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Depth of the field. Bystanders' art, forensic art practice and non-sites of memory

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Abstract

Abandoned sites of trauma often become objects of art-based research. The forensic turn offered artists the requisite tools to approach uncommemorated post-violence sites to interact with their human and non-human actors. The usage of artistic methods allows us to inspect nondiscursive archives and retrieve information otherwise unavailable. The new wave of "forensic art" joins the efforts of post-war artists to respond to sites of mass killings. In the post-war era, sites of trauma were presented as (implicated) *landscapes*, or unhospitable *terrains*. The tendency to narrow space to the site and to contract the perspective is continued today by visual artists entering difficult memory grounds, looking down, inspecting the ground with a "forensic gaze". A set of examples of such artistic endeavors, following the research project *Uncommemorated Genocide Sites and Their Impact on Collective Memory, Cultural Identity, Ethical Attitudes and Intercultural Relations in Contemporary Poland* (2016–2020) is discussed as "bystanders' art."

Key Words

art-based research, bystanders, forensic art, Holocaust, non-sites of memory, genocide

Introduction

Uncommemorated post-violence sites, sites that witnessed the Holocaust or another type of mass violence but have not been marked with monuments of explanatory plaques, display paradoxical faculties. On the one hand, these are specific locations that contemporary researchers and activists are able to localize and describe with precise geographical coordinates, as if violence left a punctual trace. On the other hand, they are frequently discussed, recalled, explained and visualized as if they were topographically more extensive than they really are, as if they were swallowed by their surroundings. In his 2014 essay on sites of past trauma, Martin Pollack grasped and aptly described the cause of the "dilution", the "spilling over" of the violence of the past out of its historical area into a larger space:

> Some time ago, I came across a photograph in the internet of Karolina Bullowa's stone house. In that house, all the Jews who had been hiding were killed, together with the owner who had put them up. The photo was taken just after these things happened. In the foreground you could see a regular wooden fence and behind it a stone house, two holes where the windows used to be, no roof – that had gone up in flames. Some years back I went off to find this spot, and the house was gone. An old man there led me to a meadow where sheep were grazing. "Here it all happened," he said, and showed me where by making a large arc with his hand. "Here those people were shot and buried immediately afterwards." Around that place was empty space, nothing more, only the appearance of unspoiled nature. A beautiful mountain scene" (Pollack 2014: 31).

In this article, we test the usefulness of landscape as a key to opening up the enigmatic mnemotope of non-sites of memory. In the subsequent reflections, we follow the work of artists who have visualized abandoned and uncommemorated sites of violence. We consider their

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representations as a way of engaged research procedures, formatted as a truth-finding actions performed at sites of mass crime, and a form of communicating the results of detailed analyses of non-sites of memory.[1]

In the last decade the term "landscape" has become a conceptual basis for many, ever more specialist and precise terms in studies on memory. There is research into: campscapes,[2] traumascapes (Tumarkin 2005; Violi 2012), terrorscapes (Otto 2009; Laarse et al. 2014), the forensic landscapes and, more broadly, Holocaust (Cole 2014, 2016; Cole et al. 2014) and post-memory spaces (Kaplan 2013; Szczepan 2014). Landscape also appears as a key category in critical research into the so-called *environmental history of the Holocaust* (Małczyński 2017, 2018; Domańska 2017; Małczyński, et al. 2020) and *ecocriticism* (Rapson 2015, Ubertowska 2019). It is certainly still a very productive category in research on the topography of violence.

The category of landscape in the context of the Holocaust allows us to investigate highly contrastive perspectives – the human and the non-human. Victims' testimonies (Cole 2016), wartime historical and visual documents by perpetrators (Schama 1995; Małczyński 2018) and post-war documentations by victims and bystanders allow us to reconstruct Holocaust landscapes from a multitude of perspectives. In this article we will follow the point of view of post-war observers that strove to perceive abandoned and dispersed sites of violence, producing a particular kind of "bystanders' art". We will be particularly interested in a shift from constructing a broad panorama typical for a landscape genre, to narrowing the scope of observation, lowering the eyesight, concentrating the attention on the narrow portion of land. This recent action of a visual "zoom into" the landscape might reveal a fundamental motivation of visitors trying to understand the past of the abandoned, uncommemorated sites that have suffered violence, the need to answer the urgent question: "What does it mean to stand in the place of death?" (Schuppli 2014). The effects of such inquiries we will call here "forensic art".

From landscape to forensic art

Crime-scene as sight

Conceiving uncommemorated sites of the violence of World War II visually as landscapes – landscapes remaining in a relationship with memory – has a long history. We can probably find its origins in the photographs taken in the course of local crime scene investigations carried out by Regional and Chief Commissions for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation and the Central Jewish Historical Commission – institutions founded in 1945 and 1944 in Poland and working – among other tasks – on documenting German crimes from the time of the Nazi occupation. These investigations were the beginnings of a photographic archive of sites that witnessed trauma. The basic poetics of visualizing a post-violence site was then established: the most frequently chosen composition is a wide shot whose center is taken up by material remains that are indexically linked to the reality of the time of conflict, and the scene is devoid of post-war people or objects.

