Performative Memory: Form and Content in the Jewish Museum Berlin

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Our mission is [. . .] to call attention to the high cost of intolerance.
          — from the mission statement of the Jewish Museum Berlin

The official name of the project is 'Jewish Museum' but I have named it 'Between the Lines' because for me it is about two lines of thinking, organization and relationship. One is a straight line, but broken into many fragments, the other is a tortuous line, but continuing indefinitely.
          — Daniel Libeskind (Jewish Museum Berlin architect), 1998

Introduction

In a recent review of a Los Angeles museum exhibition, Michael Rush asks: "If the essence of performance is an immediacy that by definition disappears once the performance is over, how does an institution, especially one devoted to the presentation of art objects, create a physical encounter with a disappearing act?" (1). Such a question may cause consternation in modern museums that increasingly seek audience interaction. Indeed, Lainie Schultz asserts in "Collaborative Museology and the Visitor" that, "collaboration has become a critical concern for museums in recent decades" (1). Joseph Roach, however, delineates this kind of passive theater and spectatorship from performance to include a wide range of behaviors and "what Michel de Certeau calls 'the practice of everyday life,' in which the role of spectator expands into that of participant" (46). This practice of spectator becoming participant has expanded "into an open-ended category marked 'performative'" and a theory of the performative that is "a cultural factor, critical paradigm, and political intervention" (46). The performative is applied in Della Pollock's definiton of performative writing as "writing that does something" through its interventions into the routine (75). In the following analysis, The Jewish Museum Berlin, read as a performative text, "does something" by not merely presenting material for passive reception but by promoting

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a unique, tangible, and sometimes physical, dialogic[1] of communication with its audiences.

The modern city of Berlin, as Karen E. Till observes, "remains distinctive because of the array of places that have been (re)established that convey both the desires and fears of returning to traumatic national pasts" (6). The Jewish Museum Berlin (2001) is one notable example within this extensive array. It stands discreetly on a side street on the original site of the first Jewish Museum Berlin built in 1933 on *Oranienberger Strasse* (Oranienberger Street) and closed during the 1938 pogrom now known as *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass) (Jewish Museum Berlin website). The new Jewish Museum Berlin is attached to the 1969 Berlin Museum building and was made to be an extension of this historical site both literally and figuratively. The Jewish Museum Berlin's stark, geometric walls of burnished metal jut from the older, more rounded, Baroque towers, and the new building's sharp, asymmetrical edges cut the horizon into pieces. This kind of metaphorical fragmentation is common to the cultural history of Berlin, especially Jewish history. But the Jewish Museum Berlin is not only a history museum; it is also a museum about culture and memory. When the building opened without exhibits in 1999, the Director Michael Blumenthal stated that, "the chief aim of the museum will be to bring a sense of the richness of Jewish cultural life in Germany before the Holocaust" (Cohen 1). However, the Holocaust infuses the museum so strongly—the museum has been called by reviewers and critics both "didactic" and "pedagogical"—that the message is one for the present and, more importantly, for the future (Lenz and Kurz 1).

Because the context of the Holocaust remains such a strong thread in this space, it warrants examination as a unique addition to genres memorializing the Holocaust. Additionally, the museum's success (i.e. high attendance rates, especially with young people)[2] over the last decade calls for an analysis of its complexity of design and content to understand how the space performs "to change the way we see things" (Street Porter 2). The museum also has strong performative elements that work together actively to construct visitors' experience as dialogic interaction: the architectural design is performatively subjective and the exhibits are performatively citational (emphasize fragility of identity through repetition) and evocative (remark absent presence).[3] As a "performative action intended to produce change" by virtue of its interaction with the public (Santino 364), the museum exerts pressure on the cultural memory-making process that occurs and reoccurs in this social genre.

An examination of this process requires a multi-layered framework. Magali Sarfatti Larson provides an excellent base method from which to analyze architecture in her

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[1] Mikhail Bakhtin (1986, 1991).

[2] Von Marlies Emmerich, in a *Berliner Zeitung* review of the new Glass structure built onto the Baroque extension in 2007, notes that over half a million visitors, many under 30 years old, visited that year (1).

[3] The definitions of the performative come from Della Pollock's "Performing Writing" (1998). More extensive definitions of these aspects of the performative will be provided in the analysis portion.

1997 piece on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in which she reads architecture as an object that makes meaning (65-67); I go further, however, to suggest that the form of the building and the content of the exhibits work together not just as an object, but as a text that that can be analyzed rhetorically to discover the patterns of communication that emerge. Whereas Sarfatti Larson uses sociology and semiotics to define architecture as an object that communicates a message, I use rhetoric and performative theory to interpret architecture as an object that dialogues with the architect's design and the intended audience reception as a relationship of form and content that produces multiple readings. Elements of performative theory provide a connection to issues of representability distinct to the Holocaust (a crucial aspect Sarfatti Larson does not discuss), by revealing how a museum as text can perform. Performative text is "writing that does something," to create action in readers (Pollock 75). The Jewish Museum Berlin, read as a performative text, creates action in audiences by presenting material that upends audience expectations of history and memory of the Holocaust to promote an interactive dialogic about an event Saul Friedlander called "at the limits" of representation (3).

