

***Holocaust Memorials in Budapest, Hungary, 1987-2010:
Through the words of the memorial artists***

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes how Budapest, Hungary represents the Holocaust through a selection of its most significant memorials and monuments, derived from the oral testimonies of the memorial artists who created them. The artists featured in this thesis belong to two groups: Those who lived through and experienced aspects of WWII as it unfolded in Hungary and those born after—the so-called “postmemory” generation—who came to know the event vicariously through the stories of others, as well as the media. This thesis shows how the two generations interpret the Hungarian Holocaust, and how those interpretations are reflected in their works of art. In large part, the inspiration behind this thesis was born out of Tim Cole’s *Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory*, in which he uses Budapest, Hungary, as a case study for Holocaust memorials erected between 1945 and 1995. His research, derived from personal observation and various media sources was conducted in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, and suggests that the city’s memorials lack Jewish specificity and are ill-placed, in hidden or inappropriate locations. This thesis seeks to update Cole’s findings, reviewing specifically memorials erected from 1987 to 2010, to evaluate if these characteristics still exist within the city’s Holocaust commemoration. But more importantly, it seeks to add another layer of meaning to his research through the words of the commemoration artists themselves.

Acknowledgments

Without the support and expertise of a special group of people, the contents of this thesis would not exist. I would like to thank my interpreter, Dániel Nagy, for taking on this project with great enthusiasm. Through him, I was able to communicate with some of Hungary's most acclaimed public artists. After our interviews, we spent many hours together transcribing recordings and double-checking the meanings of words as they translate from Hungarian to English. Our intention was to keep the personality and meaning of the interviewee's words as pure as possible. We believe we accomplished that goal.

I am grateful to the professors of CEU's Jewish Studies department— Michael L. Miller, Carsten Wilke, and András Kovács —for welcoming me into their offices to discuss various aspects of the Hungarian Holocaust. Also, Professor Miklos Lojko, who gave up a Sunday to take me on a guided tour through Kozma Street Jewish Cemetery, located just outside Budapest proper.

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And finally, I would like to acknowledge the four artists and the architect I interviewed for this project—Anna Stein, Gyula Pauer, Tamás Szabó, Imre Varga, and István Mányi—who allowed me to question them about their work and their personal lives. I would also like to include Gyorgy Vamos, founder of the *Glass House* memorial room in Budapest, for sharing his personal experience of living as a child in the Jewish ghetto in 1944–45, and what life was like for him after the liberation.

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Introduction

Thousands of Holocaust memorials exist throughout the world.¹ They vary from site to site, reflecting how a given society views the murder of 6 million European Jews at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. In some places, such as Budapest, they may also reflect changing political ideologies and attitudes toward the event. This thesis will analyze how Budapest represents the Holocaust through a selection of its most significant memorials and monuments, and the artists who created them. While the aim of this thesis is to analyze Holocaust commemoration—and not the event itself—it is first necessary to frame the subject within the history of the Hungarian Holocaust.

Under Regent Miklós Horthy's conservative authoritarian regime years, the Jews of Hungary were relatively safe throughout most of the Second World War. On March 19, 1944, however, the German SS entered Budapest and a month later, on April 16—with the help of Hungarian authorities, police and gendarmerie—undertook the destruction of Europe's last relatively intact Jewish community, Hungarian Jews, numbering 825,000.² Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum³ cites the Hungarian Holocaust as particularly haunting because, by the spring of 1944, the rest of European Jewry had already been murdered. The Allied leaders were receiving valid information on what was happening at the death camps, and to make it more alarming, it was clear that Germany would lose the war—it was only a matter of time—indicating that, while

¹ James Edward Young. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) ix.

² This number includes some 100,000 converts identified as Jews under the racial laws implemented in the late 1930s.

³ *The Nazis' Last Victims*. Ed. by Randolph L. Braham with Scott Miller. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998) 10–17.

the war was predictably coming to an end, the quest to destroy Europe's remaining Jewish population continued.⁴

"It was precisely because of this that the Germans and their Hungarian accomplices decided to win at least the war against the Jews," writes Randolph L. Braham. Indeed, the SS commandos were amazed with the enthusiasm of their Hungarian counterparts. Braham writes that,

With Horthy still at the helm, providing the symbol of national sovereignty, the Hungarian police, gendarmerie, and civil service collaborated with the SS in the anti-Jewish drive, performed with a routine and efficiency that impressed even the Germans. Within less than two months—from late March to mid-May, 1944—the Hungarian authorities, acting in conjunction with their Nazi 'advisors,' completed the first phase of the anti-Jewish drive: the Jews were isolated, marked, robbed of all their possessions, and placed into ghettos. During the next two months, they were subjected to the most barbaric and speedy deportation and extermination program of the war.⁵

Horthy, however, halted deportations in early July,⁶ and, in so doing, essentially kept the Jewish community of Budapest somewhat intact, albeit gathered for easy deportation within yellow-starred houses⁷ and ghettos throughout the city.⁸ It was also around this time that the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and the Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz, along with a number of other foreign agents, converged on Budapest in an attempt to save the many lives in jeopardy. It

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Randolph L. Braham. "The Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust." *East European Quarterly*. (Vol. 33, Issue 4. 1999) 411.

⁶ Horthy tried to force the Germans out of Hungary altogether, as he alluded in a nationwide radio address. The Germans, however, kidnapped his son, thereby coercing Horthy to forfeit his position in Hungarian politics.

⁷ On May 3, 1944, Budapest Jews were ordered to move out of their homes and into designated buildings marked with a yellow star. Out of the city's 36,000 apartment houses, 2,681 were designated as "yellow-starred" houses. In the summer of 1944, an estimated 250,000-280,000 Jews lived in Budapest, about 1 out of every 4 people. Patai, Raphael. *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996) 578.

⁸ Yellow-starred apartment houses were strategically placed throughout the city in hopes that the Allies would avoid bombing those areas. Jews were essentially being used as "human shields". Tim Cole, *Holocaust City*. (New York: Routledge, 2000) 124.

should be noted that a large number of local Hungarians also joined in efforts to save Jews from both German and Hungarian threats, as well.

By October 15th, 1944, the Nazi leadership began to suspect that Horthy might switch allegiance to the Allies. Therefore, before ousting him out of power, the occupying German forces pressured him to install as prime minister Ferenc Szálas, the leader of the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross movement.⁹ Later that same month, Himmler ordered a halt on the mass murder of Jews,¹⁰ just as the Arrow Cross militia began routinely entering yellow-starred buildings, and massacring and plundering the Jews that lived in them.¹¹ They also shot 10-15,000 of Budapest's Jews into the Danube. Thousands more died of starvation and lack of medical care within the confines of the overpopulated ghettos, strategically placed throughout the city using the Jews as human shields against Allied carpet bombing.

By the end of the war, about 80 percent of the Hungarian-Jewish population was dead, with the vast majority of survivors left in Budapest, numbering now about 119,000 survivors (less than half of the city's estimated population of 250,000-280,000 a year previously.)¹² In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet liberation, these survivors commemorated the event in early memorials, but by 1948, with Soviet rule firmly in place, all forms of Holocaust commemoration

⁹ Szálas' did not share the Nazis' concept of an inferior or superior race. He merely hated Jews, and believed they were part of a worldwide conspiracy: Braham, *The Nazis' Last Victims*, 11-17.

¹⁰ Himmler ordered a halt to the mass murder of Jews. Germany, near the end of the war, was interested in only "able-bodied" Jews they could put to work, hence the halt in deportations and the forced marches out of the cities. Ibid.

¹¹ Andrea Pető, "Privatized Memory?" The Story of Erecting the First Holocaust Memorial in Budapest", in: Nanci Adler et al. (eds.), *Memories of Mass Repression: Narrating Life Stories in the Aftermath of Atrocity* (New Brunswick, London, Transaction Publishers, 2009) 157-174.

¹² Patai computes the Jewish population by including the 100,000 Jewish-Christian converts, who under the era's racist Jewish laws were considered Jewish: Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology*. 590.

came to an abrupt halt. The following pages intend to explain this in greater detail, leading up to the “second wave” of Holocaust commemoration that began shortly before the fall of communism in 1989.

In large part, the inspiration behind this thesis comes from reading Tim Cole’s *Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory*, in which he uses Budapest, Hungary, as a case study for Holocaust memorials erected between 1945 and 1995. “Constructing a memorial is a conscious act of choosing to remember certain people and events, and by implication, choosing not to remember other people and events,” he writes. “[T]hat conscious act is a ‘political’ one, ‘political’ in the sense that it is about power over memory, power over the past, and power over the present.”¹³ This implies that art and politics are not mutually exclusive, particularly when it comes to shaping collective memory.

Cole conducted his research for the study in the mid-1990s, updating and slightly changing the last chapter in his 2003 book, *Holocaust City*, which covered the ghettoization of Budapest during the Hungarian Holocaust.¹⁴ “My interest was mainly in working with landscape study, i.e., reading the memorials in their spatial context,” writes Cole in a recent email exchange with me. Cole’s research consisted of reviewing press materials and personally reviewing each memorial for its relevance, its visibility, as well as its “strategy” of remembrance, asking the question which actor is being remembered: the victim, the perpetrator, the bystander, or the liberator? He writes that the Holocaust memorials of Budapest are typically hidden, that “a

¹³ Tim Cole. “Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory,” *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*. ed. Shelley Hornstein, Florence Jacobowitz and Moshe Lazar. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) 272-287.

¹⁴ Cole’s update included the 1999 installation of a replica statue called *The Snake Killer*, which commemorated the Swiss diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. The original statue was torn down by the newly occupying Soviet regime in April 1949, on the morning of its scheduled public unveiling.

number of competing (and potentially conflicting) priorities may determine the physical location of Holocaust memorials, ranging from the pragmatic (ownership) through a concern with visibility (or hidden-ness).”¹⁵ Cole also argues that they tend to pay more attention to the Soviet liberators rather than the Jewish victims.¹⁶ I contend that while this may have been true 15 years ago in the mid-1990s, it is no longer so today, as the city has made—and continues to make—great efforts to distance itself from its Soviet past, aggressively changing even the Soviet-inspired names of streets and other public places. Likewise, this anti-Soviet attitude is reflected in all post-1989 memorials, with a move away from the “Soviet liberator” message of the late-1940s, and replaced in the late-1980s and beyond with the “righteous gentile” message of the Western rescuers, Raoul Wallenberg and Carl Lutz.¹⁷

Therefore, my intention herein will be to update the groundwork that Cole already laid in the 1990s, with a concentration on memorials and monuments erected between 1987 and 2010. My research follows the main questions: Where are the memorials located and why? To what extent do they deal with the crimes of Holocaust, per se? Do they communicate the loss of life, the absence of the Jews, or celebrate humanity and liberation? In other words, what aspects of the Holocaust are highlighted or neglected in the city’s memorials? My approach to the topic is, to a certain degree, not unlike Cole’s, but it does diverge.

Unlike Cole, my emphasis taps into the perspective of the memorial artists, so that they too can weigh in on an ongoing dialogue that often includes their work, but not their voice. My

¹⁵ Cole, *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, 274.

¹⁶ Cole, *Holocaust City*, 227

¹⁷ Cole does acknowledge that Imre Vara’s *Second Wallenberg Statue* “sought to reverse the Soviet erasure of Wallenberg’s activities”: Cole, *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, 281.

research took me into the studios, galleries, and homes of some of Hungary's most prominent artists: Anna Stein, Gyula Pauer, Tamás Szabó, Imre Varga, György Vámos, and István Mányi to hear their stories.¹⁸

With the aid of my interpreter, Dániel Nagy, I interviewed them about their work and about their vision for commemorating the Holocaust in their city. These interviews, transcribed into English with the help of my interpreter, are the focus of my analysis, in which I am helped by a vast body of English-language secondary literature and online media sources on the theory and practice of memory, and the history of Holocaust commemoration in Hungary, Europe, North America and elsewhere.

Chapter one reviews the theory and practice of collective memory and how it pertains to Holocaust memory. It examines why people erect memorials and monuments, and the difference between the two. This chapter introduces the theories of James Young through his numerous books, focusing particular emphasis on *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, which covers the theory of Holocaust commemoration, and how Holocaust places become places of memory. Also in this chapter, I will touch on some of the aspects of Holocaust survivor silence, experienced worldwide shortly after the first memorials of the late 1940s were erected.

The second chapter explains the methodology I used in my research. It reviews a number of the theories of oral history and their links to social history, as well as reiterates the criteria for

¹⁸ The interview with Anna Stein was conducted by telephone.

examining each memorial, singling out the methodological tools I have used systematically in my work.

The third chapter, titled “Holocaust memorials and the artists who created them,” contains the bulk of my research. Here, within five narratives, I combine the stories of four artists and one architect with my analysis, which at times will elaborate on Cole’s criticisms, offering further confirmation to his argument. At other times, I will offer a different point of view. It is my hope that the research will add, by way of the artists, another dimension to the debate, as well as make the topic more approachable. And while this paper does not cover all the issues of the political debate—I interviewed no politicians—elements of it are apparent within my research.

1. Theory and Practice of Memory

1.1 Memory, Collective Memory, and Holocaust Memory

The question of memory is by no means a new one; its discourse in historiography, however, is relatively recent. In the 1970s, after the German scholar Jan Assmann reintroduced Maurice Halbwachs' ideas on "collective memory" and "social frameworks of memory,"¹⁹ interest in memory studies exploded, particularly among French scholars. Others using the term include the German historian Marc Bloch and the art historian Aby Warburg, who spoke of social memory to analyze artworks as repositories of history.²⁰ In the interest of brevity, I have limited myself here to two fundamental concepts that are central to my work: Halbwachs' "social frameworks of memory theory" and Pierre Nora's "sites of memory".

For Halbwachs, history and collective memory are at odds with each other. His theory states that history attempts to record past events objectively for the purpose of preservation. Conversely, collective memory is concerned with past traditions and memories that can shape the present.²¹ In other words, there is only one history and a number of collective memories. Inasmuch as public art—such as memorials and monuments—helps form national identity, it is by and large framed around a politically accepted collective memory. As noted by John R. Gilles, modern memory is born not just from the sense of a break with the past, but from an

19 Halbwachs himself was a victim of the Holocaust, deported by the Nazis to the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he died on March 16, 1945.

²⁰ Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24.1, 1998.