This poetics has reached out to find its artistic expression: it was particularly popularized by the world-renowned documentary form 1955, *Night and Fog*, by Alain Resnais, in which colored shots of Birkenau taken in the 1950s were used alongside black and white archival footage received from different documenting institutions and victims' associations. A similar approach was used in Claude Lanzmann's 1985 documentary *Shoah*. Lanzmann's "extreme long shots of wide-open landscapes" (Prager 2015) became emblematic for the film, as well as filming in bright light, and including in shots the post-camp remains, surrounded by trees and plants. In both seminal cases the post-violence space was presented in the same convention: sites discovered as uncommemorated, solitary, abandoned (Kligerman 2008).

These films, however, represent a change in the poetics of the visualization of wartime landscapes in comparison to the one developed for the needs of courts and archives by investigating public institutions. Margaret Olin, commenting on the landscape strategy of *Shoah*, immediately calls the landscapes as presented "pastoral"; the nature is "beautiful" and the ultimate scene achieved is "mythological" (Olin 1997: 1). "Holocaust landscapes" *à la* Lanzmann should be understood in the context of the genre of landscape painting. The over-determination of the scene of nature causes a particular "visual trope" to be perpetuated, going on to become easily recognizable (Szczepan 2014). *Shoah* landscapes will become a fixed point of reference and the most inspiring representative tradition for attempts to look at post-violence sites that have been *absorbed* by their natural environment.

Accenting the aesthetic attributes of a landscape surrounding a non-site of violence sharpens the contrast be-

1 We understand non-sites of memory as dispersed locations of various genocides, ethnic cleansings, and other similarly motivated acts of violence. "The basic indicator is lack of information (altogether or of proper, founded information), of material forms of commemoration (plaques, monuments, museums), and of reparation (any official designation of the scope of the territory in question). Non-sites of memory also have in common the past or continued presence of human remains (bodies of deceased persons) that has not been neutralized by funerary rites. These sites do not, meanwhile, share physical characteristics: they may be extensive or minute, urban or rural, though they are often characterized by some variety of physical blending of the organic order (human remains, plants, animals) and to the inorganic order (ruins, new construction). The victims who should be commemorated on such sites typically have a collective identity (usually ethnic) distinct from the society currently living in the area, whose self-conception is threatened by the occurrence of the non-site of memory. Such localities are transformed, manipulated, neglected, or contested in some other way (often devastated or littered), the resultant forsaking of memorialization leading to ethnically problematic revitalization that draws criticism" (Sendyka 2016: 700).

2 See the website and publications of the project *Campscapes*: https://www.campscapes.org/ (accessed: 10.08.2016).

Figure 1. Terrain of KL Plaszów, 29 May 1946, IPN 16745, evidence from crime-scene investigations.

tween the associations evoked by what is *seen* and those evoked by what is *known*. Nature that is easy on the eye is presented in a mode of suspicion or even accusation. Lupine and pine trees grow on the ashes of the victims of Operation Reinhardt (Germans camouflaged the area of the liquidated death camps of Treblinka, Bełżec and Sobibór). Nature hides the crime in an act of cooperation with perpetrators and beneficiaries. The landscape can be read, therefore, as being implicated in the genocidal past, i.e. "entangled in historical and present-day injustices" with multiple "modes of implication" that can be "complex, multifaceted, and sometimes contradictory, but are nonetheless essential to confront in pursuit of justice" (Rothberg 2019: 2).

The video-installation of Dominika Macocha (2016) is a good example that amplifies the reference to the Lanzmann tradition of visualizing post-Holocaust sites and that exemplifies the urge to "confront implication". Her work is named after the geographical coordinates of three places to be discussed in the work (50°31'29.7"N, 22°46'39.1"E; 50°30'56.2"N, 22°46'01.0"E; 50°30'41.0"N, 22°45'49.5"E). A part of her work is a twenty-minute film presenting absolutely breath-taking, ostentatiously aesthetic "post-card" shots of the Solska Forest Landscape Park near Biłgoraj in the north-east part of Poland, filmed in the same manner as many of the cadres we saw in *Shoah*: in beautiful weather, in full light, fusing long shots or medium-long shots and aerial shots. Witness testimonies reveal a vague legend – about some previous buildings of a church that was flooded by water, and of an old tavern.

Figure 2. Dominika Macocha, a frame from video work 50°31'29.7"N, 22°46'39.1"E; 50°30'56.2"N, 22°46'01.0"E; 50°30'41.0"N, 22°45'49.5"E available courtesy of the artist.

It turns out it is a cover for the historically rather recent event of an attack on a bunker where Jews were hiding towards the end of the war (around twenty people were murdered). Macocha's work explicitly states something that is only implied in Lanzmann's *Shoah*: the forest – a natural environment that keeps mum, obscures, destroys evidence of crimes – it works in a similar way to the humans who would like to hush up the stories incriminating them in the Holocaust.

