

*Memory and Archive*



Daniel Arasse  
Peter Carrier  
Jean-Louis Déotte  
Vera Frenkel  
David Galloway  
Jochen Gerz  
Françoise Le Gris  
Alexis Nouss  
Régine Robin  
Irit Rogoff  
Marie-Noëlle Ryan  
Gad Soussana  
Winfried Speitkamp  
Johanne Villeneuve  
Gérard Wajcman

SYMPOSIUM

Musée d'art

contemporain

de Montréal

March 23-24-25, 2000



MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL  
Québec ::



## Definitions of Visual Culture IV

# Memory and Archive

Theorists and artists will gather to examine the question of memory which, as we know, is an obsession at this turn of the millennium. They will examine the how and why behind this obsession with committing to memory, with archives, documents and commemoration, that characterizes our society today. They will also discuss the critical effect of contemporary artistic practices on cultural memory.

The discussions will cover a number of questions surrounding the theme of memory as it relates to the notion of archive. What about the places that crystallize our fascination with collective memory? Do monuments there, as elsewhere, serve both utopia and amnesia? And what role can memory play with respect to absence and disappearance? How should we evaluate the legacy of the moral criterion introduced by artistic avant-gardes in the late 20th century? In other words, from the perspective of the question of memory and modernity, what is the relationship between ethics and aesthetics? CHRISTINE BERNIER

All session information is subject to change. • Simultaneous translation (French and English) will be available.

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### Thursday, March 23

**12 noon** REGISTRATION

**2 p.m.** OPENING OF THE SYMPOSIUM

**Marcel Brisebois**, Director, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

**Uwe Förster**, Directeur, Goethe-Institut Montréal

**Jeffrey M. Peck**, Director, Canadian Centre for German and European Studies

Welcoming remarks

**2:30 p.m.** **Lucette Bouchard**, Director, Education and Documentation, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
Chair

**Régine Robin**, Professor, Department of Sociology

Université du Québec à Montréal

*Unsettled Memory: Berlin Wanderings*

This paper will examine the theme of collective memory as it is found in wanderings through today's Berlin in search of the ghosts that haunt the city, which has become the largest modern construction site in Europe. It will touch on a number of places in which the memory of the Holocaust is inscribed, notably the Jewish museum built by Libeskind in Kreuzberg and the Memorial which hasn't even broken ground yet. Also discussed will be the current amnesia about the old GDR and its memory, with reference to the work of Sophie Calle on the subject of East Berlin. The paper will also include a piece of Berlin-inspired fiction, the ragpicker of Rosa Luxembourg Street, which offers the author's reflections on the traces of the past.

**Gad Soussana**, Lecturer, Department of Philosophy

Université du Québec à Montréal

**Alexis Nouss**, Professor, Department of Linguistics and Translation

Université de Montréal

*Ruin and Testimonial*

In the Western conceptual and aesthetic system, from the time of the 18th century, ruins symbolized the persistence of the past. Modernity — in Walter Benjamin's work, for example — then took the ruin as its foundation for a philosophy of history in which melancholy harboured a creative force. A ruin refers to a place that no longer exists. It testifies to it. What happens when it comes to testifying to a non-place, a space which memory cannot (re)construct, whose traces have not been recorded by history? In the face of the problem of the un-representable — and the Shoah, first of all — summoned up by post-modern thinking about the virtual, a new approach to testimonial is called for; on the ruins of the concept of ruin.

**Marie-Noëlle Ryan**, Professor of Philosophy

Collège François-Xavier-Garneau, Québec

*Art and Memory in the Aesthetics of T.W. Adorno. Examination of a philosophical apriorism in relation to the work of Gerhard Richter*

The requirement that art have a critical function — a direct take on history (*art engagé*) or a critical distance from history and tradition — has dominated modernity. It also pervades the *Aesthetic Theory* of Theodor Adorno, who saw in art a kind of *unconscious historiography*, giving this critical function both a moral and a memorial aspect. The postmodern turn of the 1980s demanded a questioning of this requirement, which had become too absolute, and attempted (among other things) to restore the primacy of autonomous aesthetic pleasure. I would like to show that it is nevertheless possible to reconsider this critical function of art in other terms, as is suggested by the exemplary work of painter Gerhard Richter, in which the relationship to history, memory and archive plays a subtly critical role.

**4 p.m.** PLENARY

**5 p.m.** Visit to the exhibition *Around Memory and Archive* at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Cocktails will be served.