²¹ Siobhan Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001) 15.

intense awareness of the conflicting representations of the past and the effort of each group to make its version the basis of national or other group identity.²²

Typical of collective memory, Holocaust memory contains several narratives. First, are the “witnesses,” i.e., the survivors, who relay their personal experiences, and speak as best they can for the 11 million murdered victims (6 million Jews and 5 million others) who cannot speak for themselves. Then there are the perpetrators, the accomplices, the resisters, and the bystanders, and those who were elsewhere, such as the war front. Another viewpoint becoming more and more pronounced are those “born after,” those who interpret the events through survivor stories and the media –shaping into different groups depending on what stories and media they ascribe to.

Not every place, peoples, or nations affected by Nazi Germany experienced the Holocaust in exactly the same way either. Yet, no matter how the various regions interpret the event, by and large, the Holocaust narrative tends to be represented throughout the globe in a similar fashion: it depicts the Nazis as evil and the Jews as victims. Similarly, the word “Auschwitz” is a word most people immediately identify with “evil” activities. While the events are remembered in different ways in different places, the Holocaust has also entered what I call the global collective memory, where, with the exception of a few extremist groups, most aspects of the events are simply not disputed.

Nora’s “site of memory” theory states that the purpose of memorials and monuments is to express a community’s will to remember, by blocking the process of forgetting, stopping time,

²² As quoted by Ilan Avisar, “Holocaust Meetings And the Politics of Collective Memory,” *Thinking about the Holocaust After Half a Century*. Ed. by Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 39.

and materializing the immaterial. For him, the place of memory is a complex interplay between the past and the present.²³ Sometimes a site of memory is linked with a site of history, such as the memorials found at former concentration camps. Without the will to remember, writes Young, such sites of history by themselves would otherwise blend into the landscape, “unsuffused with the meanings and significance created in our visits to them.”²⁴

Like Cole, I discovered in my research that the city of Budapest continues to demonstrate a will to remember the foreign heroes of the Holocaust alongside a will to forget its Jewish specificity. Furthermore, while sites of memory in several instances correspond with the sites of history, there are also several ill-placed memorials, suggesting a determination not necessarily to forget, but to manipulate or downplay the past to satisfy other political goals.

1.2 Interpreting and Commemorating the Holocaust: Berlin, Israel, and Budapest

American art critic Arthur Danko, in his oft-quoted distinction between monuments and memorials wrote: “We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget.”²⁵ Marita Sturken echoes that sentiment in her 1991 essay about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, in which she writes that “monuments” tend to signify victory, while “memorials” refer to life sacrificed for a particular set of values.²⁶ James Young, however, opposes drawing a line between the two, arguing instead that the terms “monument” and “memorial” are, in many cases, synonymous, that the two terms can be, and often are, used interchangeably. He writes:

²³ Martin Evans, and Ken Lunn, “Preface,” *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, Ed. Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997) xvii.

²⁴ Young, *Texture of Meaning*, 119.

²⁵ As quoted by Tim Cole, *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*. 272.

²⁶ Marita Sturken, “The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” *Representations*, No. 35, Special Issue: Monumental Histories (Summer, 1991) 118-142.

The traditional monument (the tombstone) can also be used as a mourning site for lost loved ones, just as memorials have marked past victories. A statue can be a monument to heroism and a memorial to tragic loss; an obelisk can memorialize a nation's birth and memorialize leaders fallen before their prime. Insofar as the same object can perform both functions, there may be nothing intrinsic to historical markers that makes them either a monument or a memorial.²⁷

In dealing with the Hungarian Holocaust and how it is commemorated within public spaces of Budapest, I will, in this thesis, use the term “memorial,” unless the public work of art in question is referencing the so-called “righteous gentile,” in which case, the term “monument” seems to be the most fitting word. Though I do recognize, as Young suggests, there is a blurring between the two terms, particularly in commemorating a figure such as Raoul Wallenberg, who is acknowledged as both a hero in the Hungarian Holocaust (victory over evil), and a victim of the Cold War (loss). In such commemorative works, one must look closely to see the overriding message.²⁸

The task of an artist commemorating the Holocaust is particularly complex, as Young has demonstrated. First, the work must not be redemptive in any fashion. And second, artists of the post-Holocaust generation must ethically represent the experience of the memory-act; this entails finding meaning out of an experience they never knew, through imagining vicariously the horrific details of the event.²⁹ As we shall see in the next chapter, a couple of the memorial artists featured in this thesis did not have to rely so heavily on vicarious memory, as they themselves

²⁷ Young, *Texture of Memory*, 3.

²⁸ Tanja Schult argues that Wallenberg monuments honor the man's deeds and are not meant to commemorate the Holocaust victims; in other words, Wallenberg monuments have been erroneously labeled as Holocaust memorials. Tanja Shult, *A Hero's Many Faces* (Hampshire, England: Macmillian, 2009) 3.

²⁹ James Young. *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 9.

experienced aspects of the event themselves. Even so, a degree of deep reflection and imagination still plays into their work.

We all know the Holocaust had (and is still having) a wide-reaching resonance throughout Europe and much of the world. Naturally, memorials differ between the places people fled from, and the places people fled to – those places outside the events, but commemorating the major human tragedy, such as memorials in New York, Houston and Argentina. When looking at Germany, a perpetrator country, one naturally considers the incredible losses of life taken in the Holocaust; but one must take into account the loss of culture—the writers, musicians, artists, scientists, and inventors who perished, as well as the unfulfilled potential inherent in the absence of their unborn progeny. Philosopher Berel Lang notes that it is important to recognize what would have existed—lived, worked, grown, thrived—had the Holocaust not occurred.³⁰ In this regard, Young argues that “an appropriate memorial design will acknowledge the void left behind and not concentrate on the memory of terror and destruction alone.”³¹ To that end, many European memorials in recent years have been constructed around a theme of absence.

One example, erected in 1991, exists outside Berlin’s Grunewald Train Station, at the entrance of Platform 17, where a long straight wall, about 15 feet tall, acts as a monument to those who were forcibly deported from Berlin to Auschwitz. The creation of Polish artist Karol Broniatowski, the memorial makes the absent visible with hollow human figures set within the cement and moving in the direction of the station.

In 1995, German artist Horst Hoheisel proposed a curious idea for a Holocaust memorial in

³⁰ Berel Lang, “Second-Site,” *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, 26.

³¹ James Young, *At Memory’s Edge*, 198.

Berlin: blow up the Brandenburg Gate, grind its stone into dust, and then sprinkle the remains over its former site. The idea was to destroy something deeply embedded in the national identity, something whose absence could be both seen and felt. In a published interview with *Habitus*, he expounds on the idea:

I felt that the Holocaust memorial in Germany had to be different than any other Holocaust memorial in the world. It could not just be about remembering the six million victims. In Germany it has to deal with the perpetrators. It has to discuss the German role in the event. So the question was: Would the Germans stand the loss of their national symbol, especially right after the reunification? Compared with six million murdered, what is it to destroy some architecture? It's nothing. It's not [even] a metaphor equal to the crime.³²

Naturally, his submission was rejected; the gate proved far too dear to sacrifice. However, the winning entry—Peter Eisenman's *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*—is not much less shocking. Completed in 2005, the memorial covers a full city block (4.7 acres) on prime real estate, in proximity of the *Brandenburg Gate*. The memorial—consisting of 2,711 stelae—appears as a grey and grassless graveyard in the otherwise bustling cityscape, with oversized slabs of cement, shaped as coffins and tombstones. Though appropriately devoid of celebration, the memorial appeared, on a recent visit, to be fully embraced by the local community, with people gathering there as if visiting a city park. Below ground exists a Holocaust information center, where people can learn more about the Nazi atrocities committed against the Jewish people.

The monument has attracted a number of criticisms, one of which is that it contains no Jewish symbols. Yet the title of the memorial—*Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*—makes it very clear who are being commemorated. Additionally, an abundance of signposts situated throughout the city point the direction to the memorial, one ironically enough, but not

³² “A Conversation with Horst Hoheisel,” *Habitus: A Diaspora Journal*. Jan. 13, 2011. <http://habitusmag.com/2011/01/2684/a-conversation-with-horst-hoheisel/>.

incidentally, near Hitler's former WWII underground bunker where he committed suicide. Another criticism is that no other victim group of the Nazis is represented in the information center.³³ There were, as widely known, numerous victim groups in addition to Jews, including Romani, invalids, the mentally ill, Soviet prisoners of war, sexual minorities, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

But that is not to say other victim groups are not recognized throughout Berlin. Across the street from the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* is a memorial for the homosexual victims of the Holocaust. And at the *Neue Wache* memorial, placards in a variety of languages—German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese, to name some—honor the memory of all the victim groups of the Holocaust by naming each group specifically and explaining why they were targeted.³⁴ Also, it honors the victims of WWI and those lives lost during the “totalitarian dictatorship after 1945,” leaving the visitor feeling as if the city or the country is apologizing for the entire 20th century by lumping so many categories of victims into one memorial. Germany's capital city is clearly facing its past, and doing so in a conspicuous manner. Key here is the sense of absence of the victims.

Israel on the other hand remembers life with life. In cooperation with the Jewish National Fund in 1954, the first of what would eventually amount to 6 million trees were planted in the newly formed State of Israel. Located in Upper Galilee and dubbed a “living memorial”, *Martyrs' Forest* now contains 4.5 million pine trees, one for each adult who perished in the

³³ Matthew Schofield. “In Berlin, Holocaust memorial has its critics; Some object to its focus on Jews only,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. May 11, 2005. A03.

³⁴ See Appendix I for the English version in its entirety.

Holocaust, and 1 million cypress for each child who perished.³⁵ The symbolism here is two-fold: remembering, on the one hand, the victims lost in Europe and, on the other, a return to a land where once again the Jewish people can root this memory within a historic homeland.³⁶ Undeniably, Holocaust memory³⁷ is tightly entwined with the formation of Israel, for the sacrifices made in the one allowed for the existence of the other.³⁸

Where memorials in Europe tend to reflect the annihilation and absence of Jews—especially in sites of destruction—Israel integrates the Holocaust within *la longue duree* of Jewish history, as a single event that fits it into 5,000 year history. This is partially evidenced in the 26-foot *Scroll of Fire* monument,³⁹ erected on the forest’s highest hill in 1971.⁴⁰ The monument consists of two stone-carved scrolls depicting bas-relief renderings of Holocaust imagery—resistance fighters, barbed wire, mass death, and the liberation of the camps—alongside portrayals of returning to the historic motherland and cultivating it.

As a country with laws requiring official commemoration of the Holocaust, Israel possesses a vast array of memorials and monuments far too extensive to discuss within the scope of this

³⁵ The number of Jewish children killed in the Holocaust is about 1.5 million. The forest has been an ongoing planting project over the last six decades.

³⁶ Young, *Texture of Memory*, 219-241.

³⁷ The term holocaust derives from the Ancient Greek, originally meaning “burnt offering,” as in animal sacrifice. The term became known among European Jews in the 19th century to describe pogroms and other atrocities. In the 1960s, Holocaust, spelled with an uppercase H, came to represent the mass murder of Europe’s 6 million Jews.

³⁸ The dream of a Jewish state actually began in the late 19th-century. In 1903, Zionists purchased the first 50 parcels of land in, then, Ottoman-ruled Palestine, with land acquisition and immigration continuing throughout the British government’s mandate, though with strict restrictions. Had it not been for the events of WWII, the land would have remained as a British protectorate. *Jewish National Fund*, <http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=history>.

³⁹ The monument was designed by the Polish sculptor Nathan Rapoport, who also designed the famed *Warsaw Ghetto Monument*, unveiled in Warsaw in 1948.

⁴⁰ Young, *Texture of Memory*, 219-241.

thesis. Generally speaking, however, the concepts worth noting are: Martyrs and heroes are remembered equally, some depict a sense of loss (memorials), but many more depict strength (monuments), sending the overarching message, “never again.”

Commemoration in Budapest is different from that of Berlin and Israel, in that it largely concerns itself with remembering the victims of Nazi atrocities while, at the same time and quite in line with several other countries in East Central Europe, seems to avoid facing the fact that many citizens in Hungary were perpetrators themselves. Indeed, if not for the willing participation of the Hungarian government, the Germans would not have been able to carry out their murderous mission so swiftly, killing more than half a million Hungarian-Jews in less than three months.⁴¹ Yet today, from a visitor’s perspective, Hungary positions itself as a German-occupied victim of the Nazi regime.⁴² The reasons for this ongoing misconception of history stem at least partly from four decades of viewing history through the communist prism of fighting fascism. Instead of non-Jewish Hungarians participating in the murder of Jewish Hungarians, the official communist take on history had been fascists were killing anti-fascists, with no distinction as to specific perpetrators or specific victim groups. Pre-existing nationalism and anti-Semitic sentiments only helped to further embed this attitude into the state’s official discourse. The result has been a whitewashing of history, one that excludes a common sense of guilt and neglects a national awareness of responsibility.

⁴¹ Patai writes that the “Hungarian government could have saved most of the Hungarian-Jews, however the Horthy clique was interested only in saving the members of the Jewish financial elite with whom the country had advantageous relations, and welcomed the opportunity to rid the countryside of the “Galacian” Jews” Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 594.

⁴² Erzsébet Fanni Tóth, *Walking the Jewish Past?* (Budapest: Central European University) 2008. 6-9. http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2008/toth_erszebet.pdf.

In his research some 15 years ago, Cole observed that memorials lacked a Jewish specificity, and those few that did were located within Jewish spaces, such as the Dohány Street Synagogue or the Kozma Street Jewish Cemetery. His research, however, fails to mention the *Deportation Memorial Wall* erected in 1947 in Ujpest, or the *Brick Factory Memorial Stone* erected in 1945 on the Buda side, both erected before communist rule was in full control of the state. The former shows depictions of Nazi perpetrators and Jewish victims, and the latter specifically names the Jews as victims in its inscription. Cole's argument on "hidden-ness," that many of the city's Holocaust memorials are mostly hidden out of sight still holds up, though: both memorials are located a distance outside the center of town in areas where few can see them.

One of the earliest examples of anti-fascist inspired Holocaust memorials is found in Pest, on an exterior wall of the Dohány Street Synagogue, where one gate of the former large ghetto once stood. *The Soviet Memorial* plaque was placed here within months of the 1945 liberation. In Hungarian, it reads: *In the Fascist period one of the gates to Budapest ghetto stood here. The liberating Soviet Army broke down the ghetto walls on 18 January 1945.* Cole writes that the plaque's message makes it clear what is remembered here is not the construction and existence of the ghetto and its victims, but the liberation of the ghetto and the Soviet liberators.⁴³ I would add, and my research will eventually show, that the generic language, lacking any Jewish specificity, set a precedent for the city's Holocaust memorials that would last far longer than the country's communist rule.