Collective Memory and Memorial-Making

To understand memorial making as a struggle for visibility and self-representation, "is to understand it as a construction process wherein competing 'moral entrepreneurs' seek public arenas and support for their interpretations of the past" (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 382).[4] This is particularly true of historical pasts that include the stain of mass traumas like genocide.[5] The predicament for a country like Germany is to answer the difficult question of how to present "remembrance engendering shame, doubt, or feelings of guilt" in a way that prevents a difficult past from being avoided and makes it notably relevant to the present in collective memory-making processes (Irwin-Zarecka 94) (see also Armstrong and Crage 2006; Eber and Neal 2001; Huyssen 1995; Jelin 2007; Mintz 2001; Nilsson and Ohta 2006; Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger 2010; Wohl and Branscombe 2005).[6]

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[4] Jack Santino observes that the "public memorialization of death toward a social end seems to be a growing phenomenon" (2004:364). For more on commemoration, see also Armstrong and Crage (2004:724-726). The Jewish Museum does not memorialize death, but the memorializing activity it engages in does seek a social end: to reduce intolerance.

[5] For more on the intentionality of memorials see Marcuse (2010) and Akcan (2010). Marcuse suggests that in such cases, the "intentions of those who established" memorials exert as much influence as the events themselves (2010:55) and Esra Akcan notes that "the Washington Mall" reflects the fact that memorial making is one of "the most consumed mediums of self-representation and struggle for public visibility" (2010:155).

[6] I use the term collective memory to address the social function of memorials in general. The focus in this article is on the ways in which memorializing activities or memorials might provide opportunities to disrupt passive audiences to perform memory.

The Jewish Museum Berlin's status as a museum dedicated to Jewish culture (with the Holocaust as a central subtext) located in the center of Berlin,[7] once the capitol for Nazi Germany, makes it is as fraught with contested memories as any other museum that approaches Holocaust history and memory. The urge to decrease attention to the Nazi past in Germany comes with the passage of time and a distancing from feelings of "communal responsibility" for that past (Irwin-Zarecka 94). Conversely, the urge to increase attention to this past insists that with time, "moral lessons acquire even greater universal significance" (94). The Jewish Museum Berlin is deeply focused on the social function it serves for the public, and its mission to "call attention to the high cost of intolerance," reveals the moral lesson with universal significance that Irwin-Zarecka suggests (Annual Report 24). Its Director, Michael Blumenthal also has stated that he does not want "young Germans to view Jews solely as victims," a related but competing mission.[8] Because there is a need to present multiple perspectives in a memorial museum with such complex and various goals, this article focuses on how such representations are performatively and socially constructed and interpreted variously by such audiences (Annual Report 24; Cohen 1).

Reading a Museum as a Text

In order to analyze the Jewish Museum Berlin as a text, I adopt a theoretical framework based on rhetorical and performative theory. A rhetorical reading posits the act of memorialization as a social genre, because it elucidates how this space promotes social action in its specific local context. Such spaces first are rhetorical because they allow evaluation and interpretation by focusing on contexts and competing perspectives (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 2).[9] Reading sites in this way continues to be crucial to public memory-making because making "an event of the past—what the memorial marks—relevant to the needs and desires of the memorial's own present," continues to be "one of the most profound rhetorical challenges faced" by designers of these

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[7] Akcan argues that the Jewish Museum Berlin must be situated also in the immigration policies of Germany at that time. The Jewish Museum stands in a Berlin quarter that was primarily populated by Turkish immigrants, many of who were (unrelated to the museum) removed as a result of German immigration policies in the 1980s and 1990s (172-173). Akcan suggests that this second displacement be mentioned in the museum or at least acknowledged by the architect. I agree that sensitivity to the present state of a site is prudent, but the layers of history represented by a geographical location make such actions nearly impossible to achieve completely. These issues may best belong in the "future" exhibits in the museum.

[8] According to Norman Levine, of the approximately 100,000 Jews living in Germany, the most resurgent community is in Berlin where almost 80,000 of those Jews reside (1).

[9] In her work on the Civil Right Institute, Victoria Gallagher cites Tamar Katriel's work on heritage museums in Israel, which focuses on the "social functions that are performed through visitor's experiences" (305-308). Similarly, this article focuses on the performance of visitors in the museum space and takes this analysis further by defining the space of the museum as specifically performative.

spaces (Blair and Michel 33). These rhetorical challenges are especially acute in museums like the Jewish Museum Berlin, because they must address issues of national identity and the competing claims to memory that tend to proliferate around war trauma.

For many museums of history—where war often plays a major role—the social function is to commemorate the heroic dead. "Remembrance without heroes," what we would call memorialization, is as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka points out, "at high risk of anonymity"; as a result, the social function of memorialization has undergone less scrutiny (28).[10] Seeing memorialization as a genre that is "social" (Miller 595) and as an object that "constructs a recurring situation" (Devitt 577) allows it to become rhetorical, the second element of my framework. "Describing and understanding specific genres as social actions within particular social and historical contexts" allows researchers to examine non-textual genres, such as museums, more effectively (Freedman and Medway 3). Analyzing the Jewish Museum Berlin as a social genre can elucidate specific patterns of communicating memory that reoccur variously in different historical contexts.

