

DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER OCCASIONAL PAPERS • 3

## GROUNDS FOR REMEMBERING

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# **Grounds for Remembering**

**Monuments**

**Memorials**

**Texts**

THE DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES was established at the University of California at Berkeley in 1987 in order to promote interdisciplinary studies in the humanities. Endowed by Doreen B. Townsend, the Center awards fellowships to advanced graduate students and untenured faculty on the Berkeley campus, and supports interdisciplinary working groups, discussion groups, and team-taught graduate seminars. It also sponsors symposia and conferences which strengthen research and teaching in the humanities and related social science fields. The Center is directed by Thomas W. Laqueur, Professor of History. Christina M. Gillis has been Associate Director of the Townsend Center since 1988.

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GROUNDS FOR REMEMBERING contains the proceedings from a symposium of distinguished architects and scholars that took place on March 6, 1995 in the UC Berkeley English Department's Maude Fife Room. The participants included sculptor and architect Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Spring 1995 Avenali Professor in the Humanities. The Avenali professorships are made possible by the generous gift of Peter and Joan Avenali, who endowed the Avenali Chair in the Humanities in memory of family members. The Avenali Chair is attached to the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California at Berkeley, and is occupied by distinguished visiting scholars whose work is of interest to faculty and students in a range of humanistic fields.

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## Thomas Laqueur

My particular interest is the question of how a name relates to place and memory, a problem that goes back almost to the beginning of Western thinking on the subject of commemoration. Quintillian, as well as Cicero, cite as the inventor of mnemonics Simonedes the poet, who could identify the mangled and apparently unidentifiable bodies of those who had been crushed in a collapsed palace by remembering where they had stood when they were alive.

In general, the idea of connecting a name and the place of a body in war had almost no resonance until, very dramatically, in late 1914, in the early stages of a war of unimaginable destruction, there began an unprecedented and massive bureaucratic effort to mark the graves of each and every dead soldier. It then left on the battlefronts of Western Europe over four million names in relatively close proximity to where the body that had been associated with that name fell. To be even more specific, we have in the archives of the organization that finally took over the task of counting the dead, ordinance survey maps which give within ten meters the location of over 350,000 bodies that were disinterred so as to be identified and reburied nearby under a name-bearing marker or one announcing that the name was unknown but to God. World War I, in short, witnessed the most dramatic explosion of names on a landscape in world history.

Let us take the British experience as an example. There were 1,075,293 British dead in WWI. Of these, 557,520 bodies were identified and buried in individual marked graves. A further 180,861 dead were found, but even after tremendous effort of the sort suggested by Simonedes—asking survivors where they had last seen

someone, consulting official diaries that recount daily military action—they could not be identified, and were buried under markers bearing the legend “Known but to God.” Their names joined the names of 336,912 other bodies that had simply disappeared, bodies that were never found—fragmented, beaten into the mud as the war moved back and forth over them—on a series of memorials which follow the battlefronts of WWI, and which were meant to place the name near the place where the person had fallen.

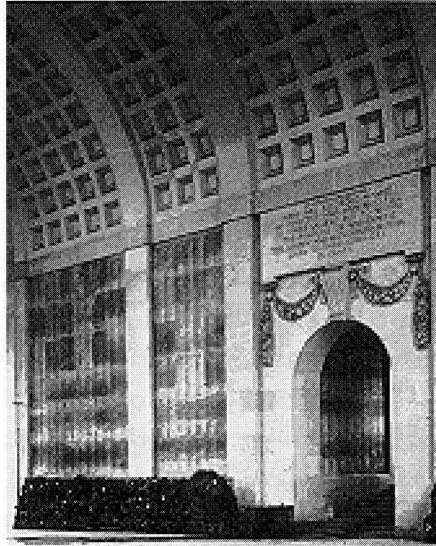
Let us consider some of the monuments starting at the northern part of the Western Front in Ypres. In the city of Ypres, on a long, tunnellike structure modeled on a 17th-century fort in Nancy, the distinguished architect, Sir Reginald Blomfield, managed to arrange panels bearing about 55,000 names. The original idea had been to place all the unidentified dead from the three major battles of Ypres on this one monument, but it turned out there were simply too many. Then the problem became how to make each set of lists mean something that was not too self-evidently arbitrary. This particular assemblage of names, for example, came to be defined as all those who had died unknown in the Salient before August, 1917. One walks into this structure through a classical arch. A niche in one pillar offers a book listing, with

*Menin Gate,  
Ypres*



numbing specificity, the names engraved on every inch of the walls, stairwells and passageways.

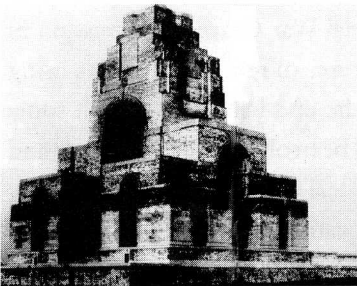
From the time the memorial was built in the late 1920s, visitors have left poppies and wreaths near the names of those they came to commemorate. Often the ashes of poppies were put on individual names by veterans' organizations. I think this activity underscores the extent to which, as would become the case in the Vietnam memorial, the names *themselves* almost immediately became places of pilgrimage.



Menin Gate,  
Ypres  
Interior

Other monuments to the fallen whose names had become unmoored from their bodies trace the contours of the Front. The Tyne Cot Memorial, in the midst of turnip fields that had witnessed the horrible fighting of November 1917 through early 1918 at the Battle of Passchendaele, encloses 33,488 names on the four sides of the courtyard, in which there are another 11,980 gravestones. The disembodied names of 11,447 men dead from the battles of Armentiers, Aubers Ridge, Hazebrouck and more line the colonnades of the Plœgstreet Memorial. At Vimy Ridge in the valley of the Somme, a memorial by Walter Allard overlooks the hill up which Canadian forces fought their way: two burning figures frame the names of 11,500 men with no known resting place. And so on.

The vocabulary of the Thiepval Memorial, however, is very different from these other monuments. The architecture alludes to the cathedral in Albert, a small city



near Thiepval, which was famous because the Madonna on its steeple was almost knocked off her perch during a period of heavy shelling, but miraculously held on. The Thiepval Memorial was meant to speak to this local event, but it was also, and perhaps incongruously, meant to be a Modernist grid for 73,412 names.

Thiepval  
Memorial

Thiepval is a massive brick structure with sixteen huge columns that bear, on three of four sides, the seemingly endless panels of names. Here, as elsewhere, each name is intended to refer to one specific body and only to that body. When there are two R. Clarks, for example, they are distinguished by their serial numbers. When someone is “known as” someone else—i.e., by another name—that fact, too, is specifically noted.

The British had no mass graves; the Germans had a goodly number. That said, however, the names were also a central feature of memorialization in these mass graves. The names of several thousand German students who died in the Battle of Langemarcke in Belgium, one of the earlier battles of the war, are recorded on the walls of a small Greek chapel on the side of the entry gate to an enormous memorial space. Immediately beyond this chapel, one comes to a mass grave of unidentified bodies whose specificity as the locus of memory is thematized in the inscription: “In the cemetery rest the remains of 44,061 German soldiers of the war, 1914 to 1918,” followed by an inscription that refers to Jacob’s being renamed Israel after his struggle with the angel: “I called you by your *name*, and you are mine.”

Pictures make clear that naming is in some sense about the arithmetic sublime, the notation of and representation of a gigantic number—in this case, of bodies. A tablet listing all the German names in the cemetery has them in run-on form; you read it without breaking. The views of the cemeteries at the Battle of Verdun show rows of Christian graves (marked by crosses) Muslim graves (marked by stones), and Jewish graves (by a portion of the Star of David). At the other end of that scale are the bodies that were gathered up into thousands of very small cemeteries.

Quite frequently, comrades would draw maps locating the battlefield graves of fallen soldiers and send the maps to the deceased’s relatives. There are tens of thousands of these extant. In addition, the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1915 began paying photographers to provide pictures of temporary graves using these maps to locate them. (The case I’ll cite at the end will show that in some instances the place where the person was buried had been obliterated by the war and the map was useless for locating the grave.) A great deal was made at the time of the fact that people were actually interested in the location of a particular person’s remains, or of a name.

Names, as Proust puts it at the beginning of *Du côté des Guermantes*, offer us “an image of the unknowable which we have poured into their mold. They are transformed to suit the life of our imagination.”

The point that I want to emphasize is that the number of things that one can and did do with these names—how the imagination transformed them—is legion. Hidden from what you have seen in the slides and monuments are the sheer technical difficulties of gathering so many names into any sort of meaningful assemblage. We can imagine the man in charge of building a memorial writing his boss and asking “Is there any reasonable interpretation of the data that would give us so low a figure as 50,000 missing, and if so, what is that interpretation?” What does it mean to have those 50,000 names rather than some other 50,000 names organized in some other fashion?

There are also tremendous design problems in how to list names in an era when nobody had actually built memorials listing numbers of such magnitude. Harvard Memorial Chapel with about 200 names, for example, is on an entirely different scale. In response to this situation, the artistic advisor to the War Graves Commission had proposed a solution which Maya Lin later adopted in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: listing them, as if in a great, long sentence to be read. This was opposed by the Labor and Socialist members on the commission, who argued that a crucial objective in these monuments would be making it easy for relatives to find the names of the deceased. It would not do to tell the bereaved that the appearance of the monument would gain if the names were grouped together in continuous lines. He thought, and the Commission agreed with him, that each name should stand for itself, one to a line, and hence the sort of listing that we have seen here. That, it turns out from the veterans’ response to Maya’s monument, was a misreading of the psychology of survivors.

This leads again to the issue of representing the sublime. People at this time had to answer the question, “How do we actually *imagine* a million dead people?” The answer was reached, in a kind of hypernominalist way, by showing them as specifically as possible. “Do you want to know what a million people looks like? *That’s* what a million looks like.” It’s extremely specific and, in their account, *anti*-representational.