Until 1986, the last public attempt to commemorate any aspect of the Holocaust was in 1949, with Pál Pátzay's the *Snake Killer*, remembering Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. It stood

⁴³ Cole, *Holocaust City*, 226.

less than a month in St. István Park, located in a 13th District neighborhood where Wallenberg and others had established a number of safe houses. In the early morning hours of April 9th, 1949, on the very day of its official unveiling, Soviet authorities ordered the statue taken down. British writer Bob Dent writes,

The reasons were clearly political. The case of [Raoul Wallenberg] the Swedish diplomat who disappeared from Budapest had by now become something of an international scandal with undertones of the looming Cold War. At the same time, the fact that the statue had been commissioned, erected, and even been designated a date for its official unveiling, indicates that by the spring of 1949 the absolute power of the ruling, Moscow-oriented, Hungarian Workers' Party was still in its early days. Arguably this first Wallenberg Memorial was a victim of the crushing of Hungary's brief, but real, period of postwar coalition government.⁴⁴

The torn-down statue—a nude bronze figure battling a snake covered in swastikas—was, in fact, approved by local authorities before the formal Soviet takeover, and commissioned by the Budapest Wallenberg Memorial Committee, with funds raised from a concert performed by the Hungarian classical pianist, Annie Fischer, and a donation from the Metropolitan Council. Cole writes that the statue's postwar disappearance from St. Istvan Park became symbolic of the disappearance of Wallenberg himself. When it reappeared some years later at the pharmaceutical factory in Debrecen, the statue—sans the swastikas—became a symbol of medical science over disease.⁴⁵ But after 1989, with public acknowledgment that the statue at the Debrecen pharmaceutical company was the *Original Raoul Wallenberg* statue intended to commemorate Wallenberg, municipal authorities and others pushed to have it restored to its original location in Budapest's St. Istvan Park. "In a further twist," writes Dent, "the [pharmaceutical] factory was now owned by an Israeli company, which was, equally understandably quite pleased to have the monument remain in front of its premises. Instead, they contributed to the cost of making an

⁴⁴ Bob Dent, *Every Statue Tells a Story* (Budapest: Európa, 2009) 281.

⁴⁵ Cole. *Holocaust City*. 233.

exact copy of Pátzay's serpent-fighting figure, which was duly unveiled in St. Istvan Park [in 1999]."⁴⁶ It is worth noting that neither the original nor the copy had the swastikas restored.

As this thesis begins to move toward looking at the artists and Holocaust memorials of Budapest in the last two decades, it is necessary to first review the 40 years of government-imposed silence that preceded this period, between 1948 and 1989.

1.3 Examining Postwar Silence: America, Israel, and Hungary

Holocaust silence was a phenomenon experienced worldwide. "For many years after the war, survivors were silent about their experiences and the general public did not know much about it," writes American anthropologist Jacob Climo.⁴⁷ Even in Israel, there was not such a keen "will to remember." In *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Dominick LaCapra writes that "the immediate aftermath of the Shoah was typified by denial and resistance, as Israelis forged a concept of the redemptive nation and its heroic inhabitants.... Survivors were often constrained to adopt a new identity and be silent, not only about their old life, but about the way it was destroyed or devastated."⁴⁸ Moreover, the intense Israeli nationalism during the early years—which deeply emphasized strength—contributed to an atmosphere that at times led some of the nation's long-established pioneers to accuse the recently arrived European survivors of not being more vocal, not fighting back, and passively allowing the Holocaust to happen.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Dent. *Every Statue Tells a Story*. 283-284.

⁴⁷ Marea C. Teski and Jacob J. Climo, eds., *The Labyrinth of Memory: Ethnographic Journeys* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1995) 175.

⁴⁸ Dominick LaCapra. *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (London: Cornell University Press, 1998) 9. (emphasis mine).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

For a variety of reasons, this phenomenon, sometimes referred to as “survivors’ silence,” affected Holocaust survivors throughout the world—including the U.S, South America, and Europe. Climo, a child of Holocaust survivors who immigrated to the U.S., writes that,

[People did not] speak openly about the Holocaust and certainly not to children. It was barely ever mentioned. Even parents rarely or never spoke about their experiences to their children. Some say it was a desire to protect the children. But it was also the inability of most people to put their humiliation into words. It was too soon.⁵⁰

Anthropologist Erika Bourguignon writes that the desire to forget is a form of post-traumatic stress, inherently linked to genocides, war, and other individual or group catastrophes.⁵¹ However, Climo argues that silence does not mean forgetting, that survivors did in fact speak about it, but only amongst themselves, and almost never to their children, or the outside world.⁵² In Argentina, Diana Wang recalls her experience as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, writing that after her Polish mother immigrated in 1947, she hid her Jewish identity for fear that what happened in Germany might be repeated in the predominately Catholic continent of South America. She continues,

These different experiences in Argentina can also be found wherever survivors went to live after the Holocaust. It is important to note that the Jews, before and after the Holocaust, were not a monolithic or homogeneous group. Not every Jew in Europe had been involved in the same way in community life. Many survivors had to overcome a crisis in faith, asking themselves, “Where was God during the Holocaust?” Some of them, not being able to find an adequate answer, distanced themselves from religion. Others chose not to participate or get involved in Jewish activities, believing that if they did not live like Jews, their children would be protected.⁵³

It would not be until the late 1950s—with the publication of *Anne Frank’s Diary*, and later,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Erika Bourguignon, “Bringing the Past into the Present: Family Narratives of Holocaust, Exile, and Diaspora: Memory in an Amnesic World: Holocaust, Exile, and the Return of the Suppressed Author.” *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Winter, 2005), pp. 63-88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4150890>. Accessed May 25, 2011.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Diana Wang, “Silence and Speech, Holocaust Survivors In Argentina.” <http://www.dianawang.net/Argsurviv.html>. Accessed May 25, 2011.

in 1962, with the media attention surrounding the Adolf Eichmann trial in Israel—that the silence within general society began to break.⁵⁴

By the 1970s, historians were taking a sharp interest in hearing the stories of Holocaust survivors and, by the '80s, trauma therapists were beginning to link together the idea of shell shock syndrome and repressed memories (experienced by abused children who lack the language to articulate violent acts), to explain the survivors silence of the Holocaust. Thus began a preoccupation with memory writing and videotaped interviews, the first being *The Holocaust Survivors Film Project* in 1979 at Yale, and later a project developed by the American film director Steven Spielberg, for the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, which contains the 52,000 videotaped interviews of Holocaust survivors.

In Hungary, under Communist rule, survivor silence took on an added dimension. From 1948-58, the government made it difficult for Jews to openly identify with their religion and traditions—even censoring the publication of books, studies, and articles on the Jewish genocide—which, according to Patai, resulted in a wish, even among Jews, to forget the past and erase Jewish identity.⁵⁵ Indeed, survivors considered the horrific events of the Holocaust a taboo subject. So much in fact, that many survivors hid their Jewish origins from their children, for fear a similar event could happen again. The result is a generation of European-Jews who did not learn of their Jewish birth until they were far into their adult years.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Toby Axelrod, “Europe remembers how Eichmann trial and TV changed perceptions of Holocaust” (April 6, 2011) <http://haitiholocaustsurvivors.wordpress.com/anti-semitism/europe-remembers-how-eichmann-trial-and-tv-changed-perceptions-of-holocaust/>. Accessed June 2, 2011.

⁵⁵ Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 620.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Anna Stein, 75, the Hungarian artist who designed the *Crying to the Sky* memorial (see page 29), says that her parents could not shield her from the Jewish memories she had already accumulated, but the topic of the Jewish genocide—as the Holocaust was referred to at the time—was rarely discussed with her. “My father told me his parents and sister were killed in February of 1945, and that was it,” she relates. “Nobody talked about it. People slowly began to come back, and when they did, all they said was ‘I was in Mauthausen,’ or ‘I was in Auschwitz,’ and so on. And life went on.”⁵⁷ She recalls, however, seeing a book lying on a table in her parents’ office in Pecs, sometime around 1946, titled *Ön a Tanú* (You Are A Witness). She perused the graphic images of “people who were killed, dying, and starving,” and never spoke to anyone about what she saw, not even to her parents. “There was not a question about these things,” she explains. “Now people talk about it, but at this time, no one did.”⁵⁸

However, the topic must have been in the forefront for some, if not many immediately following the war. There was a brief spate of public and private Holocaust commemoration while a temporary coalition government was in place from 1945 to 1948.⁵⁹ That changed in the winter of 1948, when the Hungarian Communists took full control under the dictatorial

⁵⁷ Anna Stein, Interview, April 21, 2011.

⁵⁸ Young writes that memorial books were one of the first forms of commemoration to come out of war: In keeping with the bookish, iconoclastic side of Jewish tradition, the first “memorials” to the Holocaust, came not in stone, glass, or steel—but in narrative. The *Yizkor Bikher*—memorial books—remembered both the lies and destruction of European Jewish communities according to the most ancient of Jewish Memorial media: words on paper. For a murdered people without graves, without even corpses to inter, these memorial books often came to serve as symbolic tombstones [with such forwards as]: “The memorial book which will immortalize the memories of our relatives and friends, the Jews of Pshaytsk, will also serve as a substitute grave. Whenever we pick up the book we will feel we are standing next to their grave, because, even that, the murderers denied them: Young, *Texture of Memory*, 7.

⁵⁹ At the close of the war on May 9, 1945, Stalin elected not to set up Communist rule immediately in Hungary. Instead, he had allowed Hungary to set up a coalition government with occupying Soviet forces from the war: Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 598.

leadership of Mátyás Rákosi, the self-proclaimed “great Hungarian pupil of Stalin.”⁶⁰ But up until 1948, the Jewish genocide was, as Patai puts it, “in the very center of public debate.” Indeed a number of books, pamphlets and articles were published during this brief window, including a selection of plays and films that touched upon the Holocaust.⁶¹

With the Communist takeover, the *Államvédelmi Hatóság* (the State Protection Authority), essentially an extension of the Soviet secret police force, was formed. Until its dissolution in 1956, the authority apprehended, imprisoned, and tortured thousands of citizens, so that, in effect, “they functioned as state-controlled terrorist bodies, with the knowledge, work, and concurrence of the Ministry of Justice.”⁶² It is this atmosphere of state-sanctioned silence that prompts Patai to contrast it with the state-sanctioned mass murder of the previous regime, as not so much aiming to kill the Jews, but killing the “Jewishness” within them. The regime’s methods included replacing explicit mentions of anti-Semitism in historical accounts with the concept of “fascists persecuting anti-fascists”. The Communist goal, after all, was to create a just, classless, socialist society; to that end, the party sought to blur the line between Jews and non-Jews by eliminating all traces of Jewish presence in Hungary’s history, economy, culture, art, music, and literature.⁶³

1.4 Hungary since the 1980s: Changing Tides

After Stalin’s death in 1953, the Soviet Union and its states experienced what has come to be called the “thaw”. While Hungary experienced this for a short time, the Soviet grip tightened again shortly after the Revolution of ’56, then again loosened in the 1960s, as the government

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 614–615.

⁶² Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 599.

⁶³ Ibid, 615–618.

sought to stimulate its economy through exporting goods. Still, this had little effect on Jewish life, and the perception of Holocaust history.

Real change began to stir in the 1980s, shortly after Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In 1985, he introduced “new thinking” through a liberalizing reform commonly referred to as *glasnost* (“openness”), which promoted government transparency.⁶⁴ In short order, his ideas increasingly grew more radical, with his focus moving from “economic acceleration” to “radical reform”. By 1987, Gorbachev boldly introduced a reform known as *perestroika* (“restructuring”), which together with *glasnost*, had a democratizing effect across a broad range of social, political, economic, cultural, and foreign policy issues.⁶⁵ Though Hungary already had been enjoying more freedoms than most other countries of the Soviet bloc, the effect on the country that these reforms made cannot be overstated.

The loosening of governmental control during the 1980s, followed by the sudden collapse of communism in 1989, overwhelmingly appears to be the thrust that ushered in what I have termed for the purpose of this thesis, the “second wave” of Holocaust commemoration throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The first evidence of this change in Budapest is found in the *Martyrs of Budapest* memorial—a replica of a Holocaust memorial in Austria—erected in an out of the way area of the Danube’s west bank in 1986. It was followed in 1987 with a memorial to the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who is credited with saving the lives of tens of thousands of Jews during the Hungarian Holocaust before disappearing January 17, 1945, a

⁶⁴ Daniel S. Papp, *Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Socialist Community*, Ed. Charles Bukowski and J. Richard Walsh (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990) 5, 87.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

political prisoner of the Soviets. The story of this monument and the others that followed will be covered in the Chapter Three, immediately following the next chapter on how I carried out the research.

2. Oral history and methodology

For many social historians, interviews are more reliable than memoirs, which are typically seen as an accurate record. Unlike books, writes Orlando Figes—who wrote the 2007 book *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*, which surveys everyday family life of gulags survivors in the former Soviet Union through interviews—people can be questioned and tested against other evidence, “to disentangle true memories from received or imagined ones”.⁶⁶ Furthermore, interviewees can provide information, observations, and opinions unavailable elsewhere. When combined with other sources of information, they fill in the gaps of history.

In the course of the interviews I conducted for this thesis, I found, for the most part, my subjects eager to come out from the background, open up, and talk about their lives, and their work and how it relates to Holocaust commemoration. Many had not been asked these questions before. In this regard, my job as a researcher was made easier by their commitment: in many cases, I merely asked the questions and listened. Clearly, their voices have not been properly listened to in the past, which until now has been unfortunate. Through their words, I learned that some of the sites of memory were actually selected by them, that none of them had complete control over the verbiage that went on their plaques, and what sort of challenges they had to overcome to see ideas manifested in some of Budapest's public spaces.

For the purpose of data collecting and analysis to augment the information I gained from the artists and their interviews, I spent most of my research time in the field, visiting each Holocaust memorial and monument in person. With the intention of updating Tim Cole's research

⁶⁶ Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007) 128.

of Holocaust memorials up to 1999, I asked the following set of questions while visiting each memorial and monument:

1. **Location:** Is it visible? And if not, why not? Is the site of the memorial/monument relevant to the history it is attempting to commemorate? And finally, is it accessible?
2. **Point of View:** What aspect of the Holocaust does the work remember: the liberators, the resisters, the “righteous gentiles,” or the victims?
4. **Language:** Does the accompanying verbiage shy away from the facts with vague and passive language, or does it speak plainly and directly about the history it is intended to commemorate?
5. **And finally, how is the memorial used by the community?** Do people leave flowers, wreaths, candles, gather in groups to commemorate, and has the work been the subject of vandalism?