The third element of the framework, the performative, allows researchers to explain how a museum as text combines form with content to prevent passive reception by audiences. Some theorists suggest that museums are largely performative spaces from the outset because audiences interact with the artifacts and spaces more than they would with a memorializing artifact like an autobiography or other text.[11] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill rejects the simplistic mass audience model that assumed audiences were simply passive (7). Research concluded that, "media messages [. . .] could not tell people how to think, but could set an agenda as to what to think about" (7-8). In the best case, a museum is a social genre that is also a performative text in the way that Della Pollock suggests; performative discourse can be "an important, dangerous, and difficult intervention into routine representations of social/performative life" (75). The space of the Jewish Museum Berlin is designed to perform; visitors are both directed and given choices. The design of the space allows audiences an array of responses that are both intellectual and physical,[12] encouraging a negotiation of multiple

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[10] Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz name the act of commemoration a "genre" to discuss how monuments can be built to incorporate traumatic events in history (1991:381). This article uses the framework of genre as rhetorical and social in order to address, not commemoration (ways to remember the heroic dead) but memorialization (ways to remember the victims of controversial wars).

[11] The interaction of a physical exhibition space with its spectators is naturally performative because the notion of "action" is physically enacted or "dramatized" by spectators with their movement through the space, their reception of the artifacts and representations of history and memory, and their interaction with other spectators within that space (Patraka 139-41).

[12] Walter C. Metz compares the "bodily experience" of the some of the events as less concerned with accurate facts and more interested in providing experiences like the "visceral rides offered at amusement parks" (2008:33). I argue that Libeskind's intents have nothing to do with amusing visitors, and the museum is very concerned with accurate facts.

narratives of collective memory with each visit. Using this distinctive, multi-layered method, I am able to analyze specifically how the Jewish Museum Berlin communicates meaning and interacts with its audience dialogically.

Holocaust Representation

Although Saul Friedlander called the Holocaust an event "at the limits" of representation (3), the institutionalization of this memory continues in a number of genres, from testimony and memoir to literature, and in a number of fields including history, literature, gender studies, and visual rhetoric.[13] Although many scholars have analyzed Holocaust memorials across Europe and the United States, James E. Young was one of the first to suggest, echoing Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, that the "initial impulse to memorialize events like the Holocaust may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them" (1993, 5) (see also Pennebaker and Banasik 1997; Peterson 2002; Rensmann 2004; Wohl and Branscombe 2004). The Jewish Museum Berlin is an example of the more recent German trend toward "a multiplicity and heterogeneity of narratives and traditions vying for the status of public memory" (Pickford 135).[14]

Looking at the ways in which history and memory are framed in this space rhetorically and performatively reveals how The Jewish Museum Berlin "expresses or emerges from society's values" (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 383) with the intent of acting "against the authoritarian propensity in monumental spaces that reduces viewers to passive spectators" and acting as "a "counter-monument" (Young 2008, 359). Esra Akcan agrees that the Jewish Museum Berlin unsettles audiences with its anti-monumental design (157–158). The unsettled feeling, however, also comes from experiencing such spaces as counter-monuments, which necessarily represent the past as "unrepresentable"; what is lost cannot be represented, it can only be performatively

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[13] For selected memoirs see Primo Levi (1961) and Elie Wiesel (1960) as well as Charlotte Delbo (collected in English 1995). Lawrence Langer's work on Holocaust testimony and the Holocaust in public memory are crucial to any discussion of the Holocaust and its memorialization (see for example 1991; 2006). The first comprehensive Holocaust histories were the labor of eminent historians like Raul Hilberg (1985; 1992), Lucy S. Davidowicz (1975) and Omer Bartov (1986; 2000). See Marlene E. Heinemann (1986) as an important text opening the study of gender and the Holocaust as well as Judith Tydor Baumel's work (1998). Barbie Zelizer (2001) did groundbreaking work on the visual aspects of representing atrocity, as did James Young in the area of memorials (see for example 1993; 2008). Waxman's work addresses issues of representation (2004; 2006).

[14] Pickford describes the trajectory of Holocaust memorials from the 1950s through the 1990s as figurative to abstract representations. Memorials that appear in the 1970s and 1980s assume that, "that what is to be remembered, what is to be gestured toward or evoked because it is not directly recognizable, is absence, death, mass destruction, the endpoint of the *Endlösung*" (final solution) (2005:160). The Jewish Museum Berlin can be described as coming out of this abstract movement that aimed to highlight "unrepresentability."

evoked as an absent presence. Confronting the "unrepresentability" of the Holocaust by evoking and citing the absence and presence of Jewish life and culture in Berlin also confronts audiences with their expectations about this history. Such a dialogic interaction may promote new ways of thinking to disrupt what is routine or expected, and this is the importance of the performative.

