes are installed and named “Unknown.”

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault writes about a court case involving Beasse, a child
who was charged and sentenced to two years for vagabondery. An article was written about it in
the newspaper *La Phalange*, which deconstructs little Beasse’s answers to the judge’s questions,
questions which try to locate him within a hierarchial system of government. These included
questions about Little Beasse’s parents, about his home, where he sleeps and why isn’t he an ap-
prentice. Beasse answers flippantly and references his life outside of the normative system.
“Oh, a good house, an apprenticeship, it’s too much trouble. And anyway, the
bouregeois…always grumbling, no freedom.”88 Foucault points to this as anarchistic behavior of
the time; I would like to connect it to ghost bikes, or any free space that through its outsider ex-
istence supports individual subjectivity and resists state institutions and capitalism. These are
traces that feed information forward as an eruption, outside of what is wanted and expected and
desired in terms of obedience.

The lessons of *La Phalange* were not quite wasted. They found an echo when, in the sec-
ond half of the nineteenth century, taking the penal apparatus as their point of attack, the
anarchists posed the political problem of delinquency; when they thought to recognize in
it the most militant rejection of the law; when they tried not so much to heroize the revolt
of the delinquents as to disentangle delinquency from bourgeois legality and illegality
that had colonized it; when they wished to re-establish or constitute the political unity of
popular illegalities.89

Ghost bikes are not quite illegal, but they are not legal either. The website details instruc-
tions as to how to place a ghost bike in hopes of it not getting removed by NYC Sanitation, such
as locking to traffic posts as opposed to trees or anything that would block a pedestrian walkway.

88 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 290.
89 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 292.
The Ghost Bike Project has used advocacy to maintain the place ghost bikes hold as somewhere between illegality and legality. “When the NYC Dept. of Sanitation wanted to include ghost bikes in their rules for derelict bike removals, our public advocacy resulted in over 300 people sending comments that led DSNY to remove mention of ghost bikes from the final rules.”

Except for the clear state illegality, ghost bikes could also be likened to graffiti; not quite sudden cleavage or parrhesia, but definitely an agentic eruption. As they are not related to commodity, they are anarchistic in nature, a scar in the non-human environment. As Woods argues:

To accept the scar is to accept existence. Healing is not an illusory, cosmetic process, but something that – by articulating differences – both deeply divides and joins together. New forms of knowledge, those that give greatest weight to individual cognition rather than to abstractions representing an authority external to experience, mandate a society founded on differences between people and things rather than similarities. The city of self-responsible people, of individuals – each of whom tells a personal (even private) story – exhibits its unique scars, its transformations in solitude, which are a new kind of history. Increasingly, these will be stories of resourcefulness and invention, more and more distance from conditions created by conformity to social norms.

Ghost bikes are white voids in the visual field that reference a loss and mark desire for change. They are created by friends, family and community to create a new possibility, built off the loss felt by someone anonymously. There is a breathtaking tension between the quiet solitude of a calcified bicycle juxtaposed with their explosive meaning. They are a silent scream in a noisy multicolored world that is a primary example of trace that can be left outside of hierarchy, born of and for personal subjectivity of the public.

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91 Woods, Radical Reconstructions, 16.
Conclusion

In this thesis, I’m thinking about what is lost and what is remembered. Memory is a class, race and power-based privilege that perhaps reinforces oppression or dominance. Loss also refers to the non-human environment. Growing up in rural upstate New York it is possible to have an intimate experience of confrontations with the past on a daily basis. The past marks the landscape with developments of roads from dirt to gravel to pavement, the growth of trees that eventually become stumps, the sprawl of cemeteries, infrastructure that morph organically. Historical markers dotting the roadside, placards that silently tell the stories of historical buildings, or battles won or lost. The soil is impregnated with ephemera from a century ago. Animals excavate tools made of iron, stone and glass and upon discovery, morph into artifacts. For me, there is something in the atmosphere of rural America – or in this particular case of upstate New York - it is a place permeated with a sense of history, oral and physical that is different than the experience of memory in an urban environment. This may be due to various factors – urban planning, gentrification, socio-geographical trends, war, natural disasters– that urban neighborhoods may change without holding onto trace in the same way as a more stagnant and still rural area does. Or maybe it is that memory is not as linked in the city with the soil and or old signs or in everyday conversation. Through this thesis, I have worked through different traces and critiqued their ability to maintain subjectivities of a community, perhaps looking for the experience that rural America has offered me – to never forget.