The *terrain* of crime

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, with a return of international artist-researchers to Poland, a new strategy began

to emerge. Ulrich Baer, in his *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (2005) points to a new poetics for the representation of landscapes of post-violence sites. Photographers like Dirk Reinartz (*Totenstill* 1994) or Mikael Levin (*War Story* 1997) abandon the "wide spectacle" of a landscape and draw our gaze to the peripheries of camps. They reduce the distance between the observer and the object, and do not look for the picturesque cadres. According to Baer's diagnosis, "The landscape's imagined depth – where experience, imagination, and memory may be contained – vanishes into utterly abstracted and inhospitable *terrain* [emphasis ours]" (Baer 2005: 41). The viewer becomes aware of the fact that they have lost distance and found themselves in an "inhospitable", repulsive place. The visual turn from *scenery* that is remote from the observer to the *terrain* that surrounds them coincides, it is worth noting, with the shift in cognitive conceptions of the landscape offered by social scientists. In the early 1990s, the geographer Kenneth R. Olwig and the anthropologist Tim Ingold published articles recommending substantial, action-oriented and active conception of landscape as a real being and not a representation (Ingold 1993; Olwig 1996).

The convention described above, of presenting a landscape as a *terrain*, clearly dominates the strategies of artists commenting on the ontology of non-sites of memory. Limiting the shot, filling it with disconcerting elements, the reduction of distance, introducing the point of view into the observed scene, the cognitive disorientation arising from the overload of uncommunicating elements and a peculiar vertigo to the point of fainting (the consternation brought on by removing a stabile horizontal line) – all this leads to the paradoxical effect of including the observer in a post-violence site (which they cannot now escape from). An example of one of the first Polish works investigating *terrains* of non-sites of memory was the series *Kawałek ziemi* (*A Piece of Land*) by Andrzej Kramarz, from 2009. The video, with its almost motionless shot of a clearing in Ukraine (Kiryłówka) and a set of nine large-format photographs, presented the sites of German, Ukrainian and Polish war crimes.

Figure 3. Andrzej Kramarz, *Kawałek ziemi [A Piece of Land]*, 2009, Stefkowa. Available courtesy of the author.

Looking down – forensic analysis

The process of limiting one's view and focusing on the *terrain*, drawing near to the uncommemorated site up to the point of entering into its sphere of influence and encroaching its borders, *looking down* at the *ground* with a bowed head and *looking out* for evidence introduces a new subject investigating the site of a mass crime. In the classical landscape, the observer is typically distanced, unmoved, rational, dominating and authoritative. Photographs taken at non-sites of memory often reveal someone who is active, searching, who seeks the *truth* about the past. The artist/researcher is, in this case, more of an archaeologist and investigator than connoisseur or consumer (of a *landscape*), or a surprised and disoriented wanderer (entering a *terrain*), who has suddenly found themselves in an inhospitable place. This attentive researcher activates the "archaeological gaze," penetrating seemingly empty spaces ("where there is nothing to see") in comparative effort to look for what remains and what had been lost (Didi-Huberman 2017: 66). Turning one's attention or lens towards the ground is a gesture opening up a third, today an increasingly common tendency in visualizing sites of uncommemorated violence – one whereby the landscape is neither a *view* nor a *terrain*, but the *scene of a crime* committed on victims of mass violence. And finding oneself in such a place means taking on a responsibility.

"What does it mean to stand in the place of death?" This question was posed in Izbica, Albania, a village where 120 Kosovan Albanians were killed in 1999. The question is asked by the narrator of the film *Material Witness* (2014), directed by Susan Schuppli, a British artist, a member of the group Forensic Architecture (Forensic Architecture 2014).[3] At the site of the crime, at first sight, there is nothing to see – as the narrator admits. "No trace effects, no signs of struggle, no visible residue, to alert us to what transpired". Yet, the one who has come here "knows that brutal things have taken place here". So the film-maker looks for "the right way of looking", a "recalibration" of the tools of recording, so as to be able to, finally, "decode the semiotics of landscapes, in which the processes of fertile growth dynamically reprogram the environments and remove history". [4] The investigative

3 For the research results of the project, see: *Forensis. The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. Forensic Architecture, Sternberg Press and Forensic Architecture, Berlin 2014. The webpage of the project (grant ERC): https://forensic-architecture.org/ (accessed: 10.08.2019).

4 Quoted from the soundtrack of the film at 1:00 minute into the film. See: http://susanschuppli.com/exhibition/material-witness-2/ (accessed: 10.08.2019).

practice includes, for instance, looking for environmental signs (Sendyka 2017) – severed tree-tops, stained low-lying vegetation, the disfigured shape of the terrain and soil mixed with remains. In addition, technical images are also used: there are machines which "saw what happened on those slopes:" satellites, video-cameras, phones. In contrast to the previously mentioned projects, here non-human witnesses are summoned to bear witness – plants, earth, amateur recordings, electromagnetic wave recordings, images from laser meters. Technologies effectively oppose the power of a landscape to swallow up the past – a landscape which stands accused of colluding with perpetrators.

From a forensic, investigative or criminologist perspective, the environment can cooperate with the detective: the landscape is a source of evidence, crucial to the building of a case (Schuppli 2020). This perspective eludes traditional ways of approaching the landscape: the passive experience of landscape as a mere view and the active experience of a scene of action. This ties together the perspectives of human and non-human actors, emphasizing "informed materiality" (Isabelle Stengers term), i.e. the properties of things or of a technological record to recreate the details of genocide (Forensic Architecture 2014; Dziuban 2017; Weizman 2017). The landscape is here transformed into an image that acts cognitively, is capable of generating data.