There are also issues of nationalism and imperialism—the politics of mass democracies, of how to explain armies that *became* conscript armies, though much of this began before conscription in the British case—but I would prefer to conclude with an instance that is about something much more intimate than these issues. As Stephen Greenblatt told me earlier, my account of the development of naming as a central feature of commemoration seemed to say that it is all because of Trollope. In some sense, he’s right.

There was an exchange of letters between Will Martin, who was an infantry private and one-time groom in the British army, and his fiancée Emily Chitticks, who was a servant on the next farm. There are seventy-five manuscript letters from him to her, until he was killed in March, 1917, and there are twenty-three letters from her to him extant. Five of those letters he never saw. They were returned to her unopened in a little package appropriately stamped “Killed in Action.” In 1921 she collected these letters into a bundle called “Will’s Letters” along with a chronology of their relationship, a pencil verse about how she wouldn’t see him on Earth again, and a couplet in ink saying,

*Sleep, darling, sleep on foreign shore  
I loved and loved you dearly, but Jesus loves you more.*

And there is also a note saying that she wanted this packet buried with her just as her heart was already buried in Flandres Field. Her life, she said, had ended with his.

Emily Chitticks actually died in a council flat about four years ago, and was buried at the expense of the state. Sometime subsequently, someone cleared out her effects, found these letters, and gave them to the Imperial War Museum, where I opened them.

It’s a remarkable letter exchange in its novelistic quality. What I mean is that these people attempt to read feelings into each other, that they write with the sensibility of domestic fiction. They talk about their dreams. “It was strange to dream of you in civilian clothes,” she writes to him, “because I never saw you in civilian clothes.” He writes to her, “I didn’t want to act this way because I knew it would make you anxious.” She tells him about the two little, dear puppies born

at Suffolk House in her last letter to him, “Two sheepdogs they are, and such pretty and playful ones.” He tells her about death on the front. “I’ve seen some graves today, dear, of officers and men who were killed in action. They had wooden crosses and wood railings around the graves. They were really done up very nicely. Well, dear Emily, I hope you’ve received all my letters.”

Her last letters to him come back and she hears nothing. Finally she gets a letter from his friend saying where the body is—in a temporary grave. She writes back, “How can I thank you for the information you sent me regarding my sweetheart Will Martin? It’s a terrible blow. No one knows but myself what it means.” Then she writes to the War Graves Commission as to where Will’s grave is. She gets a little card saying that he is buried at a point just southwest of Écoust St. Mein, which is southeast of Arras. That site however, she learned later, was shelled, so the grave had disappeared and no trace could be found of Will Martin.

After several more inquiries, the War Graves Commission assured Emily that Will’s name would be preserved.

You may rest assured that the dead who have no known resting place will be honored equally with the others and that each case will be dealt with upon full consideration of its merits as regarding the site and place of the memorial.

In fact, and I saw it there, Will Martin’s name along with 10,000 others is on the Memorial to the Missing at the Faubourg d’Amiens, for soldiers who were lost in the Arras sector in the Battle of the Somme.

## Maya Lin

I will continue discussing these WWI memorials but I'll be taking them in a different direction. I, too, am going to mention Lutyens' Thiepval Memorial because for me it is the prime inspiration for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

There are two points I should mention before I begin. I've never seen the Thiepval Memorial. My accounts of it came through an art history professor and his experience and description of it in a class I took. I would also like to draw attention to the notion of the individual name and the importance of the name. In reflecting on the work I've done in designing, specifically in designing the Vietnam memorial, a certain name comes to mind in addition to Thiepval and that's Woolsey Hall at Yale University.

Any undergraduate who was at Yale when I started there in 1977-78 saw one or two men always etching out the names of the alumni from Yale or of the Yale students who had been killed in Vietnam. As you walked through the hall to and from classes, you'd register that there were these two men etching in the names. And you'd unconsciously register the time it was taking to etch in each name, and the time somebody had lost. It was always *there*. It was ever-present. The actual work stopped sometime in my sophomore or junior year, but I think, like every other student passing through there, you could not help but be quiet as you walked through that hall. Also, you couldn't *not* touch the names. This, I think, is very important and always will be in my work. The opportunity to touch the names is a little different from the experience of a lot of the WWI memorials where in many cases you cannot approach the names, even though you are reading them, because

they're much higher off the ground. I would draw attention to the symbolic nature of listing the names and the impossibility of reaching some of them.

To begin explaining the steps that led up to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I'll start by mentioning a church that Tom has mentioned: the cathedral at Albert.

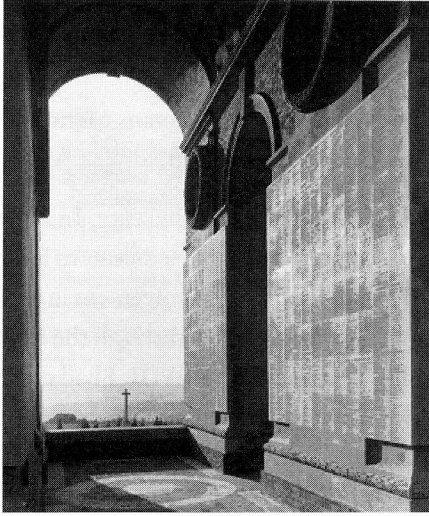
I designed the Vietnam memorial in a class on funereal architecture. In all, it took me a few weeks to design it. It also took me nearly the whole semester to learn how to describe it. In the class we had focused on architecture's involvement in how we grieve, how we mourn, how we deal with the notion of death through the built form. A previous assignment had been to design a memorial to WWII. I had come up with a design that proved to be a futile, somewhat terrifying journey. My professor at the time was horrified. In fact he came up to me afterwards and said "Maya, if I had a brother who had died in this war, I'd be so offended that I would never want to come to this memorial." I looked at him and said, "Andy, it's World War III. We're not going to be around afterwards."

That incident underscores the question that preoccupied me while designing the Vietnam memorial, "What is the purpose of a memorial?" I made some conscious decisions before ever designing it, verbally articulating what I wanted to accomplish. One thing that was very important to me was to be extremely honest about the facts of not so much the *politics* of war but the *results* of war. I also thought it important to register loss on a fundamental, individual level. The memorial focuses on the *individual* loss, because I thought the experience of visiting the memorial should be a private awakening, a private awareness of that loss.

Although I studied memorials from the earliest funeral steles to contemporary commemorative works, I was most moved by the WWI memorials, particularly those published by the British War Graves Commission. What I found most influential was the expression of great loss and tragedy surrounding these works; they focused on the people who gave their lives rather than on a country's or leader's politicized statements of victory. You begin to see emerging the acknowledgment of the individual.

I designed the project that everyone now sees, but at the time I hadn't decided to enter it into the competition. I made that decision the following semester, and

*Thiepval  
Memorial,  
Interior*



although the design was essentially complete, it took me weeks to write a written description of the design, which I felt would be as essential to understanding it since the design seemed to be so simple in the drawings.

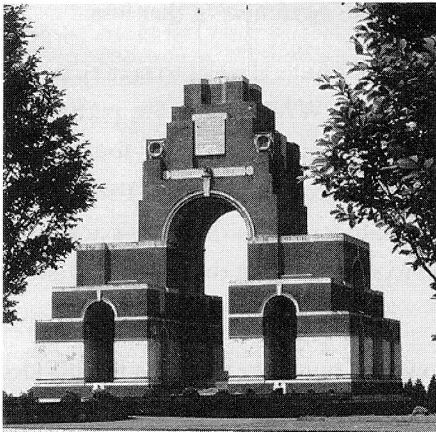
About that time, Professor Scully started talking about the Thiepval Memorial in class. He described it as an abstraction of a scream that you walk through. The design of the Thiepval Memorial is based on the church Tom Laqueur mentioned earlier, the church at Albert that

had been shelled and whose Madonna remained just barely attached during the shelling. The shelling of the church reiterated itself into the abstraction of the memorial and also, as Professor Scully had mentioned, the expression of pain and anguish—the open, gaping mouth you walk through as you enter the structure.

As you drive up to the memorial you see it surrounded by a lawn. You have to break through and walk across this encircling lawn in order to approach the structure. As you enter and finally stand at the center of the memorial you are flanked by views of cemeteries; crosses on the left, stones on the right. Professor

Scully describes this experience as a passage to an awareness, where you stop at the center and are fully aware of the immensity of the loss. You've walked through names of fallen soldiers, and you are left overlooking these very simple gravestone markers. As he described it, the journey takes us to a certain point of awareness that we cannot go beyond, even though we can continue walking.

*Thiepval  
Memorial*



I started writing the final part of the design, the accompanying written description, while he was lecturing. He couldn't figure out *what* I was doing. I had pretty much finished writing by the end of his lecture. I made several careful revisions afterwards because I realized that a lot of what I was doing wouldn't be immediately understood just by looking at the design. I ended up drafting this text directly onto the boards because I could never get it "right." It took me longer to write this than it took me to design the piece itself. I thought I'd read it today because its something I've never really discussed publicly.

Walking through this park, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth, a long, polished black stone wall emerging from and receding into the earth. Approaching the memorial, the ground slopes gently downward, and the low walls, emerging on either side, growing out of the earth, extend and converge at a point below and ahead. Walking into the grassy site contained by the walls of the memorial, we can barely make out the carved names upon the memorial walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers while unifying those individuals into a whole. For this memorial is meant not as a monument to the individual, but rather as a memorial to the men and women who died during this war as a whole.