Architectural Design: Performative Subjective

The architectural design is the first aspect of the museum I analyze as a performative space that encourages active audience interpretation. There are many ways architects theorize space, the postmodern, and performance in the crossing of discourses. According to Michael Dear and Greg Wassmandorf, "postmodern architecture was disturbingly divorced from any broad philosophical underpinnings," and for this reason it failed to catch on (321–325). In contrast, Mary McLeod states that although few agree on what postmodern architecture is, one objective unites the various concerns: "the search for architectural communication and the desire to make architecture a vehicle of cultural expression" (4). As a vehicle of cultural expression, some critics called the Jewish Museum Berlin's juxtaposition of baroque and postmodern architecture a "monstrosity" (Atkinson 3), but these kinds of juxtapositions are part of what makes the museum so unsettling to viewers. Audiences are not asked to view a building that has continuity in its design; they are asked to evaluate what it means to meld new material and design onto something old. These incongruous rhetorical choices are productive because audiences cannot but notice and question.

The architectural and design elements of the Jewish Museum Berlin are arrestingly intricate. Thus, it is not surprising that when the empty museum space was opened to the public, 350,000 people visited the space. After the building opened, many questioned whether architect, Daniel Libeskind's building should continue to stand alone without any exhibition. Julia Klein argues that, even though "Libeskind has praised the new exhibition as fulfilling the spirit of his architecture," the building "with its strong Holocaust references, and the exhibition, which seeks, in a sense, to contain the Holocaust, often seem at odds with each other" (4). My analysis shows that the form of the building and the content of the exhibits are not as much at odds with each other as they are working to promote multiple audience interpretations. As Figure 2 illustrates below, the outside of the building is covered with corrugated metal, interspersed with metal-framed windows. From above, the museum building looks like a jagged lightning bolt. As Esra Akcan notes, "Libeskind's designs are informed both by geometry, on the one hand, and by Jewish mysticism, on the other." In his lectures immediately after the 1989 competition, Libeskind cited a "four-fold structure" that guided his design process. The building's zigzag shape was a geometric play on the Star of David, which was also "enigmatically inscribed on the city plan by combining the addresses of previous Jewish Berliners" (160).

fig.1: outside the Jewish Museum Berlin with view of
cobblestones (photo by author).

Libeskind's design is not only intricate but also personal, in part because Libeskind was born in postwar Lodz, Poland to survivor parents. In this way, the design reflects the performative subjective: a "contiguous [. . .] relation between the writer and his/her subject(s), subject-selves, and/or reader(s)" (Pollock 86). It is not simply the self in plural that is performative, but the movement forward and between selves to form multiple perspectives and relations. The Holocaust permeates the museum because Libeskind employs rich metaphor in his building that he says does and should reflect this event. Libeskind has also been criticized for not truly representing a "German" perspective because he was born in Poland, but Caroline Wiedmer claims that his building is more effective because the voids represent a personal loss for him, as the child of Jewish survivors, whereas the same voids by a German architect might focus too much on the shell around the void—the shell representing the "wounding" Germans experienced as a result of the Holocaust—two incomparable wounds (138).[15] Libeskind's performative, subjective signature, shifting forward and between the spaces, therefore, is present throughout the building creating multiple perspectives.

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[15] "Wounding" refers to the identity of "war victim" that many civilian Germans have clung to, separating the guilty actions of the soldier from the innocent actions or inactions of the people at home.

The ground outside the museum, for instance, appears to be cobblestone from the visitor's ground perspective (see Figure 1). It is also an intricately designed relief that can only be seen in its entirety from the roof of the building. The museum describes the relief as a "net-like pattern of black, grey, and white stones, whose irregular shapes resemble fibers and splinters" (Rafael Roth Database). Fibers suggest growth while splinters indicate fragmentation; these concepts work simultaneously in this piece to suggest the paradoxical nature of Jewish history in Berlin. The design of this relief comes from the etchings of Gisele Celan-Lestrange and the title, "*les Filets, encore,*" translates as "The Nets, Again." It is physically impossible to see every perspective from one vantage point; that the view from the roof is an impossible perspective for any viewer suggests the impossibility of representing any history or culture in its entirety. It is clear that several perspectives and interpretations are possible and intended. Indeed, the architectural style of the museum has been called deconstructionist because "it challenges our thoughts and perceptions and is open to manifold interpretations" (Rafael Roth Database). This is the potential of performative spaces to create multiple interpretations, and as we will see, the architecture works together with the exhibits to perform memory and provide the potential for active meaning-making by each visitor.

Once inside, this architectural deconstruction continues to perform multiple meaning-making possibilities. The lines of the walls are interrupted by oddly-placed windows of varying sizes (see Figure 1). These windows serve several purposes. First, they limit the visitor's view of the outside. The horizon can be seen (i.e. the visitor can see the skyline of Berlin) but it is fractured and broken—as is the history of Berlin with the destruction of the Jewish community. Several interpretations are possible, but even the positioning of the windows "follows a precise matrix" (Jewish Museum Berlin website). Daniel Libeskind researched the "addresses of prominent Jewish and German citizens on a map of pre-war Berlin and joined the points to form an, 'irrational and invisible matrix' on which he based the language of form, the geometry and shape of the building" (Jewish Museum Berlin website). These windows suggest contact with the outside world, but they also prevent any view that is not fragmented, representing the fragmented history of Jews in Germany.