The concept of "forensic landscape" emerged after 2000, stimulated by the experience of conflict archaeologists in their search for victims and evidence of genocide in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Hanson 2004; Cox et al. 2008; Cyr 2014). A forensic landscape is "a physical parameter within which a sequence of events is discernible in noted topographical disturbances in and around a burial site" (Cyr 2014: 85). The forensic practice of reading a landscape is characteristic of all artistic projects working with a research team investigating non-sites of memory.

Forensic art and the non-sites of memory

During the course of the project,[5] the team undertook cooperation with four artists: Karolina Grzywnowicz, Angela Henderson, Solomon Nagler and Anna Zagrodzka, as well as two researchers experienced with craftsmanship and various media: Wiesław Bartkowski and Aleksander Schwarz. In one case – Karolina Grzywnowicz – artistic work served as the point of departure for the research work of the team members – providing us with material, guidance and serving as a reference point. In all cases, , the artists produced their own artistic response to the sites investigated by researchers. In what follows, we will present their general approaches.

Figure 4. Karolina Grzywnowicz, *Ground records* – visual note, documentation of a site, 2020. Available courtesy of the author.

Ground records: microscopic examinations

Karolina Grzywnowicz developed a concept for an art installation titled *Ground Records* on the basis of the material gathered in the course of our research at the site of the former camp SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor – a Nazi extermination camp which operated from May 1942 until October 1943 and where around 200,000 Jews were killed in gas chambers (Kuwałek 2014). While the former camp is now in the process of being transformed into a monument and a museum, it has partly functioned as – and its margins still are – a non-site of memory. In her concept for the artwork, Grzywnowicz examines soil from non-sites of memory as a material witness of past violence (Schuppli 2020). In her definition of "material witness", Schuppli refers to entities whose physical properties or technical configuration records evidence of past events to which it can bear witness. In the case of the soil from Sobibór the recording is strikingly precise: as the archeological research showed, the sandy ground has preserved imprints of the camp infrastructure in the form of dark marks against the bright yellow background. There are also traces of the human presence and movement in the area, like the "trodden" – a layer of compressed soil in the place where the prisoners had to stand for a long time, and were they moved between the ramp and the tunnel leading to the gas chambers.

Grzywnowicz focuses on the notion of landscape that keeps "archival records" in its soil and "evidence" of the

5 *Uncommemorated Genocide Sites and Their Impact on Collective Memory, Cultural Identity, Ethical Attitudes and Intercultural Relations in Contemporary Poland* (Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the National Programme for the Development of Humanities, 2016–2020, registration no 2aH 15 0121 83) developed in the Research Center for Memory Cultures, Faculty of Polish Studies, Jagiellonian University. Principal investigator: Roma Sendyka, team members: Katarzyna Grzybowska, Aleksandra Janus, Karina Jarzyńska, Maria Kobielska, Jacek Małczyński, Jakub Muchowski, Łukasz Posłuszny, Kinga Siewior, Mikołaj Smykowski, Katarzyna Suszkiewicz, Aleksandra Szczepan. Site of the project: http://niemiejscapamieci.uj.edu.pl/ (accessed 10.08.2020).