The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it. The passage itself is gradual; the descent to the origin, slow; but it is at the origin that the meaning of this memorial is to be fully understood. At the intersection of these walls, on the right side, at the wall's top, is carved the date of the first death. It is followed by the names of those who have died in the war in chronological order. These names continue on this wall, appearing to recede into the earth at the wall's end. The names resume on the left wall as the wall emerges from the earth back to the origin where the date of the last death is carved at the bottom of this wall. Thus, the war's beginning and end meet. The war is complete, coming full circle, yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side and contained within the earth itself. As we turn to leave, we see these walls stretching into the distance, directing us to the Washington Monument to the left, and the Lincoln Memorial to the right, thus bringing the Vietnam memorial into historical context. We the living are brought to a concrete realization of these deaths. Brought to a sharp awareness of such

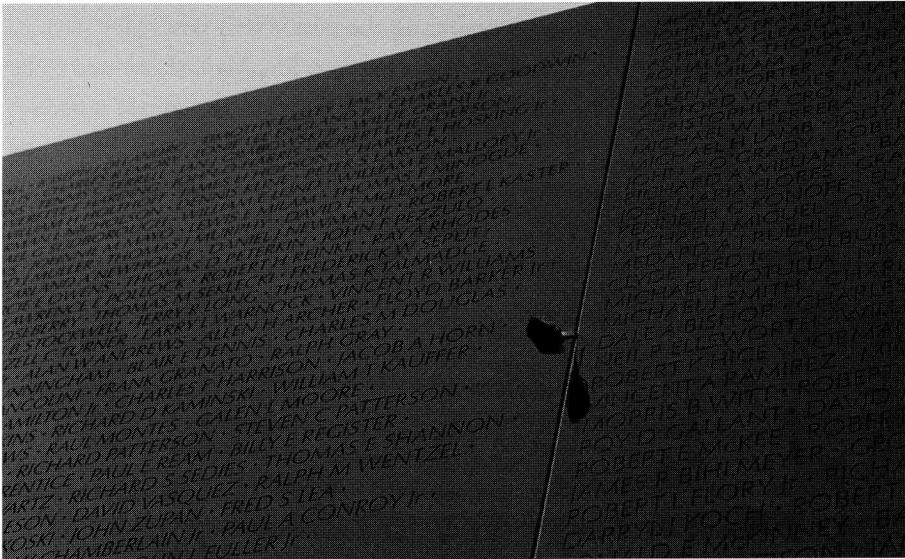
a loss, it is up to each individual to resolve or come to terms with this loss. For death is, in the end, a personal and private matter and the area contained within this memorial is a quiet place meant for personal reflection and private reckoning.

The thick granite walls, each two hundred feet long and ten feet below the ground at their lowest point, gradually ascending toward ground level, effectively act as a sound barrier, yet are of such a height and length so as not to appear threatening or enclosing. The actual area is wide and shallow, allowing for a sense of privacy, and the sunlight from the memorial's southern exposure along with the grassy park surrounding and within its walls contribute to the serenity of the area. This memorial is for those who have died, and for us to remember them.

The memorial's origin is located approximately at the center of this site, its legs each extending two hundred feet toward the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The walls contained on one side by the earth are ten feet below the ground at their point of origin, gradually lessening in height until they finally recede totally into the earth at their ends. The walls are to be made of hard, polished black granite with the names to be carved in a simple Trajan letter three quarters of an inch high, allowing nine inches in length for each name.

The memorial's construction involves recontouring the area within the walls' boundaries so as to provide for an easily accessible descent, but as much of the site as possible should be left untouched, including trees. The area should remain a park for all to enjoy.

The only significant change that had to be made on the original design was the size of the names. I'd made a horrible error in mathematics and each wall would have ended up being too long. In order to accommodate the names at the original size, the walls of the memorial would have touched the Washington Monument and cut through the Lincoln Memorial because, as Tom mentioned, the immense number of the names made the sizing of the names the biggest technical problem. I think that this memorial couldn't have been done in the past, because at the time the WWI memorials were being built, for example, each name had to be hand-cut. At the size we needed to carve the letters, the work couldn't have been done manually. Each letter ends up being about half an inch tall, which was considered impossible. But because of computers and new mechanical etching techniques, the engravers were able to do it.



I'm going to end my talk with a few points about memorials in general and my work in particular.

I consider the work I do memorials, not monuments; in fact I've often thought of them as anti-monuments. I think I don't make objects; I make places. I think that is very important—the places set a stage for experience and for understanding experience. I don't want to say these places are stages where you act out, but rather places where something happens within the viewer.

I think there's a very big difference between reading a book in a public place and reading a billboard in a public place. My works try to bring out the notion of the intimacy of reading that which is a book—literally. Even in the Vietnam memorial you'll notice that the panels open like a book. The panels are numbered like the pages in a book. At the apex you can see that on the right-hand panels the words rag right, and on the left they rag left. One change we made to the original design was to add a prologue and an epilogue. This is an interesting point of convergence between the notions of text and art and content.

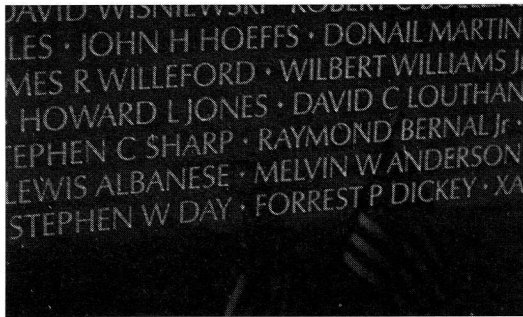
I faced two design problems aside from the political controversies concerning the building of this piece. The first one was the chronology, which was absolutely



critical. One of the things about remembering the past is that you really have to make it relevant to the present. You have to bring it to life. My task seemed to be to convince people that the memorial is a thread of life that we can put ourselves into. Keeping the order of names chronological allows a returning veteran literally to find his time. Within a couple of panels he will also find the names of other people who served with him. He is brought into an immediate experience of the past. MIA advocates wanted to list MIAs separately and alphabetically. I was able to convince these groups that separating out the MIAs would have been a disaster and would have broken the entire context of the piece. We finally convinced them to agree to a notation so that if an MIA later came back or was officially declared dead, the notation could be changed.

The second problem was the size of the text, the technical problem of placing such an enormous text on the form of the monument. We debated the issue of how small the letters could be and still be read. I came up against incredible opposition, because any stonecutter will tell you that you absolutely *cannot* read a letter less than an inch tall. They were thinking in terms of a very public monument and these

Vietnam  
Veterans  
Memorial:  
Lettering,  
Detail



were conventional measurements for monumental architecture. In order to fit the text and have the lettering be of a size that wouldn't overpower the site, we went down to about five eighths of an inch. In so doing, I really came to see the text as a book that happens to be there for everyone to read, but not to be read the way public monuments are normally read, which would have required a much larger text. The size of the letters also allows people to see the lettering as a part of the form itself, like a beautiful fabric, so that the text begins to symbolize something other than just the names carved there.

## Andrew Barshay

I want to shift the scene from Europe and America to Asia. The grotesque harvest of bodies and souls that we know about from Europe in the First World War and the Second World War has, in the case of the Second World War, its counterpart in Asia. I want to talk about some aspects of issues relevant to war memories and memorialization in Asia.

The last time I lived in Tokyo I took a bus every day past an nondescript little park that was on a hill overlooking one of the main train lines that runs through the city and also overlooking the Kôrakuen Stadium where the Tokyo Giants play. This park had many of the typical features of parks in larger Japanese cities: sandy ground, benches, low fences or hedges surrounding planted trees. Very modest, very unglamorous, but it was a place for local kids to play. There was a small stone monument recessed in the very back of the park close to where one could look out over the hill to the train tracks and the stadium and amusement park below. I didn't actually spend time in it, but in passing by every day I did notice what the park was—it turned out to be Tokyo's memorial park for its own war dead (*senbotsusha*).

At the end of this week in March fifty years ago, Tokyo was firebombed and approximately 100,000 people died overnight from March 9 to March 10. This park to memorialize the war dead is essentially a park for the victims of that firebombing. The striking thing about the park is that there is no aura of sacredness, no aura of death surrounding it. It's a normal place where people play. Its simplicity made me wonder, "Where are the dead in a city like Tokyo?" They're not there in the park.

One answer is that they are in a place not far from there, at Chidorigafuchi along the Imperial Palace moat. In 1959 the city of Tokyo erected a tomb to the war dead, people whose identities are not known. It's called Mumei Senshisha Byô—a very un-Japanese-sounding name—The Tomb of the Unknown War Dead. It doesn't sound Japanese at all. Particularly when seen in Chinese characters, it almost reads like a translation. Nevertheless, this is the place where the ashes of the people whose identities were not known are interred; ashes because that is what they had become, and because since the seventh century, cremation has been the accepted means of handling the remains of the dead in Japan.

Again, I stress that this place sounds and feels somewhat foreign. Unlike Arlington, its closest analogue, it's not a place to which people feel connected to each other or to their shared past. There is, so to speak, no “there” there, no greater self, even an anonymous one, in which they share. Ultimately, real life and death in Japan must be mediated by *family*. The prewar state in Japan referred to itself as a literal, not metaphorical, “family state.” Without consanguinity, or better, the “sentiment of consanguinity,” the collective experience of war would become unbearably senseless.

These considerations lead me to my main focus today—the *site* of my concerns. I confess to feeling rather strange about not making Hiroshima or Nagasaki my subject; but I want instead to speak about the only other place in Japan that can “compete”—forgive me this term—with them. In fact, from the point of view of memories, memorialization, and the political economy of war death in Asia, this place may be of greater significance.

I'm talking about the Yasukuni Shrine, which is located atop Kudan Hill in Tokyo. “Yasu-Kuni” means something like “to soothe” or “to pacify the country.” The Yasukuni Shrine is the main shrine to the war dead in Japan, specifically, to those people who have died in service to the Emperor of Japan, roughly (via its antecedents) since the 1850s, which is when Commodore Perry arrived, but formally speaking since 1869. It is important to understand that the Yasukuni Shrine is a Shinto shrine and that all the soldiers enshrined there must have been killed in action. These soldiers become *kami*, deities who are worshipped there not only by their own families, as members who brought honor to the family, but also

by the Emperor. The fact that many, indeed millions of heroes are acknowledged there distinguishes the Yasukuni Shrine from the many shrines to individual Imperial heroes and soldiers. In this function, it is not a shrine dedicated to one person, but to everybody who had died in combat for Japan. The Emperor's visits there, varying in frequency depending on political and historical conditions, may be understood as the sole occasion on which he performs acts of worship to his people.