## Friday, March 24

**9 a.m.** REGISTRATION  
MORNING SESSION

**10 a.m.** **Christine Bernier**, Head of Cultural Programs, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
Chair  
**Gérard Wajcman**, Writer; psychoanalyst and Associate Professor, Head of Psychoanalysis and Aesthetics Section  
Université de Paris VIII

**Art and the Century. On Selected Works by Jochen Gerz**

We have no image of the most important event of the 20th century. And yet the art of this time is obsessed with the undepictable horror of the Shoah. Perhaps today, more than ever, we have reason to believe that what the artist gives us access to is the place of that which cannot be seen.

Adorno questioned the possibility of art after Auschwitz. The work of Jochen Gerz does not show that it is possible, but simply that, after Auschwitz, it is necessary — if, of course, we wish to retain the memory of the most important event of the 20th century.

**Jochen Gerz**, Artist. Born in 1940 in Berlin. Has lived in Paris since 1966.

**Memory and Mimesis**

Do we, in memorizing, have to redo what has been done? Do we, in making art, do exactly this? Is iconoclasm a way to deal with mimesis as well as the subject of mimesis, the reality which is impossible to redo? Does the problem of the redoing of the Shoah hide the fundamental problem of art which — in reaching out for completion — is destined for failure?

**11 a.m.** PLENARY

**11:30 a.m.** LUNCH

AFTERNOON SESSION

**1:30 p.m.** **Christine Bernier**  
Chair  
**Vera Frenkel**, Artist. Lives and works in Toronto.  
**The Power of Absence: Silences, Shadows, and Remembering**

Frenkel will discuss the making of the *Body Missing* project on the *Kunstraub* (art theft) policies of the Third Reich, in particular the double plunder of artworks hidden under the term *Sonderauftrag Linz* ("Linz special mission") and destined for the unrealized Hitlermuseum. Initiated in Linz, Austria in 1994 and continuing through a complex multilingual Website featuring the commemorative works of a dozen artists, *Body Missing* opens questions on the dilemmas surrounding issues of memory and archive. Also discussed will be an extension of this project, "The Institute: Or, What We Do for Love," into a consideration of the nature of contemporary cultural bureaucracy and the absences of continuity and accountability which characterize it.

**Jean-Louis Déotte**, Member, Collège international de philosophie, and Associate Professor of Aesthetics  
Université de Paris VIII

**The Uses of Photography at the Time of the Disappearances**

Based on examples taken from Latin America, this paper will analyze the contribution which photography made to the politics of resistance, in particular to assert that the "disappeared" had indeed existed. It will examine the Recoleta exhibition in Buenos Aires organized by the grandmothers of abducted children so that they could learn their identities and return to their families, along with the work of Chilean artist Altamirano. A comparison will be made between melancholy (the contemporary arts) and enthusiasm (as per Kant) as historical signs.

**2:30 p.m.** PLENARY

**3 p.m.** **Irit Rogoff**, Professor of Visual Studies  
Goldsmiths College, University of London, U.K.  
**Without**

Moving beyond the supposition that absences need to be compensated for by the constitution of symbolic presences and beyond the understanding that memory can be, directly or indirectly, "recovered" — we are left with the task of working with and living with absence. Neither the culmination of a violent historical act nor the aftermath of void, absence is an immensely active entity — it is conversely the driving engine of any critical inquiry — from the psychoanalytical to the deconstructive. The discussion I propose will look at a series of artistic practices, museological archivizations and performative moments that have helped me grasp the enormous critical potential of historical dramas which have been cast as contemporary absences.

**Françoise Le Gris**, Professor of Art History  
Université du Québec à Montréal

**In Search of Lost T...**

Through an investigation (the disappearance of a *tantri* from the American Museum of Natural History), the author will look at the relations of inversion and reversal between document and monument, container and content, whole and fragment, depth and outspread, that govern the dynamics between text and work, between living memory and inert memory. Based on the meeting of non-parallel series, this examination will focus on the excavation process, which involves the revelation, through shards and scraps, of that which has been buried, and which tries to compensate for forgetting and loss by replacing them with other types of traces, evidence and fragments.


**4 p.m.** PLENARY

The symposium *Memory and Archive* will be held at the Imperial Cinema, 1432 Bleury Street, Montréal, Place-des-Arts metro. Registration at the Imperial Cinema.