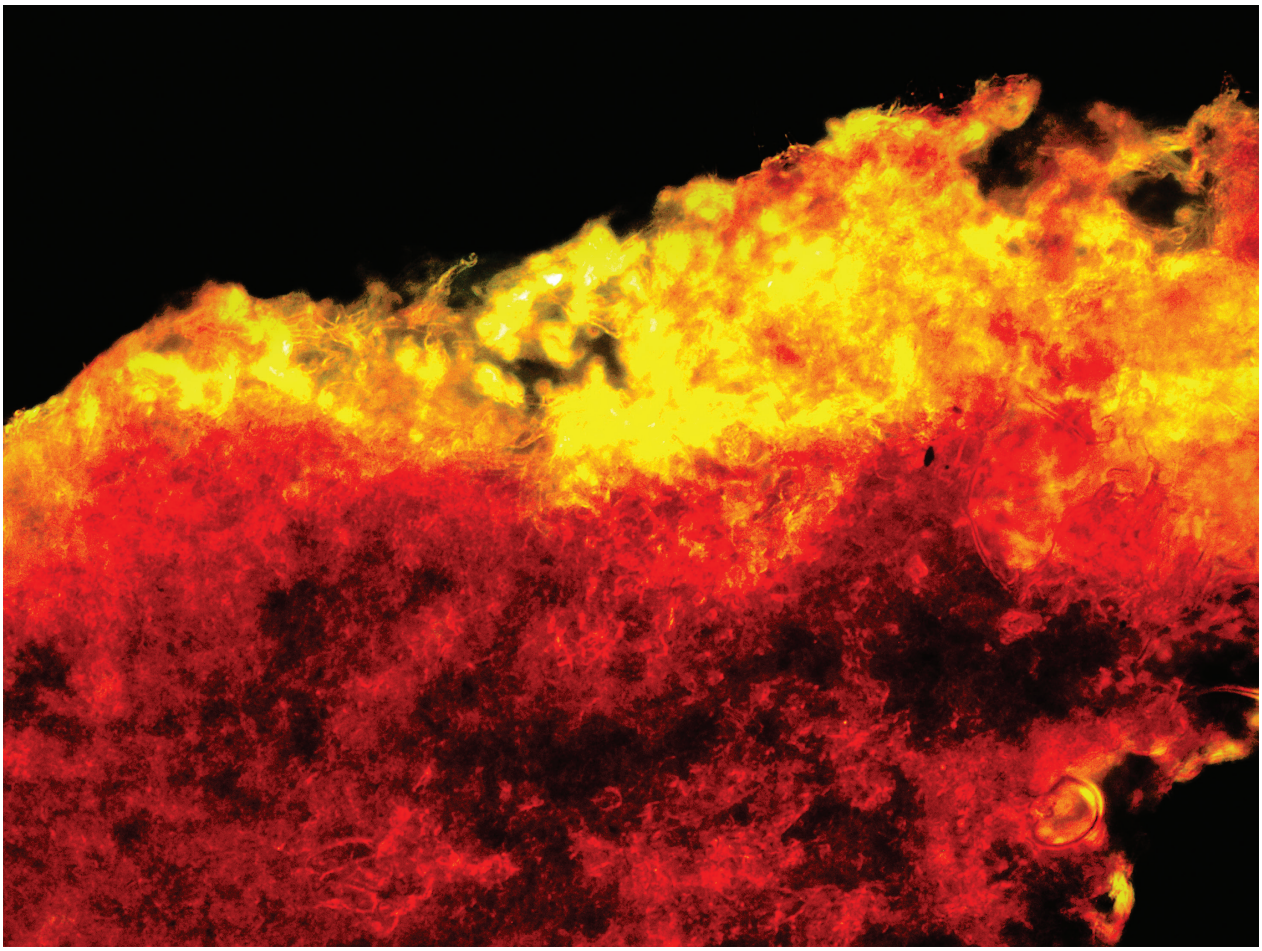

Figure 5. Anna Zagrodzka, *Epicoccum nigrum*, 2014. Available courtesy of the author.

murderous acts that have contaminated it (Pollack 2014). The aim of *Ground Records* is to invite the viewer to look at the ground through a forensic lens and explore it as a living archive – one constantly affected by complex interplays between natural forces and human endeavors.

Anna Zagrodzka is also concerned with the area formerly occupied by the camp in Sobibór, but she has taken a different approach. She has been documenting the post-camp terrain, focusing on the natural succession of living vegetation that takes place in these sites, especially when they are not protected by rigorous conservation procedures. As a biologist with laboratory training and experience, Zagrodzka visually documented the site of the former Nazi camp Konzentrationslager Stutthof in northern Poland which has been overgrown by nature, with the aid of photography and microscopic analysis as well as photographic documentation of the grounds. She has been also working for six years on the project *Alternaria alternata*, focused on the molds – from which the project's title comes from – that appear in the sites of former camps, especially in those parts where the infrastructure has been preserved (in Auschwitz-Birkenau or Stutthoff).

In Sobibór, Anna Zagrodzka has concentrated on documenting the poorly visible yet still extant traces of the camp in an area that looks empty, like a run-of-the-mill forest to the untrained eye. She has also traced them outside the grounds of the new museum project, in two locations in the strip of marsh surrounding the former camp from the north and the west, where human remains were identified by the Rabbinical Commission for Jewish Cemeteries (RCC) – an entity supervised by the office of the Chief Rabbi of Poland which is responsible for Jewish burial sites in Poland – and the Zapomniane ("Forgotten") Foundation – an organization founded by members of RCC that deals with the burial sites of the Holocaust victims.[6] In a similar way to her earlier work, Zagrodzka searched for details here, concentrating on how traces of human interference are exposed to the forces of nature and the passage of time. In these particular sites, the remains of the SS-Sonderkommando Sobibór were transported by prospectors for Jewish gold to a marsh in order to be sifted (Reszka 2019). What the artist is trying to bring to the surface is the presence of the residues of the past in what seems to be just another forest. By zooming in – sometimes using microscopic images, sometimes, like in Sobibór, just by focusing on details – she brings to light the persistence of material witnesses.

6 See: https://zapomniane.org/en/ (accessed: 10.08.2016).

Figure 6. Aleksandra Janus, Solomon Nagler, Aleksander Schwarz, *First Person Cartography*, 2019. Available courtesy of the authors.

Speculative cartographies: forensic gaze

Both Grzywnowicz and Zagrodzka represent the strategy of narrowing the field of vision, limiting the view, turning toward the earth, to details. If the landscape is a "crime scene" – being approached as such by application of forensic methods – it requires a gaze that seeks for clues that can become evidence – the forensic gaze (Renshaw 2017; Weizman 2017). This attitude sees landscape as containing data that allow to detect violence that might be "at the threshold of detectability" (Weizman 2017: 13).[7] When research is conducted in locations where the remains of Jewish victims of the Holocaust might be buried, the investigation may be limited by the Jewish religious law (halakha), which forbids any interference with the burial site.[8] In such locations the traditional tools of archaeology are excluded and instead, non-invasive archaeology may be used, including such methods as analysis of satellite photography and archival aerial photos, topographical analysis with the use of LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) and geophysical tools (like georadar) that facilitate the identification of anomalies located under the surface of the soil (Sturdy Colls 2015). This new approach has been an inspiration for two Canadian artists – Angela Henderson and Solomon Nagler who initiated the project called *Kartografie spekulatywne* (*Speculative Cartographies*).[9] In cooperation with Wiesław Bartkowski, a creative coder and media artist, Aleksander Schwarz of the RCC and Zapomniane Foundations, and Aleksandra Janus, the group focused on the search for possible forms for artistic practice in the landscape of non-sites of memory.