When Japan fought its first modern wars in 1894-95 and again in 1904-05 against China and Russia respectively, the Emperors made visits to the shrine not only to preside over the enshrinement of the dead, but also to announce the beginning or the end of the war. Those wars ended in victory, of course, but the number of visits that the Emperor made to the shrine at that time was not great—fewer than five or seven. During World War II, which we think of as beginning in 1941 even though there had been significant military activity since 1937, the Emperor made approximately twenty visits to Yasukuni Shrine on one occasion or another.

As a shrine, the Yasukuni Shrine has festivals in the fall and in the spring. Like most such festivals, it was traditionally a somewhat gaudy and tacky affair. The number of imperial visits increased as the number of casualties increased dramatically. If we compare the early decades of the 20th century to the middle decades, we see a sharp increase in the number of war dead. At present, there are 2,453,199 dead enshrined at Yasukuni. In the Japanese context, one way of handling the issue of millions and millions of dead is to honor them by making them *kami*. As such, they are represented collectively by a single mirror kept in the shrine sanctuary. As *kami*, they live in connection with their families and link generations of those families. Yet once enshrined, in a real sense those *kami* no longer belong strictly to their families; they belong to the state.

The deification of those fallen in combat is an aspect of today's discussion that deserves particular attention. One striking feature of the slides we have seen is that all the structures are monumental yet retain the possibility of connection between the living and the dead at an intimate level: we see how shatteringly true this is at the Vietnam memorial. But there are "only" 59,000 names to be touched, not 2,500,000, or, by some estimates, 20,000,000, as in China. The Yasukuni Shrine, by contrast, cuts off the families from their dead in the very act of enshrining them.

I want to illustrate this point with a court case that will lead us from the question of memorialization to the related questions of the politics of death and memorialization in Japan.

Before I do that, let me just mention that the Yasukuni Shrine is in fact a hierarchical organization; along with the main Tokyo shrine are local branches throughout the nation. It was originally intended only for people who had died *in combat*, and sometimes people weren't qualified even though they had died of war wounds or had been taken prisoner and died in captivity. Those people were originally excluded. It was considered a tremendous privilege and honor to be enshrined in Yasukuni. The regulations were loosened later on, but were still reserved for military deaths. When the future of the shrine was being debated by American occupation forces after 1945, one eminent scholar, D.C. Holtom, suggested that the enshrinement be opened to meritorious civilians; but that didn't happen.

There was a court case some years ago which involved a member of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF), Nakaya Takafumi, who died in a traffic accident near Tokyo in 1973 and was properly cremated. The local branch of the Yasukuni Shrine wanted to apotheosize (*gésbi*) him, make him into a *kami*, as would be proper for someone who had died in service to the country. The SDF made an official request to this effect with the support of the local veterans' organization. But his widow, Yasuko, refused to allow the apotheosis to occur. She was a Christian and didn't want her husband to be enshrined. In defense of her claim over her husband's remains, she argued that it violated her constitutional and human rights to have her religious wishes overridden by the state.

She sued the shrine and won. . . twice. In the first suit, the apotheosis was not permitted, so there was a countersuit. She won the countersuit, and the shrine was ordered to pay her compensation of about one million yen. Finally, the case went to the Japanese Supreme Court, where in 1988 she finally lost. The court decided that once the woman's husband had died and the desire to apotheosize him had been made known, it was neither a question for his wife to decide nor, in particular, a question of her individual religious preference. The state ruled that once the dead were dead, those religious rights didn't matter. There were two reasons for this

decision. The court decision stated that it was not the wife's decision but the man's family's decision, since what mattered most was the continuity of the house line. To recall one of those crude proverbs that tell so much, women have wombs and "wombs are borrowed things" (*hara wa karimono*); the parents of the deceased, not the widow, have first claim to the son's spirit. The court also ruled that in assisting the apotheosis, the SDF was not patronizing Shinto, nor was the widow compelled to participate, both of which would have been unconstitutional. In the end, Nakaya Yasuko lost her case and the apotheosis was carried out.

This story speaks to the meaning of Yasukuni in the context of war memory, memorialization, and, of course, the meaning of "post-war" in Japan, insofar as Japan has a democratic constitution that enshrines, so to speak, political and human rights that did not receive much attention in the pre-war constitution. For the state to win a case like this is important, because it suggests that in some ways, despite the enormous political differences in the relations between the Emperor, the state, and the people from the pre- to post-war periods, and despite the much greater degree of political openness, there are areas where the state can, in fact, reach into the most intimate concerns of people, including the disposition of their dead.

Yet the significance of Yasukuni and its differences from the WWI and Vietnam memorials become clear only when seen in an Asian context. The Yasukuni Shrine brings out and dramatizes fears of the revival of militarism, because along with the millions of departed heroes, it also enshrines Japan's official war memories. It remains the site of Japan's only public military museum, displaying weaponry and equipment: everything from swords to tanks. As you enter the shrine's precincts, there are two massive stone lanterns with metal plaques on them depicting the exploits of Japanese forces at different points in their history. Much of what is memorialized there has to do with the war in China, which began in earnest in 1937, and eulogizes the sacrifices made by imperial troops. On October 17, 1978, General Tōjō Hideki was enshrined there as one of the "Martyrs of the Shōwa Era." (Tōjō, you might recall, was executed as a Class A war criminal in 1948, having been convicted of "the grossest crimes against humanity.") I don't want to get into the issue of "victor's justice" here, but I think it fair to say that Tōjō had set a good many of the "departed heroes" on their path to "martyrdom," along with their millions of victims.

Particularly after the enshrinement of Tōjō, the practice of Japanese cabinet members, especially the prime minister, making regular appearances at the shrine has outraged the sentiments of the Chinese, as well as those of other nations for shared, if somewhat different reasons. I don't want to minimize the degree to which expressions of outrage are politically motivated, but there is a core of unassuaged bitterness that must not be denied. For the Koreans, Yasukuni is a very complex issue. Korea was a colony of Japan at that time. There were also many Koreans who served in the Japanese military during WWII, but who were excluded from Yasukuni even though they died for the Emperor. I will also note in passing that at Hiroshima, as well, Korean victims are not memorialized within the official confines of the Peace Park.

Thus, the Yasukuni Shrine may be said to form one side of a triangle in the political economy of war memory in Japan. The other two sides of the triangle are formed by Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and by the city of Nanjing in China. Nanjing was the capital of the Nationalist government that fell to the Japanese in the winter of 1937-38. When Japanese troops entered the city, they carried out atrocities that took approximately 300,000 civilian lives after the city's military defeat. For the Chinese, Nanjing is just one of those sites on which Japanese forces vented their fury for being resisted by people whom they (the Japanese) considered inferior to themselves.

The practice of official observances at Yasukuni crystallizes the issue of war memory in Asia in a way we in this country are not really aware, except perhaps by analogy. When the Japanese cabinet, for example, under Prime Minister Nakasone, that great friend of Ronald of Bitburg, insisted that his full cabinet make a formal appearance at Yasukuni Shrine, there was tremendous controversy. The spectacle of the Prime Minister with his cabinet signing his name in the registry as Prime Minister of Japan, appearing in mourning clothes, going in official cars paid for by state funds raised constitutional issues about the separation of "shrine" and state in Japan and provoked all kinds of problems in Japan's relations with China.

Yasukuni regularly surfaces as an issue. It is not settled, and I don't see it being settled in the foreseeable future. This may in fact be an optimistic conclusion. On the one hand, over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, there were five instances

when the Liberal Democratic government pushed bills in the Diet to allow for official worship by the cabinet at Yasukuni. Five times they were defeated. On the other hand, Nakasone did go, decked out in tails. And there is the Nakaya ruling of 1988 to consider. The issue is the place of Yasukuni in relation to postwar political institutions and to Japan's presence—historical and contemporary—in Asia. But ultimately, the meaning of Yasukuni will depend on the extent to which the continuity of family, of house, is linked to national identity and the collective experience of being Japanese. Which identity, which experience will it be—an official version that overrides private concerns and convictions, or a re-imagined one that respects the real diversity of sentiment and experience that will never disappear from Japanese life—remains to be decided.



## Stephen Greenblatt

This is an occasion first of all in which I can express my gratitude for Maya Lin's presence during these past weeks as the Avenali Professor at Berkeley and, beyond this, my gratitude for her extraordinary gifts. These gifts are not by any means restricted to the arts of memory, but today's focus on remembrance makes it inevitable that we reflect on that aspect of her achievement for which she is most famous. In what I have to say today I will try to blur the lines between memorials, architecture and works of art, understanding, of course, that these are all separate genres but that they all frequently refer to each other.

Since powerful works of art tend very quickly to acquire an air of inevitability, and since academics are usually in the business of reinforcing this air of inevitability by amassing sources, precedents, and historical causes, it may be worth reflecting on how wildly improbable the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is. For the United States, at the height of its military and economic world domination, to lose a war against an insurgent peasant army was virtually unthinkable. For a country dispirited and bitterly divided by this war and its disastrous conclusion to undertake to erect, at private expense, a major national monument to its fallen soldiers was unlikely, and still more unlikely to elect to locate this monument on the central triumphal axis of its national institutions and collective memory. For the commission to design the monument to be awarded to a very young, unknown architecture student, a woman, and, what is more, an Asian-American woman, was unprecedented. For this design to be realized over the vehement, vociferous, and, on some regrettable occasions, vicious opposition of some of the most influential politicians in the land,

was astonishing. And then for the completed work of art—a work predicted to be divisive, unpatriotic, coldly abstract—to become one of the most influential and beloved monuments in the United States, the center of a virtual cult of remembrance—that is the wildest improbability of all.