Info-colloque: (514) 847-6935  
[www.macm.org](http://www.macm.org)

**Hôtel Wyndham Montréal:**  
**Official Symposium Hotel**

During your stay, the Hôtel Wyndham Montréal, 1255 Jeanne-Mance Street, is offering a special \$109 daily rate for March 23 and 24. For information and reservations, contact the Hôtel Wyndham Montréal. Tel.: (514) 285-1450  
Toll-free reservations: 1-800-361-8234  
Fax: (514) 285-1243  
In addition, we suggest the Hotel's bar as a place to continue your discussions.

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## Definitions of Visual Culture IV

### Memory and Archive

Le Centre canadien  
d'études allemandes  
et européennes  
Université de Montréal



The Canadian Centre  
for German and  
European Studies  
York University, Toronto



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Association Française d'Action Artistique

## Saturday, March 25

**9 a.m.** REGISTRATION  
MORNING SESSION

**10:30 a.m. Christine Bernier**

Chair

**Johanne Villeneuve**, Professor, Department of Comparative Literature  
Université de Montréal

*Does the mutant know that what is mutating in him is already no longer him? Reflections on Memory and Utopia*

Based on a comparison between the experience of "historic change" in Moscow in the 1920s and that of the collapse of "real socialism" in the same city in the early 1990s, this paper will reflect on the meaning of the relationship between cultural memory, utopia and historic change. The notions of "mutation" and "experience" will be a central focus of the discussion, along with the poetic figure of the "mutant."

**Peter Carrier**, Lecturer in Political Sciences  
Free University of Berlin

*Berlin as an Urban Archive. The Institutionalization of National Memory in Monumental Projects since 1989*

Since 1989, in anticipation of the transfer of government from Bonn to Berlin, the federal and regional states have committed themselves to major projects to maintain or construct historical symbols of the "new" Federal Republic. Two projects, for a "Holocaust Monument" and a memorial of the workers' revolt in East Berlin on June 17, 1953, are intended to symbolize the memory of National Socialist and Communist dictatorships. Together, they exemplify the progressive institutionalization of the historical urban landscape of Berlin, and the transformation of historical traces into aesthetic monuments.

**11:30 a.m. PLENARY**

**12 noon LUNCH**

AFTERNOON SESSION

**2 p.m. Lucette Bouchard**

Chair

**Winfried Speitkamp**, Professor of History and member of the research group *The Culture of Memory*  
University of Giessen, Germany

*Colonial War and Collective Memory in Africa: The Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya*

The Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule in Kenya in the early 1950s is seen as one of the bloodiest colonial wars in contemporary history. Hardly any other colonial war has caused a comparable amount of discussion about its remembrance and commemoration. This includes scientific work as much as novels, feature films, and memorials. Conflicts about how to remember the Mau Mau rebellion played a crucial role in building the Kenyan nation and integrating the Kenyan state. The paper will deal with phases, forms, and consequences of how the Mau Mau rebellion was remembered both scientifically and politically.

**David Galloway**, Chair of American Studies  
Ruhr University, Germany

*Weimar: The Paradox of Memory*

No other city so dramatically symbolizes the glories and the terrors of the German past as the former capital of the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar. As though the contrast between Goethe and Schiller on the one hand and, on the other, the hideous crimes committed at nearby Buchenwald did not offer paradox enough, memory must also grapple with the flowering of Modernism in Weimar, the founding of the Bauhaus, the terrors of *Entartete Kunst* and the decades of Communist dictatorship. In a city where every second house seems to be an archive, coming to terms with such paradoxes is a challenge to which contemporary artists are finding ingenious if painful solutions.

**3 p.m. PLENARY**

**3:30 p.m. Daniel Arasse**, Academic Director

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris

*Anselm Kiefer's Memory Without Recollections*

Memory and recollections do not overlap. Memory organizes recollections in a structure allowing them to be summoned up as needed. On the basis of this simple observation, this paper will examine the "needs" met by the work of Anselm Kiefer. Born in 1945, without any recollections of the war, he was the first German artist to directly confront, in 1969, the issue of Nazism, its representation and its memory.

**4 p.m. PLENARY**

**Symposium Advisory Board:** Sam Abramovitch, Éliane Escoubas, Uwe Förster,  
Dagmar Guttman and Walter Moser.

**Symposium Team:** Christine Bernier: concept and organization • Julie Kennedy:  
research • Éliane Bégin: bibliographic research • Sophie David: registration and  
speakers' travel coordination • Sylvain Parent: technical direction • Communications  
and Marketing Department: promotion and sponsorship. Translation: Susan Le Pan,  
Christine Bernier • Revision: Olivier Reguin, Susan Le Pan.