Figure 7. Wiesław Bartkowski, Angerla Henderson, Aleksander Schwarz, *Compass*, 2019. Photo: Aleksander Schwarz. Available courtesy of the authors.

The *Speculative Cartographies* team worked in in five locations in southern and eastern Poland. In Głodno, Pikule, Polichna, Radecznica and Franciszków Stary RCC and Zapomniane Foundation identified uncommemorated sites of the burial of Jewish Holocaust victims.[10] When working in the field, the team sought new ways to speak about non-sites of memory, via alternative forms of mapping, recording the natural environment present there and communicating experiences related to those sites. One of those strategies was video material that was created by using an analogue camera and a 16 mm tape. The short video film made by the artists is a record of all the possible routes leading to each of the five places visited along with all the objects that were potential points of reference. The video also records the kinds of plants growing there and other topographical features that are not only visible as images but as a reflection of the way and the tempo of the person holding the camera. The film also conveys the sense that the reference points cannot be distinguished easily – one often gets lost looking for the right way, loses his/her track, confusing between forest paths.

This experience of confusion and uncertainty served as an inspiration for another object created as part of the *Speculative Cartographies* project. It was constructed with the use of a working compass and was designed to be played with by the audience in the exhibition space. The compass was deliberately programmed to respond to the smallest movements, so it enhanced the elusiveness of visitors' experiences: in contrast to a real compass for navigation, this object is supposed to recreate the sense of being *lost* and that sense of uncertainty as to what it is actually supposed to be showing, evoking

7 *Ibidem*.

8 As it is stated in the Jerusalem Talmud, *It is forbidden to move the dead and their bones from the place where they rest*, Jerusalem Talmud, Moed Katan 2:4.

9 The results of the project were first presented at the Warsaw Biennale in July 2019.

10 The Rabbinical Commission and the Foundation were represented by Aleksander Schwarz, who combined the roles of researcher, photographer, filmmaker and craftsman.

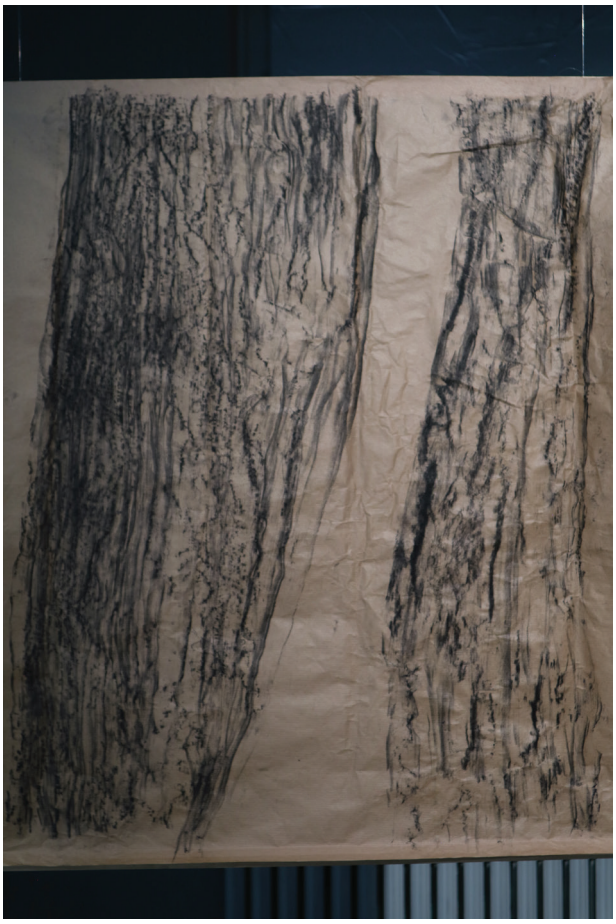

Figure 8. Angela Henderson, untitled, 2019. Photo: Aleksander Schwarz. Available courtesy of the authors.

the fundamental experience of those researching the sites in question.[11]

Angela Henderson carried out the documentation of trees growing in the five sites visited by the *Speculative Cartographies* team. In each site, she identified trees which were old enough to have been present during the moment of killing (Małczyński 2010). A fragment of bark from each tree was documented with the technique of frottage. The arrangement of trees was mapped out using the simplest and oldest cartographical method – a long piece of string. The string was used to measure the diameters of trees, the distances between them and the distance to the burial site. In this way, alternative maps of these areas were created and brought to the gallery space in the form of sculptures and an analog data visualization, using the same pieces of string and preserving the real distances.

In each of the five places visited, the vegetation was different, depending on the positioning of plants, solar radiation, and types of soil. The team documented the vegetation in a specific way: plants were first soaked in bio-photographic fluid (an organic solution that was prepared on site), then laid out on film and subjected to the operation of the natural light present, leading to effects of varying intensity and spectra of colors. This process uses the chemical structure of the plants themselves, which "imprint" themselves at the surface of the film they touch under the influence of the bio-photographic fluid. The films were then prepared for a presentation in the form of transparent print-outs, accompanied by a description of the corresponding location.