Even if it manages to reconstruct a perfect causal chain, a historicist criticism whose underlying meaning is “this must be so” or “things had to be this way” necessarily misrepresents the way works of art are actually made. It is far better to understand that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial could not have been built, could not work, could not possibly exist. We know that it could not exist not only because of the historical factors I have just sketched, but also because of a long-term, persistent resistance to monuments in our culture, a culture shaped from its 17th-century origins by a deeply iconophobic Puritanism.

It is no accident that Milton’s fallen angels excel at architecture—it is practically the first thing they do when they pull themselves off the burning lake—and that *Paradise Lost* reserves a special contempt for the monument builders of antiquity:

Let none admire  
That riches grow in Hell; that soil may best  
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those  
Who boast in mortal things, and wondering tell  
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,  
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame  
And strength, and art, are easily outdone  
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour  
What in an age they, with incessant toil  
And hands innumerable, scarce perform.

The implication here is not that monumental architecture is itself inherently satanic: the principal designer of the capital of Hell, Mulciber, had already been famous for his architectural projects up above. “His hand was known,” Milton writes, “In Heaven by many a towered structure high, / Where sceptered angels held their residence.” But there is something troubling, something wrong with trying to preserve memory, and particularly the memory of name and fame, in material structures. Again, the desire to preserve memory is not in itself evil. In Eden, too, Milton imagines the impulse to commemorate by digging in the earth and

assembling polished stones (collected from the brook, let us note, rather than polished by human labor) and making offerings. One of the things, indeed, that most afflicts Adam at the prospect of leaving Paradise is the lost opportunity to build monuments for ensuing generations:

Here I could frequent  
With worship place by place where he vouchsafed  
Presence Divine; and to my sons relate,  
'On this mount he appeared; under this tree  
'Stood visible; among these pines his voice  
'I heard; here with him at this fountain talked':  
So many grateful altars I would rear  
Of grassy turf, and pile up every stone  
Of lustre from the brook, in memory,  
Or monument to ages; and thereon  
Offer sweet-smelling gums, and fruits, and flowers.

But if the impulse to build monuments is a pious one for Adamic man, after the fall it becomes deeply suspect: it is not strictly forbidden, but it easily becomes unacceptable, improper, vain, an offense to the very values it pretends to honor.

There is a famous passage in Isaiah in which the Lord rails against "a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments. . . Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." (65:3-5). "Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments": the passage points us toward a set of deeply rooted cultural beliefs that make the building of any successful monument difficult. Monuments, like high places, altars of grassy turf, and offerings, were very early identified with stiff-necked self-righteousness, with hypocrisy, with settled landedness rather than nomadic searching, with the stony performance of a piety that does not in fact exist. Holiness and authentic remembrance are in the heart, not in outward signs, in rituals, in monumental observances that always tend, as the prophet goes on to make clear, toward idolatry.

Idolatry has two faces, both of them unacceptable, both of them lurking in monuments: the first is inert matter, the second is demonic. The demonic is the

more lurid threat, and the one most explicit in a writer like Milton, but it has, over the centuries, proved to be less enduring—though it has had sudden and surprising resurgences in recent years in the spectacle of public statues pulled down, defaced, and dismembered in carnivalesque rituals of rage and liberation. I think one of the most extraordinary trends the world has witnessed in the last five years is the attacking of public monuments as something actually satanic, not simply as inert matter. But the sense of inert matter, of monuments as dead substitutes for living memory, has if anything steadily increased, so that we have as a culture grown exceedingly uncomfortable with cenotaphs and obelisks and statues of heroic warriors. For our attempts at memorialization, we prefer narratives and movies and interactive museums.

The point is not that we have stopped building monuments—our cities are littered with them. For if we are heirs to an ancient fear of idolatry, we are equally heirs to a shame and honor system in which monuments have always played a crucial role. Milton’s contemporary, Thomas Hobbes, draws upon a very old tradition of distinguishing between idol worship and what he calls “civil honoring.” Making images of God or angels or even dead men violates the Second Commandment, he writes in *Leviathan*,

unless as monuments of friends, or of men worthy of remembrance: for such use of an image is not worship of the image, but a civil honouring of the person; not that is, but that was: but when it is done to the image which we make of a saint, for no other reason but that we think he heareth our prayers, and is pleased with the honour we do him, when dead and without sense, we attribute to him more than human power, and therefore it is idolatry.

The notion of “civil honoring” dominates the building of monuments in American cities, but almost all of them arouse a vague uneasiness. We can use as a literary emblem of this uneasiness the monument that old Montague and Capulet vow to erect in memory of the children they have managed to destroy: “For I will raise her Statue in pure gold,” says Montague about Capulet’s daughter Juliet,

That whiles Verona by that name is known,  
There shall be no figure at such rate be set  
As that of true and faithful Juliet.

To which Capulet adds, in the spirit of competitive donation: “As rich shall Romeo’s by his lady’s lie—/Poor sacrifices for our enmity!” The transformation of the dead lovers into statues becomes an emblem of a settling of the feud, with a sense, however, not only of the culpability of the parents, but also—despite the best intentions of the builders—of the oblivion to which the families consign their children even in the act of commemorating them.

There is, for all of the genuine grief of the parents, a touch in the statues of what Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* calls “monumental mockery” when he is urging Achilles to return to the war:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,  
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,  
A great-sized monster of ingritudes.  
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devoured  
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon  
As done. Perseverance, dear my lord,  
Keeps honor bright; to have done is to hang  
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty nail  
In monumental mok<sup>r</sup>ry.

Of course, it is the fate of the dead that they cannot continually renew their honor through deeds. “The earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she,” says Capulet, who is shortly to lose his last hope as well. We know this. But despite an understanding of the finality of death, despite a fear of idolatry, and despite a clear-eyed recognition that monuments cannot defeat oblivion, the fantastic dream of such renewal after death is one of the motives that, even as it used to fuel the cult of the saints, still hovers behind the building of secular monuments. The issue is not simply the honor that accrues to the dead but the benefits that the dead, and more generally the past, can continue to confer upon the living.

I want to go back for a moment before I close to the fear of lifeless matter that I said haunts the building of monuments and makes us generally uneasy with them. I want to add three further brief notes. First, monuments, like graves, are not only expressions of the dream of renewal; they are paradoxically expressions of a dream of containment: through the monument the dead will be given a proper place and kept in this place. We do not want the dead to roam unchallenged in the places of

the living; we do not want the grave to open “his ponderous and marble jaws” and to cast up what has been laid to rest. The heavy inertness of matter is present in monuments not only as a melancholy limit but as a friend to the living. The makers of monuments are generally fascinated by the stoniness of the earth, by its hardness, its smoothness, its polish.

Second, again and again in literature dead matter is at once set against the living memory of the name and made to bear the living memory of the name. It is this particular tension between the earth and the name—a tension at least as old as the Hebrew Scriptures—that makes monuments in our tradition so fraught. To cut words in matter, to transform matter into a book to be read, is the central memorializing act.

The dream of the monument then is to inscribe the name forever in the earth. One of the reasons that it is not enough to see a photograph of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has to do with what it means to descend gradually below the level of the ground and to see the book, to see the names cut into the lustrous, polished stone. In that experience Maya Lin has summoned up from the most archaic reaches of the past the whole impossible history of monuments.

And this leads to my third and final point: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a path; it describes, it invites, it requires a movement, a narrative progress from the first few American deaths to the enormous numbers to the closure. I spoke earlier about the benefits that monuments can confer on the living. In a secular world those benefits may be summed up as the making of paths—places to go, places to avoid, routes to safety. My most intense and simple experience of the monument is the cairn—the small heap of stones that marks a path through the wilderness. In California, at least, the critical number of stones is three: two stones may rest on each other at random, but three stones in a heap is rare. In the Sierras once several years ago, I climbed to a very high lake by following cairns across a huge slope of scree: thousands of rocks scraped and dropped along the granite by an ancient glacier. I walked around the high lake, at once extremely pleased with myself at having gotten up there, and also shivering a bit because a Wagnerian storm was rattling around the lake. I then decided to descend. But I had lost my way and could see no cairns at all. Only rocks, endless numbers of rocks, in every conceivable combination except

the desired piles of three. I let myself down several boulders, thinking that I would change the angle of my vision and hence see the cairns, but I only found myself in deeper trouble. I realized that I hated and feared the wilderness. I couldn't remember why I had even gone up there. It was horrible; I was likely to die there. But then I somehow scrambled up the boulders again and somehow fought back my panic and somehow continued around the icy lake—whistling, maybe humming to myself, maybe screaming on and off—until at last I saw what I was looking for: three small rocks piled upon one another. And then another pile in the distance beyond, and another beyond that. I take this to be an experience of what I might call zero-degree monumentality: no names, not even a corpse, except possibly *my* corpse, associated with the rocks, just the barest trace of an intention, the memory of *someone* who had been there before and who had left a way out. I was saved. I owe my presence here today to the existence of monuments.

## Stanley Saitowitz

I want to tell the story of how I got involved with the New England Holocaust Memorial, which is under construction in Boston and scheduled to open in September of 1995.

In October of 1990, I got a poster in the mail announcing an open competition for the New England Holocaust Memorial. It arrived on an ordinary, sunny afternoon, and I was really quite taken aback: first, with the idea of building a Holocaust memorial that afternoon, and also with the question of building a Holocaust memorial in Boston. That night, I began to think about it.

Having grown up in an Orthodox Jewish home, I knew of the Holocaust from my earliest memories. As I thought more about it, I felt a sense of obligation to enter the competition, and the next day I sent in the \$45 for the information package and waited.

I had at the time been teaching at Harvard and flying to Boston weekly. I knew the site across from Boston City Hall. One of the advantages of cross-country commuting is that you build up an enormous amount of frequent flyer miles. The Premiere Executive Desk of my airline, who probably couldn't believe the number of times I'd flown to Boston, sent me a free ticket which I had to use by the end of the year for any destination within the contiguous United States. I discovered that Mexico is part of the contiguous United States, and booked a flight to Mexico City. The day I was leaving, the competition package arrived. I threw it in my bag on my way to the airport. On the plane I read through it with interest.