3. The Holocaust memorials and the artists who created them

One of the surprising facts I learned in my research was the age of several of the artists. Typically, newer Holocaust memorials are imagined by artists who were “born after,” those who came to know the event, not through personal experience, but through the powerful memories of survivor stories and the media, what Young calls a “vicarious past,” and what Marianne Hirsch calls “postmemory”.⁶⁷ Furthermore, as noted by Young, artists come to know their subjects not so much by its history but by how it has shaped their inner lives.⁶⁸ Through the interviews, I learned that several of Budapest’s commemoration artists did not technically fit the description of the postmemory generation. Two of them—Anna Stein and Gyula Pauer—experienced aspects of the Hungarian Holocaust through the eyes of young children. Another, sculptor Imre Varga, experienced not the terrors of Holocaust, per se, but the Second World War as a young air officer flying over Stalingrad. It was only when he returned from the Soviet Union in 1945 that he learned that two of his childhood friends were murdered in Auschwitz, prompting him to visit the death camp in the 1960s, where he said he could still see ash on the ground and smell the stench of death in the air. István Manyi was born during the era, in 1943, but he would have been too young to form any long-term memories, so by this virtue, he falls in with the postmemory generation. Tamás Szabó, born in 1952, is the youngest artist in group, born and raised under communist rule. The following pages begin with the artists who have the strongest personal memories of the Holocaust progressing to those who have none. The last entry falls slightly out of the line up, features the architecture of István Manyi, who has no personal memories of the Holocaust but many vicarious ones.

⁶⁷ Hirsch, Marianne, “The Generation of Postmemory,” *Poetics Today* 2008 Vol. 29: 103-128.

⁶⁸ James A. Young. *At Memory’s Edge*.3.

3.1 Anna Stein

Crying to the Sky (1990)



Fig. 1 *Crying to the Sky*, Anna Stein, 1990, Budapest (next to Margaret Bridge, Pest side), ceramic tiles. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

It was the perfect moment. With two body guards standing by to protect her, Anna Stein crouches to the ground and begins to cement the first of 77 hand-painted ceramic tiles into a sidewalk near the Danube River. This sight, on any other day in Hungary's recent communist past would no doubt have drawn the attention of the local authorities. But on this particular October day in 1990, there is no government—which is what made this day so irresistibly perfect. With each new tile Stein lays into the ground, an image begins to take shape, the image of a blue angel, a messenger angel delivering a cry to the heavens above, one hand raised forcefully to the sky. As she lays the last tiles into the ground, the hand-painted words in

Hungarian of this freshly minted mosaic are made readable: *“In memory of those Hungarians who became victims of the Arrow-Cross Terror in the winter of 1944-45.”*⁶⁹

“[This was the] time when no one could say anything against it, because the power was changing,” recalls Stein, 21 years later. “There was no one in power, not even elections yet.” For the previous four years, since 1986, she had been working with the Budapest Gallery, a local organization charged with overseeing the city’s public works of art.⁷⁰ Stein, a Budapest native who left Hungary during the ’56 Revolution and made a life for herself as an artist in Paris, sought to donate an original work of her art to the city—a Holocaust memorial. But not until autumn 1990, when she received a call from the Gallery, had there been any real movement with Stein’s proposed project.

Born in 1936, Stein has personal memories of the Holocaust in Budapest, referring to herself as “a hidden child.” The members of her immediate family were taken in first by a woman who worked as a cook for her grandmother, then later by an elderly couple who lived by the Danube. “After that, my family went to the country, where I was hidden by nuns.” Although her father purchased passports for the family—“We had to change our names; I was not Anna Stein,” she explains—all of the members of her immediate family hid, initially together and then in different places. “My father was hidden by a priest, my mother by a religious woman, and so on.”

⁶⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotes and inferences to Anna Stein in this section are derived from an in-person interview with the artist: Anna Stein, Interview, April 21, 2011.

⁷⁰ The Budapest Gallery is a government-sponsored organization that oversees the city’s public art. It was very active since the communist days and continues to be today, although rumors are circulating among local artists that the city plans to shut the Gallery down soon.

She determined to create a Holocaust memorial while traveling by car with her husband from Paris to Budapest. As they passed through Austria, Stein spotted a sign pointing tourists to the town of Mauthausen, now infamous as the location of one of the Nazi death camps. “One of my uncles was killed there,” she says. “And I thought—my God!—people are taking beer and wine to Mauthausen, and all these people who died, they are just forgotten.” Her husband did not understand why she would be upset, considering that they, too, enjoy wine and beer by the Danube, where thousands of Jews— just like them—also perished. Stein continues,

[At the time,] nobody talked about that. Right then, I asked my husband, “Yes, but what can we do now?” And suddenly, I said, “I must do something, I must do something myself. I will make a memorial.” [Later,] I went to Pecs. I was very close to the director of the museum of Pecs. I told her I wanted to make something. She told me, “Okay, let’s go. I’ll give you a name in Budapest, and you talk.” And I did. So I prepared a design, and they agreed.

That was the beginning of her 4-year wait. Finally, on October 15th, 1990, on the same day that in 1944 the Arrow Cross had been put into power, a huge turnout of people and media gathered around the memorial for the unveiling ceremony.

Today, the memorial has become a lesser-known fixture of the city’s 5th District, located beside the north-end of the Margaret Bridge (on the exterior of Pest’s Mari Jászai Square). Stein originally intended the mosaic to be seen at a height slightly above eye level, embedded upright into the exterior of a building. She recalls the challenge she encountered with that idea:

My first thought was to put it on a wall [of a building], but at this time there were no available walls. And after the changeover, there was a problem about who actually owns the walls. [Before 1989,] all the walls were public space, but maybe [with the changeover] they would have become privatized. That was the question: Who owns the buildings? The architect of Budapest suggested that we should put the memorial on the ground, like a tomb, because the street belongs to the public and will never be privatized.

Though Stein did not receive a wall in which to embed her memorial, she did win the battle to place it in a public space rather than within a “Jewish space,” as was originally suggested by the Budapest Gallery. She explains:

At first they told me to put it in a synagogue. I told them, “No, I want to put it where the killings happened, where many people can see it there.” People were killed along the Danube, we know that. My grandparents were killed like that. And so were many relatives of my father’s family. Many people—uncles and aunts. I said it must be there [at the river] where it happened. We then found a place by the Danube where many people can see it.

The mosaic, created in the style of a Mesopotamian fresco, features a blue-winged angel pointing toward the sky and crying out. “He has the wings of a protecting angel,” says Stein. “They were made to cover and protect. But it was a tremendous thing that happened here. He is questioning to God. He is not a crying, tearful angel; he is crying out, ‘Where is God?’”

But because of its placement on the ground, the two-dimensional memorial is visible only to the occasional pedestrian, jogger or bicyclist who happens to be traversing along the small pedestrian path where it is located.⁷¹ When asked about why she chose not to identify the victims as Jewish in the memorial, she describes a conversation she had in 1990 with one of the members of the Budapest Gallery:

They did not want me to use the word “Jew”. There were two reasons. [For one,] they did not want to make a “Jewish” memorial outside because there were other people who were killed on the Danube, not only Jews. There were the Roma, the Resistance, and people who were hiding Jews. And last but not least, Jewish is not a nationality; it is a religion. These people were all Hungarian. Hungarians killed Hungarians. That is very important because if you say the Jews, it takes these people out from the Hungarian nationality.... The Jews were Hungarian citizens who were killed by Hungarian citizens. Hungarians were killing Hungarians. There is a conflict with that logic, but I agree with it. To be Jewish is not a citizenship; it is a religion.

⁷¹At the time of this writing, the memorial was covered under a sheet of plastic and a pile of bricks to “protect” it during a 3-year construction project on and around Margrit Bridge. I was able to view it when city workers, at my request, removed the bricks and plastic covering to reveal about 2’ of debris covering Stein’s mosaic. Construction around the Margrit Bridge is scheduled for completion in August, 2011.

Stein acknowledges that the wording on her memorial is a complicated issue, but in the end she says she agrees with the city's logic. However, Cole argues that the language on the memorial nationalizes the memory, whereby the victims of the Holocaust in the immediate post-1989 memory had moved from being referred to as "victims of fascism," and replaced with the identification as Hungarian victims. He argues that "in both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, therefore, the 'Jewishness' of the victims has been downplayed and denied in the city's streets."

Both arguments are sound. Yet one must consider the milieu of 1990's Central and Eastern Europe, one whose collective memory was firmly embedded in a history that did not recognize or name the fascist perpetrators as German Nazis and Hungarian Nyilas, or the anti-fascist victims as Hungarian Jews, Romani, and sympathizers. Change – such as the collapse of communism—may happen suddenly. However, minds rarely change so fast.

Cole is right to recognize and point out the nationalizing language of the Holocaust on the *Crying to the Sky* memorial, however, at the same time we must consider the context of the times in which the memorial was created. In 1990, Stein's memorial was nothing less than a breakthrough in the city's Holocaust commemoration, with its placement within a historically significant site, and verbiage that breaks from 40 years of a modeled Holocaust memory acknowledging only two actors: fascists and anti-fascists. The sudden presence of Stein's memorial in 1990 in the public sphere no doubt raised the question: Who were the Nyilas? And with that the dialogue began.

3.2 Gyula Pauer

Shoes on the Danube (2005)



Fig. 2 *Shoes on the Danube*, Gyula Pauer and Janos Can Togay, 2005, Budapest (5th District), cast iron. Photograph by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

In 1978, at the age of 37, Gyula Pauer staked about 50 protest signs of varying heights into an open field on the outskirts of Budapest. The slogans were his own invention, which included such wry sayings as “I know where you are because you are reading this, but do you know where I was when I wrote it?” The work—called *Protesting Forest*—stood for a mere three days before it was noticed by authorities and torn down. Pauer’s unorthodox pursuits in the creative realm may have made him unpopular with government officials, but during the 60s, 70s, and 80s, he became popular among his peers in the Hungarian underground avant-garde, even

dabbling into costume design and film-making for a time.⁷²

The story of how the *Shoes on the Danube* memorial came about is an interesting one, says Pauer. He explains that in 2003, with the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust approaching, he and other artists had been hearing that new Holocaust memorials would be placed all over Europe. He waited to hear about a competition in Budapest, but an announcement never came. With the anniversary already passed on April 16, 2004, Pauer decided to take it upon himself to create a memorial for submission, with or without a competition. While pondering what aspect of the event he wanted to capture, his friend, Hungarian film director János Can Togay, commented that if he really wanted to express the hatred directed toward the Jews during the Holocaust, the memorial should reflect the *belövetés*, the Hungarian term to describe the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross terror that took place on the bank of the Danube.

Basically nowhere in Europe has had a tragedy like that, where in broad daylight people could see soldiers shoot the so-called ‘*unttermensch*’.⁷³ That’s how the idea [for the memorial] came aboutIn 1945, members of the *Nyilas* party escorted so many Jewish people to the Danube where they shot them into it. When this happened, I was only three years old. I was born in 1941, and my parents told me the story. Even though I was young, I heard a lot of news from all around Europe. That’s all I remember about it.

With Togay’s suggestion, Pauer says he knew instantly what he wanted to do. With several pairs of shoes acquired from a film studio, he and Togay set out to the Danube one day in January 2005 to search for the right spot to create a prototype memorial—they found it near the Parliament building. They did this to see how it would look, but also to test what reaction they might get from several pairs of shoes arranged at the edge of the riverbank. This experiment lasted just a day before someone at the Ministry of Culture called Pauer to ask what he was up to

⁷² Unless otherwise noted, all quotes and inferences to Gyula Pauer in this section are derived from an in-person interview with the artist: Gyula Pauer, Interview, May 2, 2011.

⁷³ A German term made infamous by racial Nazi ideology, used to describe "inferior people".

down there, arranging and re-arranging shoes all day, tracing outlines around each shoe with a pencil on a large roll of paper. “I told them that before I go to apply for the permit,” says Pauer, “I wanted to find out what it would look like so that I could plan in advance and move forward.” It was then, during that call, that the ministry invited Pauer to submit his proposal for review.

Shortly after Pauer submitted his plans, the ministry sent him a letter saying they liked it—and all they wanted to know was “how much?” Curiously enough, says Pauer, he had to pay for the materials out of his own expenses, with the agreement that he would be reimbursed by the city. But for Pauer, he was delighted just the same: “I didn’t even think that they would give me the permission to make the memorial. In a way, it was like I made them give me an offer.”⁷⁴

Pauer was asked to complete the project in a very short period of time, so that it would be ready for the 61st anniversary of the Holocaust on April 14, 2005, which indicates that the consideration of a memorial was an impromptu act on the part of the city. Pauer goes on to describe how his idea came to full fruition:

The whole thing started with 6 or 8 pairs of shoes, then it increased to 60 pairs. We cannot tell you exactly the number of people who were shot into the river, nobody can.... I was doing a lot of research about how many people were shot into the Danube.... You can’t find out because there are no documents. We found a memorial plaque about a nun named Sára Salkaházi. She was saving Jewish children from the water, and then she had a visit from members of the *Nyilas* Party. They took Salkaházi and the people she had staying with her to the river and they shot them into the Danube. These are facts we got from the church.... I went to survivors; we went to their houses, and listened to their stories. We went to the families who were related to those known to have died at the river. We guessed that 3 or 4 armed men could escort a group of 60-80 people at a time to the river, where they made them step out of their shoes before they shot them in.... I think it was 40 or 50 people at least, in a group. That’s how many shoes I put out.

Pauer says he wanted to position the shoes to reflect a panic situation. He imagined a

⁷⁴ At the time, Ferenc Gyurcsány had just been elected as prime minister. Gyurcsány would admit, later in September, 2006—after initiating a series of tax hikes and public spending cuts to curb Hungary’s mounting budget deficit—that the government had lied about the state of public finances in order to win the elections of that same year. Gabriel Partos. “Profile: Ferenc Gyurcsány,” *BBC News*, Sept. 19, 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5360116.stm>

scene with the frigid below-zero temperatures of a Budapest February, and floating ice on the water. He envisioned guards pointing their guns at people—men, women, and children—who were made to face the river, and maybe a person who tried to resist, being shoved to the edge of the riverbank.