Figure 9. Angela Henderson, untitled, 2019. Photo: Aleksander Schwarz. Available courtesy of the authors.

Among the works from the *Speculative Cartographies* project there were also objects inspired by images made while carrying out non-invasive research and using the idea of navigation and technologies for locating objects in space. In the first case, the objects of interest were echograms – images generated by *ground-penetrating radar*, or GPR. The object prepared by the *Cartographies* team presented reworked images from four echograms obtained during the geophysical research in Franciszków Stary. Picture-echograms were graphically simplified and then replicated on perspex. Then these perspex cards were laid out in a way corresponding to the real-life layout (subsequent profiles in the field research were separated by around a meter). The object invites the viewer to follow the changes and irregularities of the subsequent transparent echograms, thereby adopting the research and forensic gaze.

Conclusions

The artists' attention to the ground, narrowing the field of vision, reaching down low, underfoot, following tracks – this can all be viewed as evidence of forensic sensitivity. Artists working in the field have a particular ability to spot what defies symbolization. By applying their own tools to understand these phenomena, artists help researchers

11 Thanks to Wiesław Bartkowski, the co-author of the object, there was another important context for this object: an analysis of the influence of the spread of geolocational devices over the capability of people to find out where they are and move around autonomously.

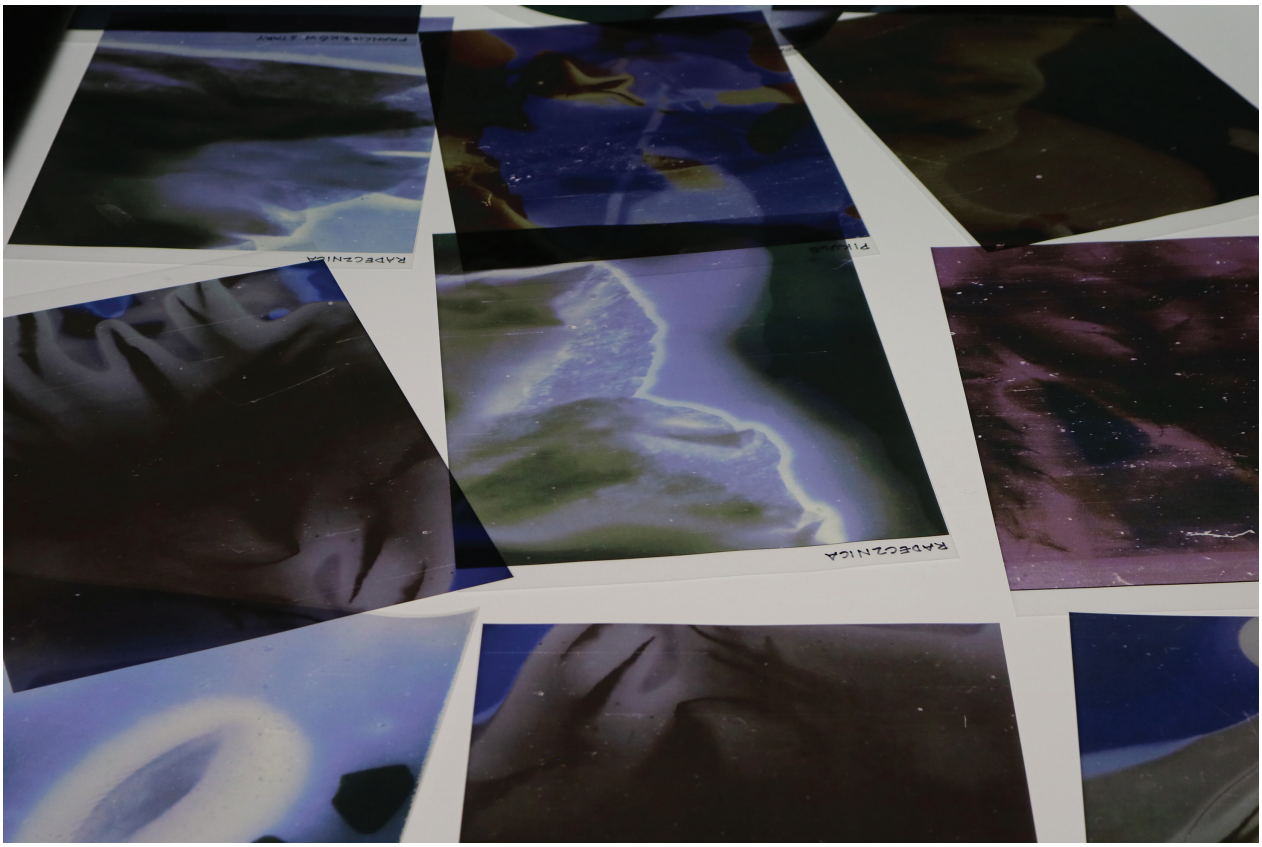

Figure 10. Solomon Nagler, untitled, 2019. Photo: Aleksander Schwarz. Available courtesy of the authors.