The building is designed around empty spaces Libeskind calls voids. The inner walls of the building, thus, do not touch; the inside walls touch only emptiness. On the floor at the bottom of the central void is a pile of metal pieces with faces. This work, called "*Schalechet*" or "Fallen Leaves," is sculpted by Menashe Kadishman. These faces evoke the victims of persecution that are commemorated inside the museum and evoke those who remain unnamed. According to Pollock, the performative evocative "operates metaphorically to render absence present" by connecting the reader to what is other (not present) in the text "by re-marking" it (80). Fallen leaves imply death, but they can also signal that with new seasons life can be renewed. Voids are spaces that are empty but also filled with what cannot be seen. Showing the history of the Jews in Berlin and in Europe is an important part of this renewal, and both the voids and the artwork metaphorically remark these absences.

Another part of the intricate design of this building is what the museum calls "Between the Lines." An imaginary straight line runs through the entire length of the interior that is called "the Axis of the Void." According to Libeskind, "this line, signifying emptiness, even intersects the exhibition floors with their objects, pictures, and visitors. It stands for radical annihilation, for those things that elude representation." Libeskind describes his structure as a building "'between the lines,' meaning it constantly moves between things that can be shown and others that have vanished or been destroyed" (Rafael Roth Database). This imaginary line is part of the building—the walls are built around it—but it is also an "other," something which stands apart from the rest. This line symbolizes the destruction of the Jewish population that is a thread that runs through much of recent German history, as it also symbolizes the continuity and connection of this history. The voids, on the other hand, evoke a death that can never be exhibited because Jewish Berlin history has been reduced to ashes (Jewish Museum Berlin website). This method is performative and addresses issues of representability by marking an absent presence. Even for the visitor who might not pay attention to Libeskind's "intended" meanings behind the voids, cutting through the building spaces in which visitors physically move evokes something that is not there, yet permeates the space at the same time. Each visitor who comes across these voids as they wander through the museum will re-mark this absence by negotiating the spaces around them.

The architectural spaces orienting the void are also crossings—bridges to the future. And yet the museum placards state that in the entrance to the museum, "Libeskind provides no visible connection between past, present, and future. Instead, he challenges visitors to find this themselves" (entrance placard). Indeed, Wiedmer claims that Libeskind has proposed a "parallel discourse of history, a discourse of suffusion that renders traditional historical narrative obsolete" (132). This idea is integral to the notion of deconstructive architecture and museum space, and to the performative subjectivity of Libeskind's building. The interpretations of the museum are intended to be multiple and varied, and thus, extend the dialogic quality of performative subjectivity of the space with its visitors because they are offered choices about how to apprehend the design, the content, and the narrative.

All of these architectural elements, outside and inside, shape the visitor's apprehension of the space from the moment they go down a flight of stairs to enter the first exhibit, which focuses on the Holocaust. This entry floor of the museum is actually subterranean; visitors cannot enter the museum any other way. The sole entry point demands that visitors see this history as they walk through it. Even if they just walk past it, their physical body has to interact with the space of representation, and they have to make a conscious decision to deny it intellectually. The museum's exhibits and building design continue to challenge visitors to take personal responsibility (through conscious choices) for the past, the present, and the future.

fig. 2: The Axis of Exile and the Axis of Continuity (photo by author).

Once visitors descend the stairs, they are surrounded with white walls and black slate floors that slope upward. The information sign names it "the Axis of Continuity" and states: "you are now underground." The point at which the visitor stands is a crossroads. The Axis of Exile and the Axis of the Holocaust (not pictured) cut across this Axis of Continuity and lead to the Garden of Exile and the Holocaust Tower. The Axis of Exile leads to a glass door and the Axis of the Holocaust leads to a black door. This path of exile, entitled "The Escape: 1933-1941," records the escape of 276,000 German Jews from Nazi Germany. As this path moves toward the Garden of Exile at the end of the hall, it widens. In contrast, the path to the Holocaust Tower narrows at the end. These are examples of how the building interacts performatively with the contents of the exhibit to reflect several metaphorical meanings that could physically and intellectually affect the visitor. Even if they do not see this widening and narrowing, their body will sense it physically as an opening and closing of space.[16] On the path of exile there is literally a "light at the end of a tunnel," but the use of a glass door also implies unseen obstacles. The garden is outside the building.

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[16] Walter C. Metz describes similar experiences in "Show Me the Shoah" saying that the museum seeks to "deliver to museum guests a bodily experience rather than literally correct historical facts" (33). I agree with the former but not the latter half of his statement.

fig. 3: Jewish Museum Berlin with Holocaust Tower to left and Garden of
Exile in foreground right (photo by the author).

To go outside, the visitor must open a large, uneven, and heavy door. The ground is slanted down as the visitor steps outside. Libeskind asks us to "think about the disorientation exile brings," (garden placard) once again evoking the bodily reactions of those who might have endured exile and marking their absence and presence. The garden is visible from the street. Any citizen or visitor in Berlin can see and walk into this space as they pass by. The possibility of this random "seeing" and "acting" indicates how integral strangers are to the success of an exile, who stands alone among those who are "at home" in a place. The garden contains forty-nine pillars of concrete. Each pillar is filled with earth in which willow oaks grow. Forty-eight columns contain the earth of Berlin, signifying the year 1948 and the formation of Israel. The forty-ninth column is filled with earth from Jerusalem and represents the Jewish presence in Berlin itself. The columns are vertical on a slanted ground, mimicking seasickness and making standing upright somewhat difficult. This is another important example of the ways in which the museum design provides meaning-making opportunities that can be apprehended intellectually but also must be apprehended physically and viscerally (if visitors choose to walk through this door).