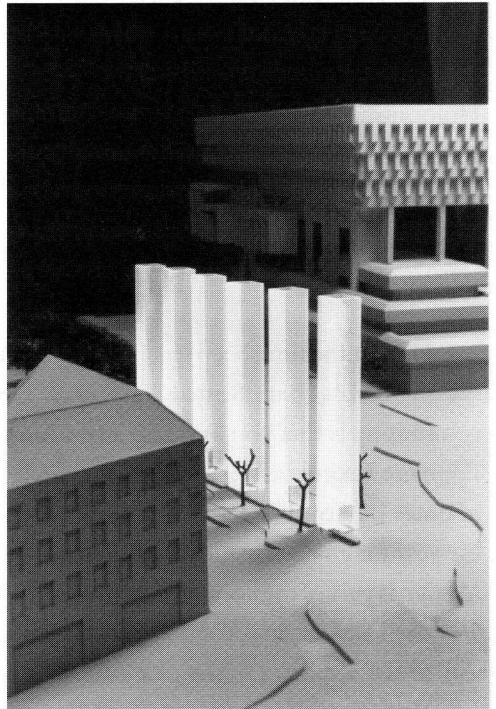
On my first day in Mexico City, I went to Teotihuacan. Each time I've been there, I've wondered who the gods were that caused such magnificent architecture, while I build private houses in the Bay Area.

If you've been in Mexico City in December, you probably know that it is the worst season for pollution. On the bus back that evening, the air was unbelievably thick. It was completely black. Even though I'm not particularly sensitive to pollution—in fact, I love Los Angeles—I began to choke in the bus. I was tremendously inspired by the experience of Teotihuacan, and breathing the polluted air made me slightly delirious. I was thinking about the Holocaust Memorial and the six million, and six death camps, and the six-pointed star. In the thick air, suddenly I felt what being gassed must have been like. I went back to the hotel and drew these six towers on the pad next to my bed. The more I thought about them, the more meanings began to attach to the towers. When I got back to my office, I began to tune the towers to the site.

I realized that the towers connected with the columns of Boston City Hall. In getting to know Boston, I was fascinated with this unique American city that is not based on a grid, and has a rich variety of urban spaces. I felt that the memorial offered an opportunity to enrich these spaces. The site is part of an undefined plaza facing the Boston City Hall. I decided to work only in a narrow segment of the site and to treat the memorial as an urban colonnade which would frame the edge of the plaza.

This is the text I included on the boards. It describes the characteristics and logic of the design.

*New England  
Holocaust  
Memorial,  
Model*



The construction of the memorial is begun on Remembrance Day.  
The horror of the Holocaust is re-enacted in the brutal cutting  
of all the trees on half the site. These stumps remain.

Six pits are dug and lined with black granite.  
At the bottom of each pit is a glowing fire.  
Six glass towers are raised above.

Once completed many meanings attach to the memorial:

Some think of it as six candles,  
others call it a menorah.  
Some, a colonnade walling the Civic Plaza,  
others, six towers of spirit.  
Some, six columns for six million Jews,  
others, six exhausts of life.  
Some call it a city of ice,  
others remember a ruin of some civilization.  
Some speak of six pillars of breath,  
others, six chambers of gas.  
Some sit on the benches  
and are warmed by the fire.  
Some think of it as a fragment of Boston City Hall,  
others call the buried chambers Hell.  
Some think the pits of fire are six death camps,  
others feel the warm air rising up from the ground  
like human breath as it passes  
through the glass chimneys to heaven.

Etched on the glass towers are  
SIX MILLION NUMBERS  
which flicker with light.

On the black granite ramp is incised:  
DEDICATED TO THE REMEMBRANCE  
OF THE *SHOA*,  
THE HOLOCAUST.  
THE ULTIMATE ACT OF PREJUDICE.  
THE NAZI THIRD REICH  
SYSTEMATIC MURDER  
OF SIX MILLION JEWISH

MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN.  
THE ATTEMPT AT THE  
TOTAL AND PERMANENT  
DESTRUCTION OF JEWISH LIFE.  
THE AIM TO REMOVE JEWS  
FROM HISTORY AND MEMORY.

Each of the six burning chambers is named after a death camp:

CHELMINO  
TREBLINKA  
MAJDANEK  
SOBIBOR  
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU  
BELZEC

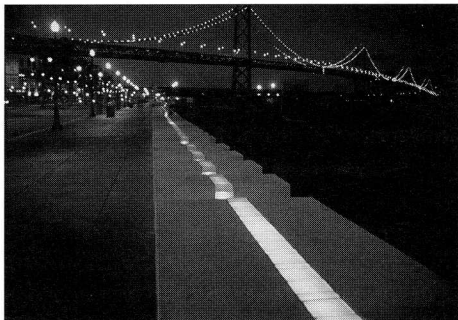
The memorial towers rise above a path that is part of the Freedom Trail in Boston. This location gives the Holocaust a place in this mythical path of Freedom, and in the history of Boston and the United States.

The towers are constructed of a stainless steel skeleton and glass panel skin. Initially I thought about having names etched into the glass, but the impossibility of knowing the six million names led me to choose numbers, which begin with 0000001 and end with 6000000. To accommodate 6,000,000, there are three numbers per square inch covering every face of each tower. I wanted the numbers to be understood with reference to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. where there are approximately 59,000 names on a 760-foot wall. Setting the Holocaust memorial in this context gives some idea of the enormity of the destruction of the Holocaust.

Below each tower is a six-foot deep pit named after the six killing machines established in Poland. At the bottom of each pit is a gas fire. These fires produce warm air, which rises up through the grating covering the pits as you walk through the memorial. Light passing through the glass during the day causes the shadows of the numbers to tattoo you, so that you become covered with the traces of these memories. Something of the horror of this experience is captured, both through the names of the camps and the sheer enormity of the list of victims.

By day, from the outside, the structure is an innocent player in the making of Boston's urban spaces. At night the monument is lit, like the candles of remembrance, or the lamps made from the flesh of the death camp victims.

I want to talk about two other urban structures, one in San Francisco, the other in Manhattan. The Promenade Ribbon is a line around San Francisco's waterfront which memorializes the end of the land.

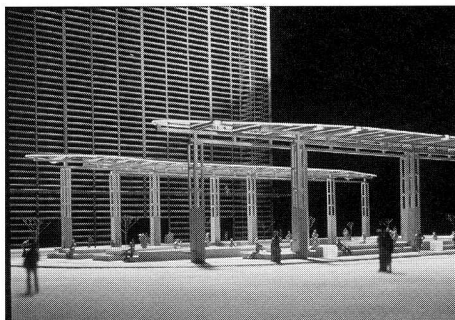


It was constructed after the Loma Prieta earthquake when the freeway was torn down because of structural damage. It marks a line that follows the waterfront for two and a half miles at the edge of the city. As it moves through the city, it transforms in relation to the places that it marks with different habitable oppor-

*Promenade  
Ribbon*

unities—benches or tables or chairs relate to specific conditions like views of the bay, or the city. It marks the edge of the land and the water and offers various ways of inhabiting that line. At night, the line is lit with a continuous fiber optic light.

The last project returns to the idea of place, name and naming. It is a public place in Manhattan at Battery Park City. We were given an open square and told to fill it with something. What can you add to Manhattan, that has so much, and so much of so much? I considered making “nothing” and carving out a new kind of urban canyon between these two roofs that establish a street without cars and offers new opportunities for habitation. I wanted to make an urban landscape, a “small” city where buildings are benches, streets patterns, and individuals or many can find places in it. In addition, I thought it would enhance the site to memorialize the names associated with the area by marking them on the pavement. The biographies of one hundred citizens, living and dead, who have helped make Manhattan such a mythical place, are etched into the stones. People like Iving



*Battery Park  
City*

Berlin, Leonard Bernstein, and Emma Goldman. Along the crooked street are the names of the “crooked” people of Manhattan: Arnold Rothstein, gambler, bankroller, rum runner and labor racketeer. Dutch Schultz: burglar, bootlegger, owner of speakeasies and police racketeer. The inscriptions provide a picture of the history of this city and inscribe on the floor the names of people who, at another time, in a similar public place in Manhattan, you may have shared a bench with.

## Open Discussion

*Question #1: I wonder how much memorials are affected by the fears of the living that the dead will not remember us. It seems that in many of these memorials, we are naming the dead, putting their names in a place where we can see them, touch them, and be sure that they are still watching us.*

**STEPHEN GREENBLATT:** This whole question of a continuing transaction with the dead is very much at issue in memorials. It's interesting that it should focus on names because with the name comes the notion that you are registering a particular individuality. There are passages in Shakespeare where characters talk about who died in the war and they say, "Only a few, and none of name." So there were only a handful of people whose names actually counted; the others were just buried in a mass grave, presumably, without any interest in memorializing them.

Clearly something changed, as with the Vietnam and WWI memorials. As Tom pointed out, each name was listed and differentiated by serial number when there was more than one person with the same name. The mystery is why it happened that we moved from a world in which we just shoveled in large numbers of people and then memorialized a handful—the Duke or Bedford, or whatever—to a world in which that transaction seems important with all these people.

**MAYA LIN:** From a lay historian's point of view, and maybe Tom can clarify this further, it seems that it took the enormity of the tragedy, the enormity of the losses in WWI for people to begin to acknowledge the soldier, the individual who had to die in the making of history. I think the tactical way of being at war more or less precludes the acknowledgment of the individual. As you are trained and as you go into battle, even today, you are trained to not act or even think as an individual; that

would be a disaster on the battlefield. So you're willing to go in line after line after line knowing you might not live. I think the premise was that the soldier didn't really exist independently. And though there were acknowledgments of the country that won or the leaders who led, up until WWI there was no acknowledgment *en masse* of the average foot soldier. I think the impulse to acknowledge individual soldiers came about through a tragedy, just as in this country it took the battle, the controversy over Vietnam to make us want to acknowledge the individual deaths again.