For material, Pauer chose iron. “The reason I chose it is because iron rusts with time, and it has a dramatic effect,” he says. “It’s just like the old bullets. I saw the condition of shells that were lifted out of the river after the war, and they were rusted. I wanted to duplicate that effect.”⁷⁵

By actively imagining the Holocaust as it may have happened, Pauer acts as a postmemory artist. Yet at the same time, he is also a first-generation (non-Jewish) witness with childhood memories of seeing people being marched against their will at gunpoint. By coupling that vague memory with a keen imagination of history, Pauer combines two generations of memories—the first who witnessed it and the second who imagines it vicariously.

At the official unveiling on April 16, 2005, Pauer recalls people in the crowd crying. “They were remembering their relatives who were killed there,” he says. Since then, Pauer has received numerous emails and letters; someone even set music to the memorial and, says Pauer,

⁷⁵ The process Pauer used to make the iron shoes involved securing real costume shoes inside a casting block and then pouring molten iron into the blocks. The extreme temperatures of the liquid iron essentially disintegrated the original material of the shoe, so that the original no longer existed and was replaced with a rendition. For Pauer, this metamorphosis is somewhat philosophical; that it, too, has its place in the Holocaust narrative. He says the process is allegoric of living, breathing humans being transformed into smoke and ash in the crematorium. It can also mean the society that would have been, had the Holocaust never happened, has been replaced by the society that we are living in now. The finished memorial, however, sends the message of absence, a common theme in more recent Holocaust memorials, yet the first of its kind in the Budapest public sphere. In Pauer’s words, “You see the shoes and you expect there to be people in them, but they are not there. They are gone.”

there have been smaller memorials erected that were inspired by the *Shoes* memorial. It is common to see flowers and burnt candles near the memorial and, on occasion, small private ceremonies. Clearly, the memorial stirs strong emotions, but they are not always those of remembrance, grief, and healing. Pauer explains:

[Some people] have different ways of thinking, that history did not happen that way....[The] people who shot the Jews into the river are not all dead yet. They might still be among the living. We know that. After the official unveiling, there was a very nice ceremony with people carrying candles and walking. And after the ceremony, six or seven pairs of shoes were [unhinged with a crowbar and] and kicked into the river. Those had to be replaced....Later on, pig's feet were put in the shoes. When we made the memorial, I was thinking we should present it to the public one pair at a time, introduce the concept slowly. Let people get to know it, and get used to it.

Pauer says that the agreement he had with the city in the first year of the memorial's existence, was that he would be responsible for maintaining it. The Budapest Gallery eventually took ownership of the memorial, but until that time, Pauer says he repeatedly had to make replacement shoes for the memorial due to vandalism.

In late January 2005, months before the official unveiling, the *Budapest Sun* reported the first incident of vandalism of the memorial, where four of the shoes had gone missing. The brief article states that according to the local police, there was "no evidence of racist or anti-Semitic motivation for the attack."⁷⁶ Three years later, in mid-June, 2009, vandals placed pigs' feet into several of the shoes, prompting Tamás Suchman, a senior of the Hungarian Socialist Party whose mother was an Auschwitz victim, to stage a demonstration at the monument several days later.⁷⁷ According to *JTA: The Global News Service of the Jewish People*, the attack followed

⁷⁶ "Holocaust memorial vandalized," *Budapest Sun*. January 28, 2005.
<http://www.budapestsun.com/news/47971>.

⁷⁷ "Demonstration called against sickening vandalism of Holocaust memorial," *Politics.hu: The Intelligent Source for Intelligence on Hungarian Politics*. June 16, 2009
<http://www.politics.hu/20090616/demonstration-called-against-sickening-vandalism-of-holocaust-memorial>.

“the electoral success of the far-right Jobbik party in European Union parliamentary elections earlier [that] month.”⁷⁸ Regardless if the act was directly linked to the Jobbik Party⁷⁹—a self-described “conservative-patriotic Christian” party—or was a random act of stupidity, the public outcry that ensued—both in the demonstration and in the press—speaks to the city’s collective memory of the Holocaust on some level that, as with the actual events of the past, there is a clash between those who choose to remember and those who would like to forget.

Also at issue is easy accessibility to the memorial: there is no traffic light or crosswalk to the memorial. According to Pauer, the Hungarian ministry of Culture promised a crosswalk to the memorial around the time it was erected, “in case people would like to visit the memorial, they won’t get hit by a car.” But six years later, this still has not happened. The memorial is located where Imre Steindl Street ends, on a tri-level embankment, with a busy road on the top level, and yet another street on the second, and finally a pedestrian path on the third. The nearest access to the memorial is at the Chain Bridge or near the Parliament Building, about four city blocks in one direction, and two in the other.

It could be argued that Hungary is currently at the verge of economic bankruptcy; at least according to some respected analysts, Budapest has already spent excessively on its public transport, and it cannot afford to make the memorial more accessible. However, when considering the vast amount of construction that the city has been through over the last six years, and still continues to invest in, that argument does not hold up. The cost of white paint and

⁷⁸ “Vandals hit Budapest Holocaust memorial,” *JTA: The GloNews Service of the Jewish People*. June 16, 2009. <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2009/06/16/1005910/vandals-desecrate-budapest-holocaust-memorial>.

⁷⁹ The Jobbik Party has widely been accused in the English-speaking press—*Politics.hu*, the *Daily Press*, and *Salon.com*—as fascist, neo-fascist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Romani. The party vehemently denies all such claims.

possibly a traffic light pales in comparison to the costs the city has already spent on tearing up Dohány Street to update it with a new metro system, to say nothing of the monies spent greening up the city with various new parks.

And while there are no signposts at street level pointing the way to the memorial, there are, on the pedestrian path near the memorial, three ground plaques, each in a different language—Hungarian, English, and Hebrew. The plaque in English reads: *To the memory of the victims shot into the Danube by Arrow Cross Militiamen in 1944-45. Erected 16th April 2005.*“ It does not say that the victims were Jewish,” says Pauer, adding that the ministry gave him little control over the verbiage. Indeed, the only indication that would make people think that the victims were Jewish is the Hebrew language featured on one of the plaques. While we can perhaps understand the lack of Jewish specificity in Stein’s memorial erected 15 years prior, it becomes apparent that by 2005, old mindsets are still at work.

3.3 Imre Varga

Memorial to the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs (1991)

Forced March (1990)

Miklós Radnóti (2010)

Raoul Wallenberg Memorial (1987)



Fig. 3: *Memorial to the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs*, Imre Varga, 1991, Budapest (Dohány Street Synagogue), chrome steel, silver, and marble. Photograph by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

On a typical Saturday morning, Imre Varga—one of Hungary’s most prolific sculptors—walks with the aid of a cane to his namesake museum in Óbuda and positions himself near a sunny window. Here, with refreshments always on hand, he visits with old friends, potential clients, and privileged guests. Rare indeed is the Saturday morning that he sits alone without company. On this warm spring morning, Varga, who at 88 years of age still possesses the imposing stature of an air officer, tells us about his tour of duty flying over Russia in the Second World War, the shock of learning that two of his childhood friends were killed at Auschwitz, and what he discovered when he walked the grounds of that death camp in the 1960s with an

Auschwitz survivor. Naturally, we also talk about public art, and how his life experiences have found expression in his work.⁸⁰

As a high school student, Varga went off to Paris to study art. He returned to Hungary when WWII broke out, and learned aeronautics at Military Academy, graduating to serve as a Hungarian air officer fighting against the Soviet Union. During the war, Varga was captured by American Allies and detained in Germany. After his release, he returned to Budapest, at the age of 22, to work in a factory. In 1949, he met his mentor, sculptor Pál Pátzay⁸¹, who taught at the College of Fine Arts and persuaded him to enroll. According to Varga's online biography with the Budapest Gallery, he went on to sculpt subjects representing "anti-heroism," that is: heroes depicted in anthropocentric situations, emphasizing the casual features of a man.⁸² Prior to that, Varga tells us that he spent several years learning the techniques of others by repairing statues that had been damaged during the '56 Revolution.

Over the years, Varga's public works became more and more pronounced on the Budapest cityscape. In the course of his 60-year career, which has generated no less than 300 public works of art, Varga has sculpted a number of Biblical and mythological figures, as well as such historical figures as the 16th-century Polish astronomer Nicolas Copernicus (Warsaw and Óbuda); the 1956 Hungarian Revolution's Prime Minister, Imre Nagy (Budapest); and the great Hungarian pianists, Franz Liszt of the 19th century (Budapest), and Béla Bartók of the 20th (Budapest).

⁸⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all quotes and inferences to Imre Varga in this section are derived from an in-person interview with the artist: Imre Varga, Interview, April 22, 2011.

⁸¹ Pátzay designed Budapest's original Raoul Wallenberg sculpture in 1949. See page 18.

⁸² http://www.museum.hu/museum/index_en.php?ID=88.

When asked how he reconciles his military experience with the tragic Holocaust memories of others, Varga appears unsettled. “We didn’t know,” he says. “The news did not travel to the frontlines.”⁸³ We read nothing, we didn’t get papers, we received no news at all. I was simply a flying officer.” When he returned to Hungary in 1945, the sister of two of his childhood friends told Varga that her brothers had been killed in Auschwitz. Varga continues,

I went to Auschwitz on my own expenses to be sure about it, because I was curious. It was really something terrible and incredible. I made friends with the director of the museum, he was a Polish Jew [named, Kazimierz Smolen⁸⁴]. He came to visit me later. And he told me everything about Auschwitz. He told me in two days. Back then [1960s] we were walking as far as our boots over the human ashes. There were human ashes everywhere. I went to the crematory and it was a surprise to me what the German people were thinking Those people are the same people who were listening to Mozart and Johann Sebastian Bach and what they were thinking [he shakes his head in disbelief]. Incredible, incredible. And the fate of [the victims], who were like you and me. They were put naked into a room and then they were gassed. The director of Auschwitz museum, told me he was in such a group who had to take the bodies out of [the chambers]. First they had to water the bodies because they defecated on themselves. He told me they had to wait for rigor mortis to set in because it was easier to take out the dead that way. Incredible. Isn’t it? In 20th-century Europe.

Varga is clearly affected by the events of his time. Yet, unlike many other Holocaust artists his age, he has come to know the details of the event in much the same way as a second-generation postmemory artist would: through the memory of a survivor. The walk on the grounds of Auschwitz, the sight of the crematorium, and the human ashes undoubtedly forged powerful images in Varga. Shortly after that visit, he created a number of works that in some way or another related to the topic.

“This is the reason I made the memorial tree,” says Varga. “Not the big one [in the Dohány Street Synagogue], but a small painting.” When three members of the World Jewish

⁸³ In addition to being on the frontlines, Varga was also held prisoner by Allied forces in Germany until after the war.

⁸⁴ My research was unable to confirm that Mr. Smolen was charged with clearing the dead bodies from the Auschwitz gas chambers. However, he was indeed an Auschwitz survivor and the museum director for the Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau from the 1950s-80s.

Council paid Varga a visit back in 1987, he merely showed them the work he had painted 20 years prior. From that, the idea was born to create the *Memorial to the Hungarian Martyrs*, aka “the memorial tree”. In 1991, the \$2 million tree (USD)—paid for through the donations of the U.S.-based Emanuel Foundation⁸⁵—was unveiled in the rear courtyard of the Dohány Street synagogue. Made of chrome steel and silver, it is fashioned to look like an inverted menorah that takes the shape of a weeping willow. Inscribed on its 4000 silver leaves are the names of Hungarian Holocaust victims—each at a cost of \$125 USD, paid for by surviving family members, and donations.⁸⁶

Cole has criticized the memorial on the grounds that, given the price of each leaf, only a small fraction of the vast number of victims is actually commemorated. He referred to this practice as “purchasing memory,” claiming that it forgets those who are not named, and that “money in this space can be—and must be—bought.”⁸⁷ However, even if the commercial considerations that are central in the construction of every memorial are not taken into account, it is important to acknowledge that through the names that are presented, we can remember that *each represents thousands* who are not. After all, not all the names of the dead are known, and the reality of it is, they never will be.⁸⁸ But the names that we do have on the tree serve as both witness and symbol that real people suffered through the events of the Holocaust, that by

⁸⁵ The Emanuel Foundation was founded by American film star Tony Curtis, who is of Hungarian descent.

⁸⁶ The amount in 1988, when the memorial was planned.

⁸⁷ Tim Cole, *Holocaust City*. 241

⁸⁸ Selling the leaves helps defray the costs of the memorial. The leaves are made of silver and are engraved at Varga’s workshop. All the monies collected for a name stays at the synagogue. Also, the tree holds only 4,000 leaves, not nearly enough room to hold the names of the 600,000 Hungarian-Jewish victims who died in the Holocaust. Moreover, for many synagogues, it is not unusual to collect funds for a special memorial plaque for a member who has died. Collecting funds for memorial tree falls completely in line with this practice.

singling out some—even if we do not know who they were personally—the Holocaust becomes more personal and less monolithic.

In terms of timing, Varga explains why it took him so long to build. “I had to make it in headwinds,” he says, meaning there was a lot opposition to the project, much from the city, often taking the form of stalling for time. For example, when the synagogue tore down the wall surrounding the rear courtyard, replacing it with a fence so people could see in, the city of Budapest wanted to rebuild the wall—which created a slow-down in construction, costing more time. Then there was individual opposition, such as when a stink bomb was thrown over the fence while workers were erecting the memorial. Varga implies that the regime changes which happened during the course of construction also created some setbacks. “There were a lot of changes,” he says. “Sometimes communists were here, sometimes not. And the new people were pretty much as racist as the old. Obviously, they were not as wide open about it in public, but they were racist just the same.”



Fig. 4: *Forced March*, Imre Varga, 1990, Budapest (Dohány Street Synagogue), steel and concrete. Photograph by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

In addition to the *Holocaust Memorial Tree*, Varga also designed a memorial commemorating the victims who died in forced marches, sometimes called death marches. Located in the synagogue's *Heroes' Cemetery Garden*, where more than 2,281 people who died in the "big ghetto", between late December, 1944 to January 16, 1945, are buried in 24 common graves.⁸⁹ Called *Forced March*, the metal-welded composition depicts a procession of figures—all skin and bone—marching en masse. The image appears to be cascading forward, with the images falling into the earth. The memorial takes inspiration from a smaller version that Varga made in the late-1960s, composed of concrete, iron, and plastic. The museum's literature says the piece is a "symbol of the reviving torture of dragging, of the pain of people humiliated and forced to the concrete floor, but also the symbol of man stepping outside of time."

One of Varga's first (indirect) Holocaust-related compositions was back in 1969, with the creation of a life-size figure of *Miklós Radnóti*.⁹⁰ The Hungarian-Jewish poet—along with 22 other members of an unarmed labor battalion—had been shot by Hungarian Armed Forces in Bor, Yugoslavia in November, 1944.⁹¹ "[Radnóti's] path was so honorable that you could not go around it," says Varga, meaning that even in Hungary's communist government of the late-

⁸⁹ Kinga Frojimovics, *Jewish Budapest*, 422.