As I walked in this space, a museum tour guide[17] was giving a tour to some German teenagers. Before she told them anything, she suggested they walk around by

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[17] These guides are called museum "hosts" and are an integral part of the expressed purposes of the museum and its exhibits; audience satisfaction and education are both high priorities. The hosts aid visitors in finding their way, explain information that may be confusing, and provide general assistance. In addition, they are trained to give tours to a variety of audiences (all tours are age, group, or theme-specific). Education plays a large role in the museum from the RRLC with computer databases for all visitors, to these on-site tours, to exhibits and presentations given off site.

themselves for two minutes or so to experience the disorientation of the design. This is precisely what Libeskind had in mind when he designed this museum space. There are written design rationales within the museum, but they are not realized until the visitor interacts with them, and it is important that they are "realized" differently—the interpretations depend on the individual visitor. In this case, the students experience the feeling of disorientation and then learn why it occurs. This experience suggests aspects of what Simon and Eppert et al described as "pedagogical witnessing," where knowing and understanding are "social rather than solitary." The social communicative act "re-cites" what "happened to others at/in a different space/time" (293-4). The tour guide[18] says exiles literally lose the ground beneath them, and this experience is learned through an intellectual and a physical disturbance.[19] The performative evocation and subjectivity in the design of the museum resonate with the exhibits in this underground section, where performative evocation and citation play more prominent roles.

Historical Exhibits Underground: Holocaust Jewish History as Performative Subtext

Experiencing the physical and intellectually challenging design of the museum shell is echoed repeatedly inside the museum as well. Whereas the visitor is confronted with the performativity of Libeskind's subjective design, they are further challenged to negotiate memory and history with the performative citation and evocation of the exhibits inside. It has been noted that the performative evocative "operates metaphorically to render absence present" by connecting the reader to what is other (not present) in the text "by re-marking" it (80). Additionally in these exhibits, the performative citational reveals "the fragility of identity, history, and culture constituted in rites of textual recurrence"; that is repetition exerts counterpressure on representations (Pollock 92).

Returning inside, visitors retrace their path along the Axis of Exile. High on the walls along this walkway on both sides are the names of cities to which exiled Jews escaped, citing places that provided refuge, and evoking these places by re-marking them. On the left side of this hallway is another display about emigration. It includes photographs of people, *Ausweise* (traveling documents), suitcases, watches, and jewelry. The suitcase is filled with "objects of memory," but the wall itself is also filled with such objects. The listing of cities and the family names along with these objects cite the actual places and names of exiles and make this history personal as well as communal. There are citations of numbers, "276,000," and family names like "the Simon family." These objects of memory mark an absence but do not attempt to stand for it.

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[18] I observed a tour guide at my officially sanctioned research visits to the museum in 2006.
[19] Holocaust scholar Dan Stone agrees that: "Libeskind's museum not only shows how architecture can discomfort, it reveals the absence that characterizes the post-Holocaust world" (523).

This is one way the museum brings attention to the construction of memory, through objects, stories, and facts that foreground memory, and the way memory situates the victim as complex and connected to history and place. Visitors reflect on memory and history to make meaning with the space, the contents, and the objects dialogically in performative memorialization.

Once again at a crossroads, the visitor turns to face the Axis of the Holocaust. This is the way I traced the paths, chronologically from exile to Holocaust, but visitors are free to trace any path they wish in this exhibit. At this point, visitors can access historical information and archival information in the Rafael Roth Learning Center (where the database is located). This Learning Center is placed at the beginning not at the end of the museum as many learning centers are set up. This placement suggests that learning and discovery should take place immediately and at several junctures. Learning is not an end point but a dialogic process, continuous and open-ended.

fig. 4: hallway leading to the Holocaust Tower (photo by the author).

On the left wall of this hallway are the names of the concentration and death camps. As in the Axis of Exile, names and places are cited here to remind the visitor of the physical spaces of destruction. The right side of the hall contains pictures of people behind darkened glass, dark backgrounds, names, and letters. The repetition of the names of the dead juxtaposed with information and objects about what they did

(musician or doctor for instance) bears witness to their lives. This contextualization of people and their lives before the war complicates the category of victim in a European Holocaust context.[20] The visitor sees not just dehumanized victims, but the real people who were brutally murdered. The juxtaposition of the lives and the deaths forces the visitor dialogue with two realities to make layers of meaning and acknowledge both what was and what was extinguished.

The citation of numbers, much like the citation of names, performatively reminds the visitor of the human toll through repetition. The Axis of the Holocaust lists numbers: at least 6,000,000 million of the victims of the Holocaust were Jews, 200,000 of whom were German Jews. This brings the larger history back to the regional history to localize their lives and deaths. This was not an event that happened elsewhere. Opposite these figures is a display about a local family in Berlin, bringing history again one step closer to the viewer. First, the Jews of Europe, then the Jews of Germany, and then, finally, Jewish families from Berlin. The history encircles personal stories and moves the visitor geographically to its center, Berlin. Berlin residents are now empowered to identify with these places as sites of destruction and as their home community simultaneously.