Thinking through what inspired me to pursue the line of inquiry in this thesis--, it was moments in public space when my role as an outsider, a stranger in a city, was experienced I wandered past the Tom Otterness round and cute sculptures at the 14th Street-8th Ave station in NYC, knowing this artist once killed a dog for a video, knowing what few of the strangers rushing past
me knew. I have inside knowledge; but no one in the environment wanted to know. I mourned a house that was torn down in my neighborhood and seeing the graffiti come down with it. The new modern condos built in its place with new tenants, knowing nothing of the explosion that marked the site before. Walking past the comic store that no longer exists in the East Village. I worked at this store on September 11th when the planes hit and I saw the face of a man who looked sunburned because he was too close to the event. Dusty ghost-like New Yorkers floating down the sidewalk, zombies from a day when time seemed to stop. I mourn the fact that these spaces are gone and there is nothing left from them in the monuments that have replaced them. When the viewer is gone then their experiences will be gone as well, along with the possibly new subjectivities that exploded through them.

In this thesis, I looked at various works and their place within the potentialities of trace. Tilted Arc is a piece that through its intentional placement in a public space resisted the normativity of the institutions that surrounded it. It created a platform or a backdrop for the public to be interrupted and to perhaps interrupt others with spontaneity. Tilted Arc is certainly different from the other examples of art I pose in this paper, in that it doesn’t memorialize a loss or trauma. The work itself symbolized a certain type of public freedom, and here I discussed that loss of that freedom. It was erased and replaced by innocuous work that does the job that the state structure would desire, which is to provide a pleasant experience for the transitory public moving in and out of the square but to now allow corners of agency or divergent activity. The loss is Tilted Arc and the ability to create heterarchial space from it. From the vacuum that resulted from its erasure, hierarchal space continued.

Next discussed was the Cambodian Toul Seng Prison Museum and the Killing Fields, created by the Vietnamese and perpetuated by the current government. These were manipulated histo-
ries, created to feed forward a narrative that benefits the state or institution that maintains the power relationship. When I was an elementary school student in the 1990s, I can remember the world map taught to us with the United States in the middle and China and Russia bookending the right and left side. This narrative, though not untrue, was a particular perspective used to re-inforce nationalism and the privileged entitlement of white America. The trace we see in atrocity museums, while certainly an accurate portrayal of an experience, produce knowledge that benefit the commodity and political goals of the state and corporate structures involved. It is by no means a memorial that will maintain a cultural consciousness to avoid the turbulence of the past. It is a power-oriented and top-down narrative that does not give space for the many voices involved in the conversation of a cultural tragedy.

Finally, I presented three works that are alternatives to erasure and problematic trace. Maya Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, rising from the earth like a healing wound and literally reflecting the viewer onto herself. Though institutional, it is nonetheless a space that is abstracted in such a way, with data more neutral than atrocity museums, that are meant for reflection and to keep alive the names of the dead. It is in the same family as *Tilted Arc* in its minimalist form, its way of cutting across a landscape, its immovability. It is different from minimalism in its fine material of polished stone, which is of note. Perhaps that is what sets it apart from *Tilted Arc* and thus allowed its continued existence- its ability to cloak itself in the aesthetic language of institutional art. While it was hard for the public to accept, perhaps it could be more acceptable due to its materiality. *Tilted Arc* was created out of steel that would rust in time, intentionally made of basic materials. Perhaps *Tilted Arc* was too far to the left, too radical for the aesthetic space to be able to continue to explore its potentials with the public that would interact with it.
Pokemon Go also cloaks itself in corporate garb but is allowed to continually exist as a trace resistance against a state that declared a murder of a child was justified. But it is a hidden moment in a digital game, making soft waves that ripple out to players, minds, communities. Play is a space that's incredibly valuable, especially if it is not policed. On the margins, away from authority, but liberating in the DaDa sense of creative play.

Lastly, the heterarchial quiet explosions of ghost bikes. Monuments in the midst of urban environments; unplanned and also unpoliced. Much like graffiti, they are subjective articulations from the public, expressing loss and remembrance and hope for change. They stand out in the environment as something white, barren and inert. Much like the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial, they can camouflage themselves in a way that they can continue to exist. They are familiar tools from the living world and not so obtrusive that they necessitate removal.

With the examples I present, it seems the thread for communal heterarchial memory is the ability to camouflage oneself in the open. This idea of camouflage is an interconnectedness with the city, landscape, community. *Tilted Arc* created a change in the way that landscape architects, city administrators and artists create art – now the tendency is to survey the community to see what they want in their space, so as to not have a fissure like the one created around *Tilted Arc*. As I’ve discussed with ghost bikes, trace can exist “in between:” in between legality and illegality, in between explosions and apathy. In a structural and hierarchal physical and political landscape, we need to find spaces to leave traces that are free, undiscovered or overlooked. In these crevices of the everyday, subjective memory can thrive, so that we, she, he, they and I never forgets.
Bibliography


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