**TOM LAQUEUR:** I find it puzzling, too, because when the war began, none of the belligerents had any intention of doing anything but shoveling bodies into the ground, which became unthinkable after October and November of 1914, the trenches, and the major assaults. People who had been to the front began to write letters of protest because the sight of mass graves of that magnitude was unbearably sad. Many organizations pressured the governments to do something about it. There are all sorts of political issues that led to the listing of names on the memorials; it's not simply a natural consequence of Democracy.

In some sense Trollope and the postal service are, ironically, a central part of this, which is to say that a name is no longer simply a lineage which counts above others—as in Shakespeare's "and none else of name"—but that anyone could have an official life, anyone could get a letter, and anyone's life had a narrative worth hearing. My sense is that the 19th-century phenomenon of everyone getting a name is a critical element in the history behind the form of the memorials.

I also think Maya is absolutely right to point to the tragedy and the particular politics of the tragedy, but the possibility of this particular aesthetics begins before the tragedy itself. Moreover, it begins without the states knowing anything about it beforehand. We can imagine an Adjutant General seeing the numbers of dead and saying, "I have no idea what to do with this situation," and being somewhat relieved that the Red Cross and the Quakers are gathering bodies from the battlefield and labeling them.

*Question #2: I am curious about recent events in France where Le Pen had a gathering at the Eiffel Tower for the National Front. All the workers struck in*

*protest because they felt a national symbol was being used inappropriately for partisan purposes. I'm curious to hear the panelists' thoughts on the political purposes of the monuments and the "neutral" status they achieve once they have become national symbols.*

**STANLEY SAITOWITZ:** The process that I've been through with the New England Holocaust Memorial has been really interesting on many levels. On a personal level, if I'd known what I know now about the Holocaust, I probably wouldn't have been able to design that project at all. The actual building of the memorial has been going on for four years. It has caused a tremendous amount of debate and controversy, and also a lot of educational spin-off. At times it seemed like the memorial wasn't going to get built. Even if it hadn't, the memorial would have served an educational purpose simply because of the way it brought people face-to-face and made them deal with each other and learn from each other over the issue of the monument and of the Holocaust as well. I think the process was both interesting and incredibly frustrating. Normally, if you win a competition you just want to get it done and get on with something else.

**ANDREW BARSHAY:** I was wondering about the idea that monuments are neutral spaces. I don't think they are, at least not in the ways that I understand neutrality. The Hiroshima Memorial, for example, is about as far from a neutral space as I can imagine. Its purpose is quite clear. The conflict you mention in France seems to be a conflict over the violation of an unwritten sense of what is or is not proper behavior in a given place.

There is a sense that one can do many things in certain spaces, but there are some things you definitely should not do there, and much of that code is deeply internalized. One element of that sense of propriety has to do with the idea that national monuments come to stand for the moral best in whatever political tradition prevails in the land. Improper behavior in that space would be seen as a desecration of those values. In the Eiffel Tower case you mentioned, it would be that somehow using the Eiffel Tower for displays of xenophobia would be unacceptable in the context of France. I understand what you are asking, but I don't think it's a case of violating *neutral* space so much as it is a case of violating morally and politically *charged* space.



**MAYA LIN:** I would agree. Another thing that I find interesting is how a space can change historically with the politics of the State, where you begin to evolve, over time, a prescribed history. Once a memorial has been built, it can be transformed through history; it can be given new meaning, and that can include what acts will be permitted to pass through its space. An example is the history of Tiananmen Square and what has happened on it through its generations and generations. I would really question this notion that a space is neutral and that a space is fixed in time because it is constantly being reinterpreted and being owned or borrowed by different factions.

*Question #3: I'd like to comment a little bit more on the question of naming, especially the question of naming all the dead as something particularly modern. I was struck by what made the First World War so different from the war in Vietnam. Many of the First World War memorials had names arranged and clearly separated by rank. Was it not perhaps a nostalgia for the perfectly ranked, perfectly hierarchized and ordered army that informed these choices? I wondered if you might like to comment on this ranking.*

**TOM LAQUEUR:** There was a lot of pressure from military groups to keep military formations together in listing names on the memorials. My sense is that it did not come from the officer class alone but from all sorts of people. In the Australian war memorial, for example, the names are arranged by town. There was a lot of opposition to that way of listing the names because military personnel wanted the memorial to be a place where they could easily see the names of their war companions. The idea of doing it chronologically was discussed as well, but frequently within the context of preserving some reality of the military unit.

**MAYA LIN:** I would also say that it is primarily the acknowledgment of the mechanism of the military, which is how you remember the group. I think that's where I got into so much trouble by just having a plain chronology. I don't want to say that it was threatening, but it was misunderstood at the time as something that was going to be deliberately confusing. I think it was inherently about demarcating so there was no discussion of the military in the memorial—these people stood out as individuals, not as a part of any ranking or grouping except in terms of the “real” time of the war. The chronology broke with proper military

etiquette and propriety, which again probably marks this evolution that starts with the acknowledgment of the individual and how far we had come from WWI.

*Questions #4: We've been talking about memorials that have been designed by individual architects, except perhaps the Shinto shrines. Keeping that in mind, I wonder if you would like to comment on the AIDS Quilt in that it is not only a memorial without a specific place but also a memorial without a specific author. It also doesn't memorialize a specific event, but a series of much smaller events.*

MAYA LIN: I think one of the issues with authorship is that certain things get authored, other things don't. Parks oftentimes are not authored. Memorials, for the most part, are not either. We mentioned Lutyens; many of the WWI memorials are architectural edifices and can be authored in that sense. But unless you're in the business, so to speak, you won't remember who designed the Washington Monument. You do not know who designed the Jefferson Memorial or the Lincoln Memorial. I *might*. The public generally doesn't. They are not authored as a rule. The monuments happen. They are practically phenomena once they go out into the public domain, unlike much contemporary art and architecture.

*Question #5: This is a question about kinship and the State and memorialization. I was fascinated by the story at the end of Tom's talk and was wondering what it was about the culture that in the 1920s went to great lengths to memorialize each individual name, but that seventy years later would not bother to inter the woman's letters in her grave. What mechanisms were in place in the 1920s to allow people to self-memorialize in such a way? Would it have been possible for her to have had the letters interred with her or to have had her remains placed near the remains of her intended?*

TOM LAQUEUR: It is important to remember that she was a poor person and was buried at public expense. I really have no idea if anyone would have disinterred her at any period to put the letters in with her. The question of a war casualty is somewhat different. The government was incredibly afraid of class conflict and class interest being expressed in the battlefield graves. The family owned the names and could put a phrase of up to sixty-four characters on the grave marker, but nothing more. The state owned the body and the cemetery. You couldn't put anything else

in the grave or mark it in any special way. There were huge debates around the issue. There were even instances of body smuggling by families who wanted their loved ones back or buried in a particular location.

Churchill was vehemently opposed to this policy. He felt that if a family wanted to put up a proper gravestone or a proper memorial or have the body back they should be allowed to do so. The argument that prevailed, however, was that these men had fought and died together, so they should be buried together in identical graves—name for name. Any effort to vary that uniformity, to add anything personal, met with rigid opposition. The government took a very hard-line position to preserve that procedure.

*Question #6: I think that one of the richest things about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the fact that it enumerates the names and the lives that were lost. In my home town, the biggest protest against the war in Vietnam consisted of community members standing in the town square in front of the courthouse reading the names of the people who had died. It is something that people in town, which is only two hours away from the memorial in Washington, remember to this day. That event and the monument are frequently discussed together. We particularly took note of President Bush's visit to the memorial when he stood reading the names of the dead.*

PANELISTS: (General acknowledgment.)

*Question #7: I have a question that derives from my own research. I compared Communist monuments with post-Communist monuments in Poland. I noticed that in the early years of Communism, when there was great emphasis on making ideas clear and powerful, a majority of monuments used statues of human figures, most of them figures in action. As Communism progressed, the monuments became more and more abstract, especially as Solidarity rose to power. After Communism, with Solidarity in power, Poland began constructing monuments with human figures that seemed frozen, like the monument to the Warsaw Uprising. I was wondering if there was something inherent in human bodies that makes them more suitable for periods of cultural turmoil and the assertion of a political ethos. Have any of you observed a similar phenomenon?*

**MAYA LIN:** Before I respond, it came to mind while you were speaking that the difference between abstraction and figuration in the built form is very complex. I do not view text and words as being abstractions. In a way they become much more of a concrete realization of anything you might have known about a person, but I find it very interesting because the question is seldom discussed. Why would a text be considered an abstract representation of a person? It seems to be just a different notion of realism in a way. A name. Because it is everything you could ever remember or imagine about a person. In a way, figuration is also quite abstract, whether it is a “snapshot” figure like the Iwo Jima memorial, which will then connect to a certain group of people, or whether it’s a more general, more 19th-century aesthetic where figuration represents a struggle or something more romanticized than a specific event. I’ve always wondered about that urge to say that text is more abstract than figures. That would get us into an entirely different area concerning the form and the words upon the form.

*Question #7 redux: I wonder if you might not want to comment on this. One of the biggest protests about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was that you didn’t have a body, and now there are. . .what? . . .three bodies?*

**MAYA LIN:** There are now *four* bodies. The bodies are growing in number. I find that very fascinating because the people who protested the design saw that it is formally very abstract in nature, but they did not acknowledge how real the names are—more real than any depiction or representation.

In order to recognize the level of realism in the name itself, you have to consider the power of the word and the power of history as represented by bringing that history out upon a very public forum. This kind of representation, with text instead of figures, created a set of technical problems that I mentioned earlier: the form of the monument, the size of the text, the amount of space each name could occupy.