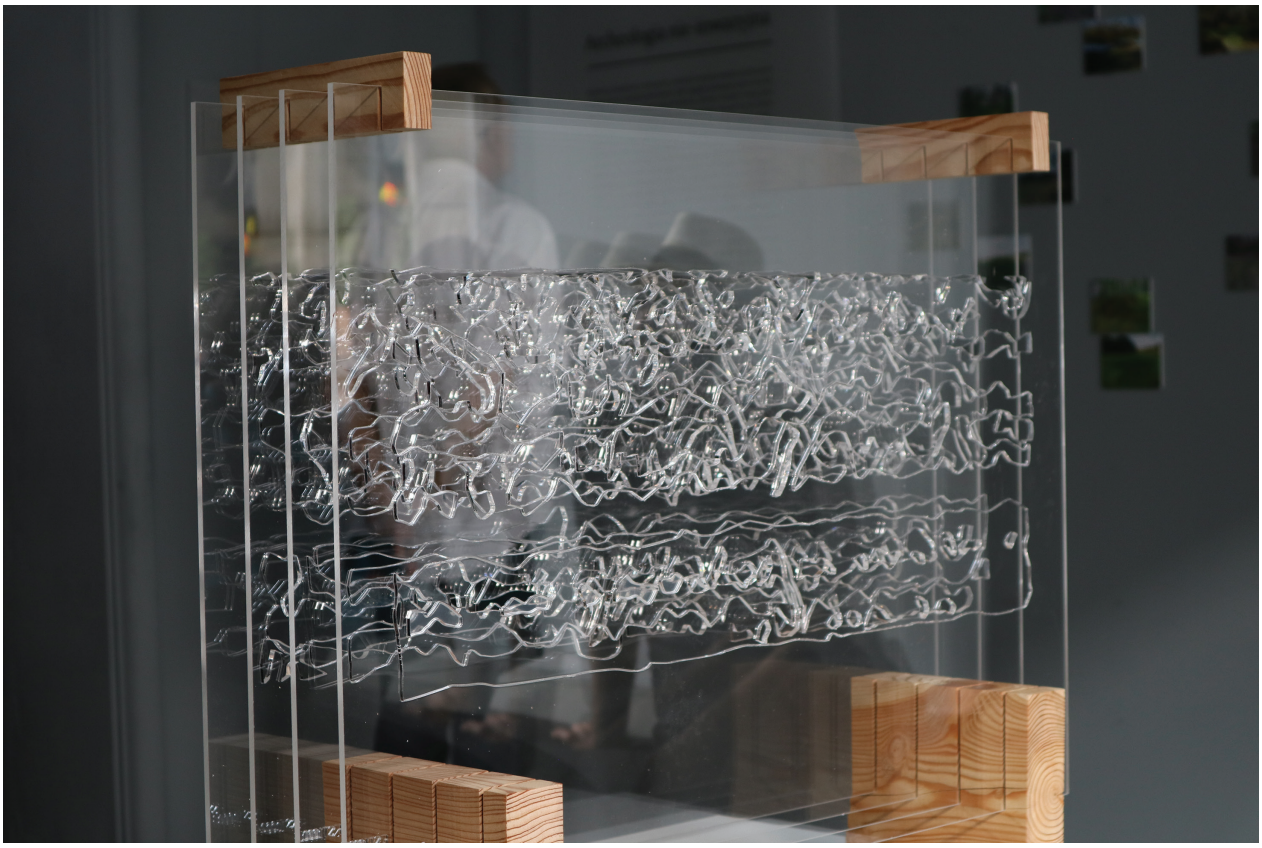

Figure 11. Wiesław Bartkowski, Aleksander Schwarz, untitled, 2019. Photo: Aleksander Schwarz. Available courtesy of the authors.

gain access to this unique, non-verbal, mediated and local knowledge. To perceive this is of the essence to understand processes of remembering which have happened and continue to happen in relation to non-sites of memory, in contrast to globalized discourses on memory.

The images of non-sites of memory, as presented above, develop our understanding of the position of the observer most of all, that third person on the scene – the bystander, or a belated post-bystander, who comes many decades later and needs to form an alliance with the technology and the environment to establish what happened in criminal events. Artist interventions contribute to the recent trend of the growing importance of the figure of the "bystander" (Morina and Thijn 2018). They join efforts to transgress the purely functional typology which distinguished between perpetrators, victims, and bystanders which was based on the forms of action taken by them. Putting "bystanders" at the center of attention, they help to repose and reinvigorate questions about current responsibilities and challenges related to uncommemorated sites.

In many ways, the contemporary work of intervention into the circumstances of abandoned and dispersed sites of violence is a particular kind of "bystander art". We would like to understand it – based on the evidence presented above – as a variant of the "art of witness" (Lehrer and Sendyka 2019): characterized by a conscious motivation to testify about a past crime or act of violation of human rights and clearly communicating this through artistic means. In the same way, images – examples of which are discussed above – are a unique and rich testimonial resource. They facilitate understanding about the way of seeing the act of violence from a temporal distance – but without analogous geographical shifts. The analysis of these representations is one way of understanding the fundamental question: "What does it mean to stand in the place of death?"

Transl. by Patrick Trompiz

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