At the end of this hall is the Holocaust Tower. The tower is an empty, vertical void constructed with concrete that commemorates Holocaust victims (see also Figure 3 for a brief outside view to the left). A museum employee opens the heavy door, through which visitors enter the tower, and then closes it. All sounds are suddenly muted. The Tower is cold in the summer and even colder in the winter. It intentionally contains no heating or cooling system to metaphorically reference the absence of such luxuries in ghettoes and concentration camps. The tower footprint is polygonal, the lines uneven and chaotic. There are straight lines, but these edges of the tower corner into darkness. There is a tiny sliver of light at the ceiling. There is a ladder next to the door, but it is out of reach for any occupant and leads, in fact, to nowhere. There are ten holes along the sidewall. Libeskind says about the tower, "Inside this place we are cut off from the everyday life of the city outside and from a view of that city. We can hear sounds and see light but we cannot reach the outside world. So it was for those confined before and during deportation and in the camps themselves" (Holocaust Tower placard).

Once again, the building design performatively provides several opportunities to evoke physical, intellectual, and emotional reactions from the visitor to "metaphorically render absence present" (Pollock 80). The Holocaust Tower is a representation of memory and feeling, not a recreation of history. It is meant to evoke the feelings that victims might have felt during these times, all unique and all different. Similarly, each visitor will experience being "trapped" inside a concrete tower differently. But they can also not enter the Tower at all, which allows for individual constructions of meaning from the space or the avoidance of the task of meaning making. The aim is

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[20] This is what Blumenthal has suggested is one of the primary intents of the museum (See Cohen 1999).

not to re-create ghetto or camp experience, but to mark the event in a way that could purposefully affect visitors to "change they way they see things" (Street Porter 1).

Historical Exhibits Above Ground: Jewish History as Performative Context

The exhibits on Jewish history continue as visitors return above ground. As I noted earlier, Jewish history in Berlin has been fragmented by violence. Daniel Libeskind's design of the museum building and the Holocaust subtext performatively evoke and cite this fragmentation throughout the underground portion of the museum. These performative elements continue to engage visitors as they return above ground, initially because the chronology of history is disrupted. Visitors began the museum with exhibits on the Holocaust. The next floor goes back to the beginning of Jewish history in Berlin almost two thousand years ago. This disruption in narrative time emphasizes the multiple perspectives and relations that characterize the performative subjective, as it also perhaps represents the non-linearity of time; the past may be closer than we know, while the present is more distant. As visitors move through these exhibits chronologically, they come once again to another (and different) representation of the Nazi era.

In this section, the museum complicates the expectations visitors may have about this history. Much like the underground portion, where visitors were encouraged to contemplate the Berlin Jewish population not only as Holocaust victims but also as productive citizens of the era, the above ground section on the Nazi era addresses the misinformed perceptions visitors might have about the passivity of Jewish victims. All these complications serve to open spaces for layered meaning-making. Beginning with the section entitled, "World War I and Weimar," the museum displays the 1919 constitution that gave emancipation to Jews, a landmark that subsequently was crushed in 1933 with the rise of the Nazis. Before the museum explains Nazi persecution at any length, it directly addresses German audiences with an important question: "Did Jews Passively Accept? No." A new section begins with a timeline on black boards: "Persecution, Resistance, Extermination 1933-1945." First it is shown that several help associations were created to fight this persecution. Then there is a focus on emigration and resistance. It is important that resistance appears second in this title; the focus shows action, reminding visitors that resistance was an important part of Jewish history that undermines the stereotype of the passive Jewish victim. This nuanced perspective of the Jewish population is performatively re-marked by its repetition throughout the museum.[21]

The next section moves to 1933 and begins with a metal tree called an "Emancipation Tree" with forms in German and English on which visitors can write an an-

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[21] Patraka notes that in the USHMM's section on ghettoes represents resistance mostly through the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which is filmed by the Nazis. The concept of resistance is undercut by this framing ("Spectacular" 146-8). The Jewish Museum Berlin, in contrast, highlights resistance as continuous and framed from multiple perspectives.

swer to the question: "What do equal rights mean to you?" and hang their answers on the tree.[22] The juxtaposition of emancipation and the suggestion that visitors physically interact with and move through the space of "equal rights" contrasts deeply with the next section on the legalized persecution that began in 1936 with the Nuremberg Laws. The visitor is called to critically think about equal rights—to act—before the persecution begins. This is an important movement of the past into the present. The visitor is called to act at a critical time in history in the present. This movement evokes the absent presence of persecution and German response to it, as it also allows visitors to repeatedly respond by physically "crossing the line" from equal rights to persecution in a matter of moments.