⁹⁰ Varga created a number of works that referenced the Holocaust in the 1960s, his first was called *Babi Yar*, which paid tribute to the victims of that event. It was submitted to Moscow in a competition for a Babi Yar memorial, but did not win. The small-scale work is currently on display at the Varga gallery in Óbuda.

⁹¹ Radnóti was conscripted by the Hungarian Army in the early 1940s. The poet, who identified more with his antifascist Hungarian nationality than his Jewish origins, continued to pencil poems throughout his ordeal, which he kept in his raincoat. After the war, on June 23, 1946, Radnóti's wife had his body exhumed, whereon his last poems were found: Miklós Radnóti, Edward Hirsch. "Poetry: Miklós Radnóti," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Autumn, 1996) pp. 104-110. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40259386>.

1960s, Radnóti's name found a worthy place in the collective memory. "One of my closest friends, György Aczél [the Director of Culture under General Secretary János Kádár] ensured that his memory would lived on."⁹²



Fig. 5: *Radnóti Memorial* (replica), Imre Varga, 2010, Budapest (off Andrassy Blvd, in front of the Radnóti theater), bronze. Photograph by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

The composition features the bronze-cast figure of Radnóti leaning against a wooden fence. The poet, as described in the museum literature, expresses not suffering, but an attitude to remain human under all conditions, bearing a transfigured expression that reveals a tormented face. "Behind the closed eyes, images of a more peaceful past and future swirl," the literature reads.⁹³ To date, Varga has made four copies of the Radnóti composition: The original, financed partially by him and partially by the city of Budapest—stands in the garden of his Óbuda museum. Another copy, financed by Varga himself, was produced for a site in the former Yugoslavia (now Serbia), which was

stolen and later replaced with a new copy. And the fourth, produced just last year in 2010, stands prominently on a busy sidewalk off Andrassy Boulevard, in front of the Radnóti Theater. The

⁹² When asked how he found favor in Kádár's government, Varga says the answer is much too complicated: "I can't answer it. There are no answers. If the work is good, then you got commissioned. But it all happened in hidden ways. It was not an open thing. We were living in a fake community. Sometimes, if you had the same religion, then you got the commission. It's who you know. It's hard to answer that question. It's nearly impossible. But it's not only in Hungary. It is in London, too. Try to put a statue in London, just try it."

⁹³ Márta Harangozó, *"The World of Imre Varga"* (Budapest: Kossuth Publishers, 2003) 11. (note: some online sources cite Martin Bell as the author.)

city council financed the last one. That copy, along with the replacement in Serbia, was produced with a metal fence instead a wooden one, a decision Varga made when the wooden fence of the first copy in Serbia was vandalized with a torch. One hesitates to call the composition on Andrassy a memorial, per se. It contains no plaque describing the poet's wartime ordeal. From the statue alone, the observer learns very little about the forced labor battalions.⁹⁴



Fig. 6: *The New Raoul Wallenberg Memorial* (front view), Imre Varga, 1990, Budapest II District, Bronze and red Swedish marble. Photograph by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.



Fig. 7: *The New Raoul Wallenberg Memorial* (rear view), Imre Varga, 1990, Budapest II District, bronze and red Swedish marble. Photograph by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

⁹⁴ Forced labor battalions were made up primarily of “working-age Jews,” and on frequent occasions included decorated veterans of WWI who were stripped of their former military rank and forced to wear yellow armbands (a white armband for baptized Jews). They were part of the Hungarian Army, yet they were given no weapons. They, like other Holocaust victims, were subjected to the brutal conditions of forced marches, including torture, starvation, and exposure to disease: Kinga Frojimovics, et al, *Jewish Budapest*. English translation. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999) 369.

On the other side of town in Buda, within the verdant park of Erzsebet Szilagyi, stands Varga's monument to *Raoul Wallenberg*, the Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of upwards of 100,000 Jews by providing shelter within diplomatically protected safe houses and issuing protective Swedish passports. During the Siege of Budapest, on January 17, 1945, Wallenberg and his driver, Vilmos Langfelder, disappeared on the way to the headquarters of the Red Army. It was later learned that Wallenberg was taken to a Soviet prison, perhaps on suspicion of being a spy. He has never been seen again by his family or the rest of the Western world.

Straight on, the bronze, slightly larger-than-life-size figure of Wallenberg is visible to the observer, but as one moves away in either direction, it seems to disappear behind the slabs of granite. This optical illusion alludes to the disappearance of Wallenberg himself. The figure's right hand is lifted slightly, perhaps, as Bob Dent suggests in *Every Statue Tells a Story*, in a gesture of warning or patting the head of a child that is not there. The figure's left hand is slid into the pocket of his coat, suggesting cautiousness and closeness.⁹⁵ Inscribed on the back of one of the marble slabs in Latin, the text reads: *Namec eris felix multos numerabis amicos, tempora si fuerent nubila; solus eris.* ("As long as you are lucky, you will have many friends; if cloudy times appear you will be alone.") The text is from Ovid's *Tristia* and alludes to Wallenberg's disappearance. The opposite slab depicts the image of the naked *Snake Killer*—Budapest's first Wallenberg monument created by Pátzay—replete with a serpent covered in swastikas.

Varga says the monument came about as the result of a dare. In 1985 while Varga was dining with the American ambassador, Nicolas M. Salgo, himself of Hungarian descent,

⁹⁵ Bob Dent. *Every Statue Tells a Story*, 278-284.

Wallenberg's name came up in conversation and Salgo challenged Varga to create a monument of him. Varga stated if he had the money, he would make the statue. The next day, Varga received a commission from the American Embassy to design a statue, to be partially funded by the Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB (SEB), the Swedish financial group founded and run by the Wallenberg family.⁹⁶

"When I started working on it," says Varga, "I was called to the City Council, and told there was no place to put it in the city." Even when he approached his friend György Aczél, the director of the city's cultural life, who supported the Radnóti project, Varga got nowhere. "So I started talking to [Salgo] again," says Varga. Together, the two hatched a plan to place the finished statue on grounds belonging to the American Embassy: a garden—containing a golf course—where the American International High School is located, 9 miles away in Nagykovácsi. There, Salgo picked a highly visible corner, where the statue stood behind a chain-linked fence for all to see. "There were even hooks set up on the fencing," Varga recalls, "so that people could bring flowers or hang wreaths."

The decision to move the monument to public property was, in Dent's words, a "certain plot," involving a private lunch set up by the Swedish ambassador, Bengt Lundborg. His guests were Varga and the American ambassador Salgo. During the course of the meal, as noted by Dent,

Salgo informed Varga that the following afternoon he was due to pay a final visit to János Kádár, the head of Hungary's ruling party, since his term of office as ambassador was

⁹⁶ SEB owns a number of stone mines and thus furnished the granite for the monument. "I traveled to Sweden to look for pristine stone," says Varga. "And since the American Embassy was responsible for the project, there was no problem with sending it through customs back to Hungary."

coming to an end. A certain “plot” seems to have unfolded. As it turns out ... In the morning of the following day, [Lundborg] met with Kádár to present him with an official invitation to visit Stockholm. Asking what the program would include, Kádár was apparently told ... that it would certainly involve a press conference, at which, no doubt, someone would ask whether there was a statue of Wallenberg in Budapest. In the afternoon [American ambassador Salgo] duly paid his farewell visit, during the course of which he happened to mention that as a parting gift he would like to offer Hungary a statue of Wallenberg... That evening [Varga] was bombarded with telephone calls from various officials, all demanding to know the whereabouts of the Wallenberg statute. A meeting at the Municipal Council the following day resulted in an agreement to have the statue erected. It was moved to its present location within 48 hours.⁹⁷

Cole writes that the final location in Buda is far from where the Swedish diplomat conducted the bulk of his operations in Pest, adding that the monument is located at the site where Wallenberg’s abandoned *Studebaker* was discovered,⁹⁸ thereby anchoring the monument’s meaning in Cold War rather than Holocaust history.⁹⁹ It is worth noting, however, that receiving permission to place the monument in any kind of public space during these final years of the Cold War was not an easy accomplishment, as was demonstrated here in this text. According to Varga’s longtime friend, Hungarian writer Márta Harangozó, the surrounding park symbolizes peace and revival.¹⁰⁰ In that vein, one might reflect on the bed of yellow poppies that surrounds the monument during the warmer months of the year, which may or may not signify the color of the stars that Jews were required to wear under the Nazi regime.

⁹⁷ Dent, *Every Statue Tells a Story*. 282. (Note: Varga, in a recorded interview on April 22, 2011, corroborated much of Dent’s version of the story, however with minor differences, and a request to “keep it off record.” Dent, likewise, leaves a footnote to his version of the story stating that “for this and his subsequent personal experiences, see the interviews with Imre Varga in Árpási, 2002).

⁹⁸ According to Harvey Rosenfeld, it was “by sheer coincidence, [that] the site chosen for the monument was the spot where Wallenberg’s *Studebaker* was found abandoned in February 1945.” Cole, *Holocaust City*, 235.

⁹⁹ Cole suggests that it is “clear [the site] was more than simply fortuitous.” Ibid, 235.

¹⁰⁰ Márta Harangozó, “*The World of Imre Varga*,” 11.

To briefly summarize each memorial: *The Memorial to the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs* (1991) is located in private space within the Dohány Street synagogue. Though it is not public, it can be seen from public spaces. Considering the value of the monument and its delicate structure, with 4,000 individual silver leaves, the location behind a secure gate is a wise choice, as it protects the monument from possible vandalism. The perspective is clearly from a Jewish standpoint by virtue of the fact of its location within private Jewish space, even though the victims are still referred to as “martyrs”. The memorial has become somewhat of a tourist attraction, as it is located within the largest synagogue in all of Europe, which is a tourist attraction unto itself, and provides guided tours in numerous languages.

Much of the same can be said for the *Forced March* memorial, though it is not quite as visible as the *Martyrs* memorial, and is often overlooked by visitors as they pass through the walkway next to the gravesites on their way to the rear courtyard.

The *Radnóti* memorial on Andrássy is visible, accessible, and located in a high-traffic area. While it is not located in a site of history, it is situated in front of Radnóti’s namesake theatre. The only criticism with this memorial is that it contains no plaque that explains what the memorial is supposed to be commemorating.

And finally, the *Second Raoul Wallenberg* monument. As Cole noted, it is indeed far removed from where the Swedish diplomat conducted his operations. Cole suggests that the location—which is situated close to where Wallenberg’s abandoned car was discovered—indicates that city officials were more interested in highlighting the Wallenberg’s disappearance in the Cold War rather than his operations in the Holocaust. This is interesting because Tanja Schult, a researcher at Stockholm University writes that President Gorbachev’s office in Moscow

gave Varga permission to erect the monument as long as it was “free of any allusion to Wallenberg’s fate.”¹⁰¹ According to Varga, the location was sheer coincidence, though he admits that the spot was not ideally suited for a monument. He says the site was saturated with water, making for a soggy foundation. “I had to [create a foundation with] wood planks, like the kind used for building railroad tracks, otherwise it would sink,” he says. This indicates that the site *may* have been chosen by an individual with an agenda and certain ties, or it just could have been chosen because it was remote, and city officials were not enthusiastic about showcasing it in a more visible site. Until more evidence is available, this is simply something we cannot know.

¹⁰¹ Tanja Shult, *A Hero’s Many Faces* (Hampshire, England: Macmillian, 2009) 159.

3.4 Tamás Szabó

Carl Lutz Memorial (1991)

Roma Holocaust Memorial (2006)



Fig. 8 *Carl Lutz Memorial* (close-up), Tamás Szabó, 1991, Budapest District XII, bronze and gold plate.

Fig. 9 *Carl Lutz Memorial*, Tamás Szabó, 1991, Budapest District XII, bronze and gold plate.

Images by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

In 1990, when Tamás Szabó entered the competition to design a monument commemorating the Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz, he submitted two plans: one for a location in Buda, and the other for a corner on Dob Street in the Jewish Quarter. “They picked the first location because Carl Lutz had lived there,” says the artist. “However, the jury deemed that it was not representative, and that it had nothing to do with the Holocaust....[They] realized that Dob Street could be a better location.” For the first location, Szabó had created a three-figure

monument, but for the second, the existence of an empty firewall presented a special problem, which according to Szabó, caused the other artists to drop out of the competition.¹⁰²

“That’s when the godly idea hit me to sculpt a savior, which was an angel to me,” says Szabó. “Carl Lutz was handing out groups of passports to Palestine, because the Germans accepted the Palestine passports. From that, I had the idea for the savior to drop a cloth to the figure lying on the ground. The cloth is the salvation, like Carl Lutz’s passports.” Szabó’s original idea was to inscribe all the names on the survivors on the cloth, but he realized it would be far too complicated to find and list the 62,000¹⁰³ Jewish people that Lutz saved with his international passports. “I didn’t want to leave anyone off the list,” says the 59-year-old artist. “I didn’t want to get involved with whose name is on there and whose name is not on there.”

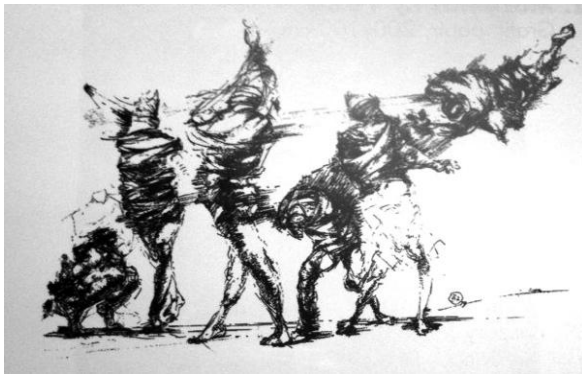


Fig. 10: *Drawing*, Tamás Szabó, 1979. Image courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 11: *Sacrifice of Isaac*, Tamás Szabó, 1987, Kisvárd, Hungary, bronze. Image courtesy of the artist.

¹⁰² Unless otherwise noted, all quotes and inferences to Tamás Szabó in this section are derived from an in-person interview with the artist: Imre Varga, Interview, May 3, 2011.

¹⁰³ Theo Tschuy. *Dangerous Diplomacy: The Story of Carl Lutz, Rescuer of 62,000 Hungarian Jews*. 2000. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).