**TOM LAQUEUR:** My sense about the names is that they are abstract because they are so specific—a name is just that minimum of specificity necessary to evoke all the other details of an individual life. Stanley Saitowitz’s numbers seem to be at just the opposite end of that spectrum—a kind of specificity that resists the individuality that the name seems to require. A peculiar in-between use of names is Chris Burden’s

book-like piece in the MOMA which consists of one hundred names scrambled by a computer, which he suggests are syntactically possible Vietnamese names corresponding to the number of Vietnamese dead. It is possible that many of those names correspond to real Vietnamese who died in the war, but they do not correspond with the same specificity as the names on the WWI memorials. Similarly, in the Holocaust memorial, there is no way to look at number 5,997,832 and say, “That’s someone I knew.”

**STANLEY SAITOWITZ:** Yes, and furthermore, there is no relationship at all to the concentration camp numbers.

**STEPHEN GREENBLATT:** It’s the arithmetic sublime.

**STANLEY SAITOWITZ:** Precisely. Any associations are quite random. The important representation is the enumeration of the six million.

**STEPHEN GREENBLATT:** I think it is worth thinking about the difference between numbers and names because one of the things that keeps coming up in the presentations and the questions is the sense that there is something magic about the proper name, something peculiar about it, something irreplaceable, something disquieting that makes you anxious, for example, about listing just one name if there were four people out there with the same name. It’s almost as if we think of the names as still being attached, as if they still had bodies trailing from them.

The clearest sign, it seems to me, of a non-inherence of a distinction between the body and the name—the representation of bodies and the representation of names, the fact that there may be a big difference but that there is no abstract difference—is the way in which people treat the names at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with a very particular density and intensity of response. Visitors leave offerings, which are now collected afterwards and catalogued at the Smithsonian and have become part of an ongoing, unfolding anthropological record—much like the AIDS Quilt—in which there will be more and more objects accumulating around these particular names.

**ANDREW BARSHAY:** I am struck by the way that knowing each name, as, for instance, the over two million enshrined in the Yasukuni Shrine, somehow legitimates the many millions whose names are completely unknown and will never be known by

anybody. It legitimates the unknown deaths it took to create these *kami*, these deities. In other words, the sacrifice of the heroes was somehow noble, and so it must have been all right that it took perhaps ten times as many unknown deaths to produce these 2,500,000 noble deaths.

Also, when you are trying to interpret the significance of the names, the question of perspective becomes very significant. If you think of the fallen heroes as victims, albeit heroic victims, of the war, then you can approach them with reverence. But if you see the shrine as a shrine to killers or to marauders who were bayoneting children and beheading civilians, then there is little incentive to view the shrine with reverence. There are layers and layers and layers of unknown and unacknowledged dead that should be taken into account when trying to understand the significance of the names.

THOMAS LAQUEUR: I agree. The Nameless Warrior was invented in Europe in 1919. Its development is related to the project of memorializing each and every death.

*Question #8: I'd like to ask another question about figuration. Would anyone like to comment on the Holocaust Memorial in San Francisco where George Segal has placed plaster forms of people at random in the precinct of the memorial?*

STANLEY SAITOWITZ: I just think its a very strange thing for Jewish art considering the ban on graven images. It seems a very strange way to represent something where six million Jews were involved.

*Question #9: Many of you have talked about memorials and the journeys they create and their involvement in national journeys. This question is for Andrew Barshay in particular. The Yasukuni Shrine, as I see it, is a path to war and death. What do you think is the national purpose of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial? More specifically, what is the difference between Prime Minister Nakasone visiting Yasukuni and President Bush visiting the Vietnam memorial?*

ANDREW BARSHAY: It's odd that you should ask me that. I think there are a number of important differences. Yasukuni Shrine was the center of a cult that was created on the basis of genuine traditions of ancestor worship but was turned into something very different. It was made the center of a modern cult of war. That past

hovers around the shrine and is always a problem for some who visit it. Nor is the shrine a product of defeat. Yasukuni Shrine is associated with military glory and with legitimating the grotesque harvest of bodies in war. These are inescapable characteristics: Yasukuni was the center of a state cult whose entire legitimacy was built on invincibility. Yasukuni is a problem now because of the massive defeat in WWII and the discrediting of the cult in that defeat.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was not intended as a monument to military glory nor was it intended to produce a sense of pride in that nationalist sense. It may be about this awful gap that comes up between everyone who enters the military and makes that sacrifice and this entity of the national state that can demand so much of so many people. In some ways, the Vietnam memorial addresses that gap. Yasukuni Shrine cannot handle that kind of problem. I think that it seems inevitably bound to a determination to forget defeat.

**MAYA LIN:** I think my original intent was not that at all, but rather to avoid politics absolutely. That attempt to avoid politics as much as possible may have been my response to having witnessed all the turmoil going on in the 1960s. I wanted effectively to avoid that type of governmental politicking. It is also a situation where the government wasn't directly involved in the building of the monument; it was funded by a private group of veterans who had decided to give *themselves* a memorial because the government couldn't even face the situation. Ironically, it was the government that literally tried to stop the memorial as it was being built.

To return to the question about Bush being there and reading the names: Reagan wouldn't even go near the memorial until after the millionth visitor. Here is where we get into the notion of the neutrality of a space and of how things change and how spaces might be appropriated by different interests. The memorial starts out as something condemned as a "leftist" design, is almost stopped, and is almost altered by what might be seen as the "rightist" designs who, in their own words, wanted to "politicize" it. It goes up, becomes immensely popular, and all of a sudden is then visited by the presidents as if it were theirs in the first place, with absolutely no acknowledgment that they didn't want it, that they tried to change it, or that they tried to "politicize" it. But now that it works, it becomes "theirs."

What do you learn from that? You learn that spaces fluctuate and they can go from one group appropriation to another, and that, ironically, the place hasn't changed whatsoever, even though it has, because it has become politicized in quite another way. It gives me misgivings. Its original intention was that it would be apolitical; it was not going to make a judgement about "why" or "why not," about "did you serve or not serve." It was supposed simply to acknowledge the loss. I don't think that is about defeat, and I never will. I think that's where I would argue strongly, though obviously the implication of defeat is why they wanted to stop the design in the first place: if nobody died, then there was no defeat. But it is fascinating to me that as the memorial became more popular, it switched over. All of a sudden the powers that be adore it for very different reasons. I just find that fascinating.

*Question #10: I sense a certain division in your original intent precisely because of your investment in the chronological ordering of the names. You track the casualties of a war over a period of time. I think that turns out to be very subversive, especially for a war that was not officially declared, because by tracking a chronology, you then make possible an association with all the other narratives and events: peace gatherings, etc. That is the memorial's power—that it thematizes narrative in the remembering of that war.*

MAYA LIN: Right, but in saying that I wouldn't disagree about the subversiveness of the chronology, because I knew that it was highly unusual for a number of reasons. You can call it a narrative, but I also had it in mind to make the past a real part of the present. The chronology brings that history to mind with greater immediacy—it brings up the history in a way that we can, I don't want to say "re-live," but become a part of that history, in a way that connects the present with the past. That connection changes, too. In fifty years, that relationship will change as fewer visitors have a direct, historical tie to or memory of the war. That is when the Vietnam memorial will evolve, as do a lot of memorials—when there is no longer that individual connection to that history. Then what will it represent?

*Question #11: I just wanted to comment on the last two remarks. It seems to me that the chronological ordering of the names made the memorial an anti-narrative and in that way distinguished it from other kinds of war monuments in that the chronology takes the history out of time and empties the events of any interpretive*



*narration. So my question has to do with what Stephen Greenblatt called your anomalousness and uniqueness. Part of the anomaly of this gathering is that you are a woman, and war memorials are not usually designed by women. I don't want to make any essentialist claims, but does your being a woman make a difference in the memorial's design, especially considering that many monuments designed by men are erections, if you will? Other memorials discussed today seem to monumentalize the sacrifice as part of a narrative, but yours seems to memorialize loss, which I think are two very different things.*

MAYA LIN: I'd actually rather let someone else answer that. As far as the design is concerned, as I've said before, I think that whether its because of the way we're raised or because of something biological, the operation of the different brains as regards spatiality and design could become an interesting discussion as more women build. Did I consciously make a statement specifically about gender through the work? No. It seems obvious that certain things are happening in the design. I don't think those features are about the phallus versus that which is cut into the earth, but it might be more about the experience and the scale of the memorial and what I would call the intimacy of it. As more conversation occurs and as more women design spaces, there does seem to be a noticeable difference in the ways the different genders approach the designing of space.

In designing the memorial I was preoccupied with the one-on-one dialogue or experience that piece was going to have with another person. It was a very intimate communication, which is very different from reading a sign or reading a billboard, or being told what to think. I wanted to leave open the possibility of asking a question. Again, I would hesitate to say that the cause of that is strictly a fact of gender. I'd rather leave it open to people to look at the memorial and say, "I think it's...*that*." It's very dangerous, being the one who makes the work, to attribute explanations and motivations, unless of course you want your work to make a statement about *that*. I also think it's dangerous for me as an artist to discuss my work with terms in which others are perhaps better able to discuss it, because that's not really how I design these works.

**GROUNDS FOR REMEMBERING  
SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS**

**PROFESSOR THOMAS LAQUEUR** is Professor of History at the University of California at Berkeley, and Director of the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities. He is currently completing research on naming, memorials, and commemoration in the Great War.

In 1981, while an undergraduate in Architecture at Yale University, **MAYA LIN** won the competition to design and build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Since completing the memorial, Ms. Lin has designed several other sculptures and architectural installations. She currently lives in New York City and visited Berkeley as the Avenali Professor in the Humanities for Spring 1995.

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**PROFESSOR STANLEY SAITOWITZ** is Professor of Architecture in the College of Environmental Design at the University of California at Berkeley and is a practicing architect in San Francisco, California. He is currently completing the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts.

# Grounds for Remembering

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Illustrations of WWI memorials were taken from various publications of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Illustrations of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial were taken from the private collection of Lynn Kawaratani. Illustrations of the New England Holocaust Memorial, the Promenade Ribbon and Battery Park City were provided by Stanley Saitowitz. The cover illustration of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is used by permission of Maya Lin.



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