When visitors reach the section on the Holocaust, as in the underground section, there is a marked absence of graphic representations. Simple banners hang from the ceiling in the next section with dates, numbers, and names of those deported and killed, which forces the visitor to focus on these details—names and numbers. The names and numbers on the banners evoke the presence of those lost and performatively re-mark and repeat them as it scrolls continually. At the table in this room there is a *Gedenk* (Memorial) book table. The books here list the names of German Jews. This is another form of witnessing, citation, and evocation through the repetition of these names in different modes—names scrolling visually and names printed in a book. As visitors read these names and the *Gedenk* books that are located on side tables, they have the opportunity to "accept the role of reader or hearer" and "to accept a responsibility and obligation, to take one's place in a series of readers whose attention keeps the witness alive" (Douglass and Vogler 45). Visitors can also ignore these books and reenact the role of indifferent bystander. To do so, however, much like with the Holocaust Tower, they must physically negotiate a path that turns them away, marking this inaction as deliberate action, or conscious choice. These names evoke those who died, as they also evoke those who lived (as they saw in the underground exhibit). Visitors, in interacting with these performative citations and evocations, are given the opportunity to see how these representations can be constructed in many ways. Both history and memory are memorialized in such a museum, as well as the relationship of the past to the present, revealing the political and social nature of the memorial-making process and the true "fragility of identity, history, and culture" in the present (Pollock 92).

In a museum about memory and history, the Jewish Museum Berlin pauses to reflect on how this process is constructed in one of the last sections called, "How to Remember?" The suggestion that postwar reconciliation did not acknowledge the atrocities of the war is directed at German audiences who might have preconceptions that because Germany is "reconciled" with the world on a political level the atrocities of the past are behind them. This section confronts visitors by showing that to remember memory and history is to engage in an ongoing dialogue. Closure is not the

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[22] Some of the answers to this question that I observed were "freedom" and "tolerance of difference." I do not know whether the museum keeps these cards officially on file.

goal. The museum presents German-Jews not as "other" or endangered, but as a constant presence—a complex, individual and collective presence that influences the present. Each visitor has the opportunity to take the responsibility to witness and converse with this history. The Jewish Museum Berlin, thus, can be a museum of the future of the Jews in Germany by creating witnesses who participate in an ongoing dialogic of social and cultural meaning-making about memory.

Conclusion

It must be remembered that, "everything one sees in a museum is a production by somebody" (Patraka "Spectacular" 153). The interpretations of the social outcomes or functions of these spaces requires them to be analyzed as rhetorical genres that are, by definition, social and performative. This social function in the Jewish Museum Berlin can best be analyzed as promoting an interactive and visceral experience through the theoretical lens of rhetorical performance to understand how the Jewish Museum Berlin allows for a special degree of agency in audiences. In a museum space that is performative, the passivity that often characterizes the museum spectator undergoes a metamorphosis. In museums that address the Holocaust, personal testimonies are an important aspect of the conglomerate of historical evidence. This provides a special subjectivity to the content, but the overarching chronological timeline is what guides the visitor through the museum. That movement of the spectator is mostly chronological and non-interactive.

This is also true of the Jewish Museum Berlin to some extent, but the strong subjectivity of the architect in the building design, as well as the fragmented chronology of the timeline of the exhibits undermine this. By upending the "typical" museum's tendency to induce passive reception, the Jewish Museum Berlin has the potential to transform the bystander into an active witness. Visitors can consciously act in the space, remember events anew, and apply this learning to the present. In the Jewish Museum Berlin the fragmented narrative time frame between past and present and future interacts continuously with the subjectivity of the architectural space and the citations and evocations of names and numbers in the exhibits to create such witnesses through an active dialogic; this rhetorical space becomes a performative text that "does something" (75).

Memorial museums have an enormous power to communicate and influence public memory; thus, they also have an enormous responsibility to address multiple perspectives. Defining the museum space first as a rhetorical genre reveals its potential to evoke these perspectives. Applying performative theory to the details of its designs and exhibits allows an analysis of this meaning-making process to emerge. The intent of a memorial museum may be articulated by its designer or within the space itself. I have argued that the Jewish Museum Berlin invites audiences to actively make meaning in its spaces. If this invitation is ignored, that choice must also be conscious. Active response negotiates the audiences' position within the past and recognizes that memory and memorial productions are socially constructed processes in which they

participate in the present. They can accept or resist. Action in witnesses comes from performing memory—shifting perspectives, broadening knowledge, and complicating categories in the past to disrupt the unconscious performance of the present.

Rush claims that the essence of performance is its immediacy, and with the end of performance comes the disappearing act (1). If, however, performance is a social and political intervention, where spectators becomes participants, as Roach suggests (46), then The Jewish Museum Berlin is a performative text, which stages memory and invites participation, locating "the viewer and the environment as vital elements in the making of the art object" (Casey 80). By presenting content, design, and chronologies that upend audience expectations of histories and memories of the Holocaust, the museum promotes an interactive dialogic. Faced with a convergence of form and content they do not expect to find, audiences must reconsider what they "know" and how they feel about Jewish history and the Holocaust. The histories and memories of the Holocaust are "recontextualized" and "displaced," not made new (Hirsch 218), and this movement is precipitated by the museum's performative elements. Museums rely on meaningful encounters with audiences; when these encounters are interactive, as they are in the Jewish Museum Berlin, audiences perform the re-construction of memory as a collaborative project between their lives, the lives and deaths portrayed in the museum, and the intricately designed space. Spaces like the Jewish Museum Berlin intrude upon our present by exerting pressure on cultural memory-making processes to activate audiences in the future.

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