The Carl Lutz monument features a 24-carat, gold-plated angel flying out of the wall and dropping a long cloth to a prostrate figure on the ground.¹⁰⁴ By no small coincidence, the monument bears a striking resemblance to a statue Szabó created in 1987, called *Sacrifice of Isaac*, and located in the Hungarian countryside of Kisvárdá. The three-figure composition, which is not a memorial, features an angel flying from the heavens, supported only by its firm grip on the shoulder of another figure—the biblical Abraham—who stands tall, eyes closed as if meditating on a divine message, one hand tightly clenched, the other open, fingers slightly parted. Kneeling toward this image is a third figure, smaller in stature than the other. “The sculpture is about when God sent an angel to save Isaac from being sacrificed,” says Szabó. “That’s when I first used the concept of the savior; it was the predecessor of the angel that I used for the Carl Lutz monument. But the idea goes back even further to 1979 from a drawing I did.”

From Szabó’s earliest rendition of the “savior,” the human figures are shown wrapped in a dressing of gauze, revealing random patches of skin, such as on the torso or part of a leg. The significance is unclear; Szabó chalks it up to “instinct,” something he relies on more than research, which, for him, is practically none at all. Of the tightly wrapped figures, they mainly reflect Szabó’s personal struggles. “That was how I felt; it was basically my instinct,” he says. “Back then, I felt that I was tied up; everyone felt like they were tied down. We felt that way for almost 20 years.” It is tempting to assume this feeling that he and others felt was the result of living under communism, but Szabó says not exactly. “Obviously, these two things were combined—the communism and what I felt personally,” he explains. “That’s when we were young.” One senses he may, in fact, be a little nostalgic for the old regime. By his side, his wife adds that it was not just the communism. “There was a lack of opportunities,” she says. “People

¹⁰⁴ The city of Basel, Switzerland paid for the 24-carat gold plate on the monument.

were tied down in every meaning; it's the so-called frosting on the cake that it happened to be during the communist era.”

For Szabó, the biggest challenge to overcome with the Carl Lutz project was technical. “It is not a typical situation, a bronze angel flying out from the wall like a bird,” he says. “I was doing something new.” The problem was how to connect the statue’s three separate parts: the angel connected to the wall, the cloth dropping from its hand, and the figure connected to the ground. He trucked the pieces in from his studio and, at the site, welded the pieces together to get rid of the line of demarcation. “The difficult part was the welding,” says Szabó. “But the original problem was how I was going to sculpt it. I had to lie on the ground to sculpt the flying angel, so that I could see what it would look like when it was viewed from the ground below.” Indeed, if one looks closely, one may recognize that the face of the angel is that of Carl Lutz, sans the glasses.

Since the monument’s unveiling in 1991, a number of critics have commented on the monument’s location, that it lacks site specificity. As noted by Tim Cole, Lutz did not conduct his operations in the 7th District, where the Jewish Quarter is located. His rescue operations were conducted in the 5th District, out of the American Legation (now the American Embassy¹⁰⁵), and 72 “safe houses,” including a glass factory at 29 Vadasz Street where, under Swiss authority, tens of thousands of Jews were sheltered.¹⁰⁶ Due to temporal constraints, I found very little information in my research as to why the original location—Carl Lutz’s former residence in Buda—had been suddenly rejected. However, in terms of erecting a memorial in an actual “site

¹⁰⁵During the war, the American Legation was maintained under Swiss protection.

¹⁰⁶Cole, *Image and Remembrance*, 272-287.

of memory,” that location would have made more sense. Indeed, as we are reminded by Young, a memorial that can be placed anywhere has little meaning.

One possibility for the change of location may have been a desire on the part of various entities, including the City Council, to create a mythical “Jewish space” in the immediate years after 1989. As convincingly argued by Erzsébet Fanni Tóth in her 2008 masters thesis on the topic, the historical Jewish Budapest¹⁰⁷ gradually transformed into a “sacred Jewish space” around the Dohány Street synagogue, initiated by religious organizations, the civil society, and the state. Toth suggests that newly erected monuments—such as the Carl Lutz monument—around the main synagogue (as well as the addition of Jewish enterprises, such as kosher restaurants) opened the area up to both international visitors, as well as local Jews, who started to talk publicly about their own memories. In Toth’s words, “the public urban space [was] thus commoditized in order to sell the image of the area.”¹⁰⁸

And although the Carl Lutz memorial is now firmly planted within this Jewish space, the verbiage on the plaque is in keeping with the city’s staunch policy of not mentioning that those targeted and affected by the Hungarian Holocaust were vastly Jewish. In Cole’s words, the “Jewish specificity of those ‘saved’ by Lutz in 1944 is suppressed in a text which speaks only of ‘those thousands of Nazi-persecuted saved through the leadership of a Swiss counsel, Carl Lutz, in 1944.’”¹⁰⁹ The monument does, however, reference Judaism with a quote from the Talmud,

¹⁰⁷ It is worth noting that the area around the Dohány street synagogue was not called a “ghetto” until the German occupation during WWII, and even then, there were many smaller forms of ghettoization throughout the city, not just here. The way the term is used today seems to imply a mystical medieval history, such as that of the Jewish ghetto in Venice, Italy.

¹⁰⁸ Erzsébet Fanni Tóth, *Walking the Jewish Past?* (Budapest: Central European University) 2008. 6-9. http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2008/toth_erszebet.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ Cole, *Image and Remembrance*, 272-287.

one on the ground in Hungarian, and another on the wall in English: “Who saves the life of one person acts as saving the whole world.”¹¹⁰ The inscription is also inscribed in English and Hebrew on a rustic tombstone added in July 1997, without the consent of the artist, in what may be an attempt to make the monument more “Jewish”.¹¹¹



Fig. 12: *Fighting from the Right*, Tamás Szabó, 1990, Budapest: Glass House Memorial Gallery, bronze.
 Fig. 13: *Carl Lutz Memorial plaque*, Tamás Szabó, 2006, Budapest: Glass House Memorial Gallery, bronze. Both images by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

In another apparent attempt to correct the city’s historical memory, Szabó was commissioned to create a wall plaque featuring a bas-relief of his larger Carl Lutz monument, for the opening of the *Glass House* memorial room in 2006, the aforementioned location of the glass factory on Vadasz Street. Also, within the gallery is the three-figure composition that Szabó submitted for the Buda location. Called *Fighting from the Right*, the small bronze statue depicts a wounded man on the ground, and two other figures, one fighting from the right, the other helping from the left. “‘From the right,’ that could mean the Right-Party,” says Szabó. “That inspiration

¹¹⁰ This quote was also used in *Schindler’s List*.

¹¹¹ In the Jewish tradition, stones are placed on gravesites to signify that a visitor has come to pay respect to the dead. Larger stones have come to symbolize large groups of people lost during the Holocaust, such as the *Holocaust Memorial Stone* located at the Old Brick Factory in Budapest’s 3rd District, erected in 1945.

came to me when I opened up the Bible, and with closed eyes I pointed down on the page. Those were the first two words that I saw, *jobbóltámadnak* (“attack from the right”). In this depiction, the figure to the left, swaddled in drapes of cloth just as the other two, represents the Carl Lutz hero.



Fig. 14: *Roma Holocaust Memorial* (interior), Tamás Szabó, 2006, Budapest (Nehru Park), marble, bronze, gold leaf.

Fig.15: *Roma Holocaust Memorial*, Tamás Szabó, 2006, Budapest, black marble, bronze, gold leaf.

Fig.16 *Roma Holocaust Memorial* (ground work), Akos Mauer Klimes, 2006, Budapest, bronze inlay.

Also in 2006, Szabó created the *Roma Holocaust* memorial, located on the southernmost edge of the city in Nehru Park, just north of the Petőfi Bridge. Funded primarily by the Budapest Gallery and the Hungarian Institute of Culture and Art, with some contributions from Romedia Foundation, Roma Civil Rights Foundation, and the Romaversitas Foundation,¹¹² the memorial

¹¹² Agnes Daroczi, Vice President of Phralipe Independent Roma Organization and minority researcher at Hungarian Institute for Culture and Art was instrumental in bringing all the funders

commemorates the thousands killed within the Roma camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as the resisters who died fighting. The hollow three-sided structure—an austere prism made of black granite—contains a gold figure inside looking up toward the heavens. The figure can be seen through a variety of small plexiglass windows shaped as flames of fire. Clear plexiglass on the top of the structure allows light to filter in, revealing shiny gold-leafed walls that sparkle when the sun hits it a certain way. Szabó explains how it was pure instinct and zero research that led him to interpreting the Roma perspective of the Holocaust in this manner:

The Gypsies¹¹³ during the Second World War had to wear the same symbol, a black triangle. For the Jewish people it was two triangles, which was the star. I did not know the significance of the black triangle. The triangle was an instinct. It came to mind and I found out its meaning later. It sounds unbelievable but it's true. And that's when I started thinking about what I could put in the triangle. How can I make a sculpture that would be visible from inside and outside? That's when the idea came to do a sculpture within a sculpture. The idea came to mind to put a figure inside, which is completely gold. The gold inside the sculpture represents heat and fire.

As with many of Szabó's works, the meaning behind the form and materials leaves much to interpretation, and he is reluctant to commit to any. "Yes, a lot of people say that [the gold represents the fire of the crematorium], that's one interpretation, and I thought that, too, that the figure inside is burning," says Szabó. "But another thing, though, gold is very significant within the Gypsy culture." Indeed, for this artist, gold carries many meanings. For each person, it means something different. One viewpoint, he says, is purity; yet another would indicate royalty. In the case of the Carl Lutz monument, it represents purity of spirit.

together for the monument. According to her, a group of Hungarian-Romanis began a letter-writing campaign, petitioning for a Holocaust memorial. None of the political parties would hear their pleas until 2003, just before the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust was approaching.

¹¹³Szabo prefers to use the term "Gypsy" over "Roma," his logic being that the culture contains many branches, with various dialects, that are not all indigenous to Romania. They, like the European Jews, became a part of the country and culture in which they became settled.

The memorial has generated little interest from the public and media, however the Roma community has used it on several occasions as a gathering place to commemorate their own, who were murdered in the Holocaust. The languages on the ground inscription—whose embedding work was done by artist Akos Mauer Klimes—is in Hungarian, Roma, and English. In English, the inscription reads: *In the memory of the Roma victims of the Holocaust.*

Like the city's other Holocaust memorials, the Roma memorial is not impervious to vandalism. A corner of the prism was struck with a crowbar, permanently damaging the granite. On a separate occasion it was spray-painted with graffiti, which has been removed. The location is visible on the banks of the Danube, but outside of highly trafficked tourist zone, so those seeing it mainly are locals.

3.5 István Mányi

Holocaust Memorial Center (2004)

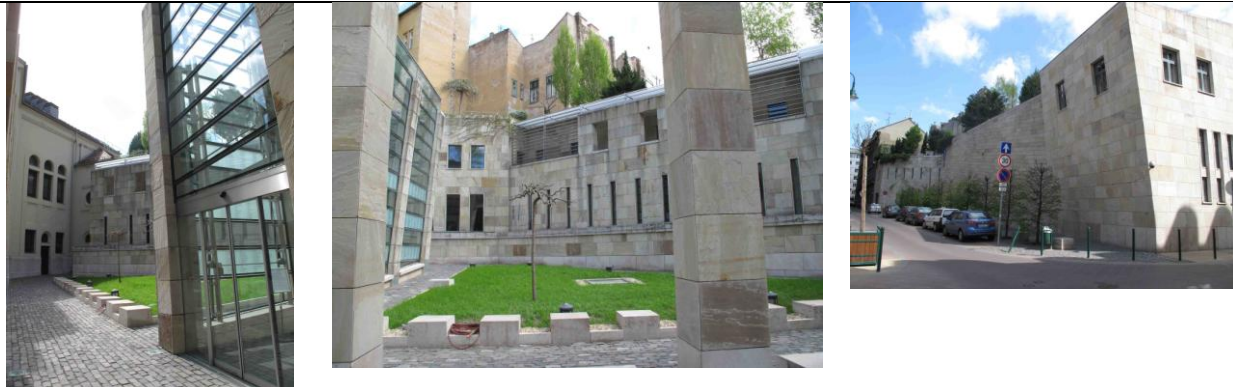


Fig. 17: *Holocaust Memorial Center* (stairwell in memorial garden), István Mányi, 2004, Budapest; limestone, glass, steel.

Fig.18: *Holocaust Memorial Center* (memorial garden)

Fig.19 *Holocaust Memorial Center* (exterior)

Images by Jessica Taylor-Tudzin.

István Mányi, the architectural mind behind Budapest’s Holocaust Museum Center (HMC), is clearly proud of the stone, steel, and glass complex he designed. “An architect has to take his hand off his work so it can live its own life,” he tells us as we walk the grounds together. But for Mányi, that has not been such an easy task, as he is a frequent visitor here, often getting involved in some of the Center’s cultural events, such as the evening last summer where guests read aloud the poems of Miklós Radnóti in the Center’s memorial garden.

We partake in a little name-dropping; he tells me “Peter Eisenman had very positive feedback on the design,” and then he delves into the story of when celebrity architect Frank Gehry paid a “secret” visit to Budapest 2006. According to Mányi, a reporter had hunted Gehry down on that visit and asked him what memories of the city will stay with him the longest. “Gehry answered, the view from Gellert Hill, the city at night, and Pava Street [where the

Memorial Center is located].” Manyi says that by the time Gehry saw the clear glass chairs in the Center’s synagogue, he was moved to tears.

Not everyone, however, has been as moved with the Center. From its earliest stages of development in 2001 to well beyond the international grand opening on April 14, 2004, the project has come under fire from various intellectuals, including Nobel-prizing winning writer, Imre Kertesz, and noted Holocaust historian, Randolph Braham. Critics say the Center’s location in the city’s 9th District appears purposely removed from the center of town, that it is not easily accessible, and most visitors to the city do not even know it exists. The biggest complaint, however, is that the location has no historical significance, that it would have been more useful if the dilapidated Rumbach Synagogue in the 7th District’s Jewish Quarter had been refurbished and the Center had been located there, in proximity to the city’s other high-traffic Jewish attractions.

True, had the Center been located there, as had originally been proposed a decade ago, it would have been more easily accessible. Yet, even in 2001, when the Rumbach Synagogue was, as Manyi puts it, “only a verbal plan,” even that location came under (mild) attack. Cole wrote that selecting the former Pest ghetto as a place to situate the museum “points to the self-conscious drawing upon this site of Holocaust history, albeit in rather generic ways.”¹¹⁴ In other words, the location—the site of a former liberated ghetto as opposed to a liquidated one—was not specific enough to speak to the whole of the Hungarian Holocaust and its Jewish victimhood.

¹¹⁴ Cole, *Holocaust City*, 246.

At some point, however, the question has to be asked: If not in the center of town and not on the periphery, then where would be the most adequate place to build such a museum—the first in East-Central Europe to present the Holocaust in a comprehensive manner, replete with a research center?¹¹⁵ Indeed, the argument regarding location is unreasonable, considering such arguments as: “it is not central” and “it is not historically significant” and “the Rumbach synagogue is much more beautiful”. Some even suggested that the Center should have been situated at the former Óbuda Brick Factory, an even further-removed location, where Budapest Jews were forced to meet to begin a march out of the city to various labor camps. For Manyi’s part, he had no other choice than to tune out the noise and build. “I stopped paying attention to the media,” he says. “I put all of my focus on my job instead.”

Indeed, the critics seem to be missing the bigger picture here. It is a big step that Hungary—situated in a region of Europe where some countries are still not addressing this aspect of the past—took steps to erect a Holocaust Memorial Center in the first place. And they did not just decide on it; they actually built it, though it took nearly 15 years to get from talking about it in 1990 to actually opening the doors in 2004.

Today, the facility acts as both museum and education center, where more than 10,000 documents (most in the Hungarian language) are made available for research. There is, nothing else like it in this region. And, says Manyi, the location is in fact historically significant to the Hungarian Holocaust.

¹¹⁵ The Jewish Quarter in Prague and small gallery in Austria were technically first, but neither presented the topic as comprehensively as the HMC.

In 1944, the Center's attached synagogue—built in 1924 by Lipót Baumhorn, who designed 22 other synagogues within the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy—was a designated place to collect Jews to move to the city's various ghettos. After the war, survivors returned to the synagogue and erected a number of wall memorials to the dead. But with survivors falling off in numbers—some succumbing to their injuries, others emigrating out of the country, and finally the communist takeover in 1948—the synagogue could no longer support itself, and closed. By 2000, the synagogue was in complete disrepair, under a collapsed roof. Manyi says the Auschwitz Foundation offered Manyi the synagogue and asked him to consider restoring it as part of the proposed memorial complex. When he surveyed the site, Manyi saw that it offered much more potential for expansion than the Rumbach synagogue, which is sandwiched between two other buildings on a narrow street. This was an important consideration in the planning stages, as the complex was to be built with education in mind.

“I designed the Center with big rooms, so that after a walk-through, school-age students could participate in a history class,” says Manyi. Though we saw one class of students walking the grounds on our recent visit, this sort of participation is not mandated by the city's education system. Still, some teachers in the school system have taken it upon themselves to bring their students here because they think it is important.

When asked if he thinks that architecture has a special responsibility in interpreting traumatic events, Manyi wholeheartedly agrees. He points out the tilts in the newer walls that surround the memorial garden and renovated synagogue, and explains, “They are inspired by the state a city is in after an earthquake. People lose their standing in an earthquake. The straight is not straight, the vertical is not vertical, the ground is not level, and just like the Holocaust, it

cannot be processed.” Standing in the Center’s open-air memorial garden, the neighborhood’s surrounding buildings that rise above us add to this effect of the straight versus the skewed.

Manyi then directs our attention to the stairwell that leads down from the memorial garden to the museum’s permanent underground exhibit. Its glass walls are tilted in another rephrasing of nature, like the trees one finds on the Tuscan coast that should by nature stand straight, but instead are permanently bent in a leaning position due to the strong winds and storms that hit them from the sea. But, warns Manyi, “the building itself is not a narrative. It doesn’t explain the Holocaust like the exhibit does; it merely shows the importance of it.”

Other details in the architecture—which is contemporary in style and combines Indian limestone, glass, and steel—include six stone pillars in the memorial garden, representing the 600,000 Hungarian victims, 10 percent of all the European Jews killed in the Holocaust. The surrounding walls stand high over the complex, shadowing behind it the former synagogue (which now acts as cultural and education component of the center). Some critics complain that the walls hide the synagogue, but Manyi defends his decision to build them so high, saying that they play an important part in commemoration by providing room to accommodate the names of 600,000 victims in 8 mm type. Indeed, the number—which is actually only 60,000 so far as the Center is continuing to research the names of the dead—is much more significant when you can see it represented this way rather than hear it uttered in four-syllables.

The memorial garden also plays an important role. Here, at ground level, the garden is meant to be a quiet place of reflection. No picnicking or other recreational activities are allowed here. Symbolically, it is meant to represent living in the present, and contains a number of trees and benches for sitting. Above it are the heavens, and below, the underground exhibit that

outlines in graphic detail the evil of the Nazis and collaborators, who killed nearly a million Hungarians. It is important to note that the Center makes great efforts to include the Romani victims in its exhibit and education center. The overriding philosophy here is not the numbers, but what happens when a government stops protecting its citizens. In that regard, it has an eye on the future, working hard to educate against anti-Semitism and other racial hatred.

Curiously enough, the Center has had no episodes of vandalism. The building's beige stone walls seem an inviting canvas for teenage taggers, but thus far they have not had to wash any graffiti off of them. Of course, they are protected with anti-graffiti materials, but Manyi likes to think that the community respects the message behind the Center and has left it alone. And this to me, as I take note of the graffiti that marks the rest of the city, speaks volumes over the words of the critics.

The HMC is not centrally located, but it exists. To me, this is the main point with the museum: Where once there was nothing, there is now something. Furthermore, it is located in vicinity of other museums. Manyi says that there are currently plans in the works to revitalize the 9th District, which has been made evident with the arrivals of new 21st century architecture. Should everything go according to plan, the 9th district will become a bustling section of town, and the argument that the HMC is too far removed from the city's center will no longer be viable.

Conclusion

In this paper, I focused on 9 artistic works in Budapest that remember various aspects of the Hungarian Holocaust, restricted to a specific time period, from 1987 to 2010, what I call the city's second wave of Holocaust commemoration. Two of the works are located within the private property of the Dohány Street Synagogue. The remaining seven are located within the city's public sphere. My research included four memorials discussed in Cole's *Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory*: Anna Stein's *Crying to the Sky*, Tamás Szabó's Carl Lutz monument on Dob Street, and Imre Varga's *Memorial to the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs*, and his *Second Raoul Wallenberg* monument.

I entered this project wanting to know if the arguments that Cole posed in his research were still viable. Since his research in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, the city has added several new public memorials, including the Holocaust Memorial Center. His main concerns were the "hidden-ness" of the city's memorials, and their lack of Jewish specificity. More than merely pointing out if these new memorials were hidden, inaccessible, or use vague language that does not address the Jewish and Romani specificity of the Hungarian Holocaust, I wanted to know, at least in part, why these conditions existed. In truth, it is not enough to know that something exists; one must know why it exists, and under what circumstances.

For the answers to these questions, I turned to the artists who created the memorials and monuments. Through their oral testimonies, I was exposed to a much wider perspective that went beyond the politics of memory. For instance, my interviews with the artists also provided a glimpse into how "postmemory" artists come to know the subjects they did not experience firsthand, yet are attempting to commemorate in their works. For me, exploring

this topic was basically an exercise in learning how memory is bestowed from one generation to the next. Naturally with such a small sample group, it is hard to make broad statements. However, my sources did provide some insight, as three of the artists were alive during the era and experienced it in various degrees. Reflecting on their work, I am left with the impression that when attempting to represent even a small aspect of something as monumental as the Holocaust, a measure of vicarious memory comes into play even for those who, on some level, experienced the events first hand. Gyula Pauer, for example, combined his childhood memories bystander, with historical research and survivor testimonies, and then fused that together through the use of “memory-activity”, i.e., imagination. But perhaps even more profound is Anna Stein who, out of all the artists I interviewed, was more closely placed at the center of the events as they were happening. Even she, who had two grandparents murdered at the Danube by the Arrow Cross militia, had to come to know that experience vicariously.

I also learned how much thought the artists put in choosing their materials. Varga used red marble imported from Sweden in his monument to the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg; Pauer used iron to reflect the quality of rusted bullets pulled from the Danube after the war; and Szabó used gold leaf to reflect the quality of fire in his *Roma Holocaust Memorial*. These are some of the materials that make up Budapest’s “texture of memory,” a term coined by James Young, referring in part to the material forces of the monument maker.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ James E. Young. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. (Indianapolis: Indiana University press, 1988) 173.

The artists also offered interpretations of their works, allowing me to see the deeper meanings behind the abstract shapes. It is the results of this unintended outcome that has left the deepest impression on me. Through their explanations, I am now able to see their work through their eyes, where the more subtle, yet no less meaningful, aspects of the Holocaust narrative are revealed. I personally believe that this element of my research is the most valuable, as it can enhance people's awareness of the memorials, and perhaps stimulate them to think more deeply about their meaning. To be certain, most monuments and memorials go unnoticed. In the words of novelist Robert Musil, "there is nothing in the world that is quite so invisible. They are no doubt erected in order to be seen, indeed precisely to attract attention; yet at the same time they are somehow made attention-proof, so that attention slides off them like drops of water off an oilcloth."¹¹⁷

Musil's observation may be true with most memorials that are so far removed from the present few people notice them anymore. But this is certainly not the case with collective memories that are still relatively fresh, particularly when there are several actors involved, many of them still amongst the living. Such is the case with Holocaust commemoration in Budapest, where the same memorial can be used as a gathering place for one group of citizens to come together and remember, only to be vandalized later by another group. Clearly, Holocaust memory in Budapest (as with most European cities) is still a very emotional topic. For this reason, one surmises that there is a lot of negotiation that goes into deciding a site of memory here. One suspects that the locations are just visible enough to appease those who wish them into existence—mainly survivors and their relatives, as well as those traveling to the region to learn more about their Jewish heritage. But at the same time

¹¹⁷ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 146.

hidden enough so as not to become a source of national identity. Although, I perceive that this may be changing.

Through the artists, I learned that while the city ultimately has to approve the location of a proposed site of memory, it does not always get involved with choosing the site in the first place—in some instances, the sites were chosen by the artist or another organization. This, at least in part, redeems the city from the sweeping accusation of intentionally “hiding” the memorials, or locating them in low-traffic areas. However, there is still a lot of behind-the-scenes bureaucracy yet to be discovered regarding the location of the Carl Lutz monument in the Jewish Quarter. As mentioned two sites were proposed, yet the more historically relevant, more visible location was rejected. As was shown in my research, the city previously overruled the original site that Varga and his client, the former American ambassador, Nicolas M. Salgo, had chosen for the *Second Raoul Wallenberg* monument in St. István Park, in the same spot where the first Wallenberg monument was erected and torn down in 1949. But in 1987, the city council would hear none of it, selecting a far- removed site in the city’s 2nd District instead. The decision to erect the Carl Lutz monument in the Jewish space of the 7th District rather than on Buda Hill, where Carl Lutz lived, appears to have a political agenda behind it. Further investigation is recommended in this area.

Contemplating this issue, I have concluded that when one questions Holocaust memory in Budapest, one cannot separate it from the city’s Cold War memory. The latter invariably has had an effect on the former. It is no small coincidence that all public Holocaust commemoration came to an abrupt halt in 1949, with the removal of the Pál Pátzay’s Wallenberg monument the day it was scheduled to be publicly unveiled. Over the ensuing four decades, the official history of the Second World War was essentially distilled down to

two main groups: anti-fascists fighting fascism, fascists killing anti-fascists, anti-fascist liberators, anti-fascist victims, and so on. Removing the Jewish specificity, as well as the Romani, from the Hungarian Holocaust and replacing them with such euphemisms as “anti-fascists,” “martyrs,” and “victims” served the government’s goal of homogenizing a society that included both former Nazi collaborators and Jewish and Romani Holocaust survivors.

Nevertheless, since 1989, when communism fell and the city opened itself up to the ideas of the free marketplace, including Holocaust commemoration, the Soviet-inspired language of “evil fascists” and “anti-fascist” heroes and victims still continues. Notwithstanding the *Roma Holocaust Memorial*, such vague references have come to characterize the way the city remembers the Hungarian Holocaust.

It is interesting to note that the Soviet-inspired language of the Holocaust persists even as the city embarks on an aggressive campaign to erase any connection it once had to its Soviet past. In Holocaust commemoration, we now observe the rise of memorials and monuments to such “righteous gentiles” as foreign diplomats Raoul Wallenberg and Carl Lutz. To me, this is the most striking example of Soviet erasure, with the foreign actors rising to the fore, and the Soviet liberators falling far back into the background, in an almost complete reversal of how the history was presented some 20 years ago.

Another finding involved the actual financing of the memorials. I had supposed many of them were funded by outside organizations, like Varga’s *Memorial to the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs*. Not so. I was pleasantly surprised to learn the city of Budapest financed many of the memorials. This indicates to me that while people may debate the way the city remembers the Holocaust, this city is consistently demonstrating an increased will to remember.

Holocaust commemoration has been a long and gradual evolution since the mid-1980s. But it is happening, as evidenced by the addition of the Holocaust Memorial Center in 2004—the first facility of its kind in all of Central and Eastern Europe. Though its location may not be ideal for some, the fact of the matter is, it is here—and people are visiting it. One hopes that the lessons taught here will have a positive effect on future generations.

The formation of the European Union has helped to create a more global perspective of history. While it is evident that some Hungarians cling to their old ways and old mindsets, and some of the younger generation have adapted these old ideas in a vicarious memory of their own, I would like to believe many more Hungarians are influenced by the attitudes of the wider world, one that rejects racism and other social prejudices. It would be interesting indeed to revisit this topic again in another 15 years to witness additional turns in Budapest's Holocaust memory.

Appendix I

Complete wording on the *Neue Wache Memorial* in Berlin:

The Neue Wache is the place where we commemorate the victims of war and tyranny.

We honor the memory of the peoples who suffered through war. We remember their citizens who were persecuted and who lost their lives. We remember those killed in action in the World Wars. We remember the innocent who lost their lives as a result of war in their homeland, in captivity and through expulsion.

We remember the millions of Jews who were murdered. We remember the Sinti and Roma who were murdered. We remember all those who were killed because of their origin, homosexuality, sickness or infirmity. We remember all who were murdered, whose right to life was denied.

We remember the people who had to die because of their religious or political convictions. We remember all those who were victims of tyranny and met their death, though innocent.

We remember the women and men who sacrificed their lives in resistance to despotic rule. We honor all who preferred to die rather than act against their conscience.

We honor the memory of the women and men who were persecuted and murdered because they resisted totalitarian dictatorship after 1945.

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