

Critical Inquiry



Ricardo Nirenberg and David Nirenberg * Joseph DeLappe and David Simpson * Sandra Laugier * Susan Gubar * Stefan Helmreich * Gil Anidjar * Mark Seltzer * David Antin * Jerome Rothenberg * Jennifer Scapetone * Gertrud Koch *
and
Ruth Leys and William E. Connolly * A Debate on Affect Theory

When a variable x in a formula never appears preceded by the "there exists" or the "for every" symbols, we say that the variable x is "free" in that formula.

Set Theoretical Symbols

x, y, z , and so on generally stand for sets.

$x \in y$, "x belongs to y," is the basic, undefined, relation in set theory. $x \notin y$ means x does not belong to y .

Brackets $\{ \}$ are used to define new sets. For example, given sets x and y , $\{x, y\}$ is the set consisting in the sets x and y , or, in other words, the set whose elements are the sets x and y .

The empty set \emptyset is the set defined by: $\forall x (x \notin \emptyset)$, "for every x , x does not belong to the empty set."

$y \subseteq x$, "y is contained in or equal to x," or "y is a subset of x," means that any element of y is an element of x . Formally, $\forall z (z \in y \rightarrow z \in x)$. The empty set is a subset of every set. Every set is a subset of itself.

Two sets x and y are equal, $x = y$, means that $(y \subseteq x) \& (x \subseteq y)$.

$y \subset x$, "y strictly contained in x," means that $(y \subseteq x) \& (y \neq x)$.

Given any two sets x and y , the "union of x and y ," $x \cup y$, is the set containing all elements either of x or of y . Formally, $(z \in x \cup y) \leftrightarrow ((z \in x) \vee (z \in y))$.

$P(x)$, "the set of parts of x ," or "the power set of x ," is the set whose elements are all the subsets of x , including the empty set and x itself.

Virtual Commemoration: The Iraqi Memorial Project

Joseph DeLappe and David Simpson

Except under extraordinary circumstances, most of us do not look forward with any eagerness to our own deaths. That said, one of the few positive thoughts that can accompany the prospect of dying is the possibility of being remembered with affection or respect. Those of us living ordinary lives out of the public eye would expect to be lamented by our loved ones and commemorated in their living memories and perhaps by some modest headstone or plaque in a place that had meant something to us or to those we leave behind. Few of us anticipate a future in which there are no memories of who we were and no record of at least our names.

If we die in military service or as the result of a terrorist attack we can expect a good deal more: a widely published obituary, a memorial service, a funeral high on decorum, or a coffin draped in the flag. Here the impulse is to make sure that something of us will survive in the public sphere beyond living memory. Architects of commemoration engage in a mediated effort at once to reproduce and to innovate upon the iconography of mourning. Edwin Lutyens's cenotaph in London's Whitehall, built to honor the British dead of World War One, impresses because it is almost antimemorial, a small and largely unadorned column in the middle of a busy street otherwise given over to grandiose government buildings. Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial startles us in its decision to convey us into the earth. The Freedom Tower in New York City, now renamed One

The iraqimemorial.org exhibition will be on display at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Projects Space in New York City in September 2011. www.efanyc.org/efa-project-space/

World Trade Center, will either inspire or appall us according to how we feel about its balancing of moral gravity and patriotic triumphalism.

But what about the deaths of others not ourselves that the West has brought about, deliberately or inadvertently? What about those we have targeted as part of our foreign policy or deemed to be inevitable collateral casualties in our pursuit of profit or revenge, strategic advantage or necessary violence? What about, for example, the hundreds of thousands of dead and disfigured Iraqi civilians whose lives have ended or been irrevocably damaged by a war many of us now admit to have been a mistake and even an injustice? Who will remember them and in what form? Living in a state already disabled and impoverished by years of economic sanctions even before the American invasion, what prospects exist here for a public culture of commemoration? Such things take time and money and, above all, peacetime, time to look back and to declare an end to violence. None of these conditions pertains in Iraq. The sanctions and the war together have created the conditions for failed statehood and for ongoing civic and economic turmoil; even living memory is insecure. At least for the foreseeable future there are unlikely to be any international competitions for building memorials to the Iraqi dead. Their names will go largely unrecorded in a place where record keeping itself is a scarce luxury. While endless hours and extraordinary technological and scientific ingenuity have been devoted to establishing the identities of even the tiniest of the body parts excavated from the rubble of lower Manhattan, no such options exist for Iraq, where the loss of life goes on and on and where the resources required for mere day-to-day survival are critically stretched. Perhaps, in a hundred years or so, the Western Alliance will apologize for its part in this, in some act of meaningless contrition, but probably not. Meanwhile the memorialization of the Iraqi dead seems likely to remain an unbuilt project.

Need this be the sign of total failure? Of course it would be a better world if modern Iraq were in a position to contemplate lavish public memorials to its dead, but this could only be imagined for a fully functioning Iraqi civil society enjoying peace and affluence. Given that this is not how things are, there is something to be said for the integrity of the unbuilt memorial, especially when the conditions for being unbuilt are part of

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what a memorial concept communicates. This is what iraqimemorial.org initiates in providing a forum for unsponsored art and for the expression of an unfunded grief. Iraqimemorial.org was set up by Joseph DeLappe in November 2007 as an entirely virtual project inviting submissions from artists from all over the world, all of which would be exhibited on the website. Two successive sets of jurors convened to respond to the submissions, but there were no winners or losers and no rewards or rejections. All projects were accessible to all comers at all times, and all were invited to submit votes and comments. In the West such a gesture comes best from outside official channels and works best by keeping a distance from officially sanctioned memorial genres. By not ever being frozen in time, by never taking permanent form, the virtual memorial does not risk becoming out of date; it is only ever conjured up when someone chooses to encounter it. And by being perpetually latent, permanently to come, it does not pass judgment on history as something purely of the past. Before Berlin got Peter Eisenman's Potsdammerplatz installation there was much debate about antimemorial options and about ways in which commemoration could be an ongoing event not made permanent in built space.¹ Here in the Iraqi Memorial Project these options are the priority.

Among the very few utopian moments generated by the disaster of 9/11 was the idea of a memorial made up of a simple silk or canvas tent fluttering in the wind and demonstrating the fragility of its own construction as well as of the lives that it commemorated. Had it been built it would have been always on the point of its own disappearance, through the effects of wind and weather, into something unbuilt. Of course it was implausible (because politically unimaginable) that the vulnerability and transience of human life would have been deemed more important to recall than the defiant strength of the nation, and this is seemingly still the case. But we may learn even now from this unbuilt project and from others like it. It offers us a way to imagine modes of alternative memorialisation that do not regurgitate the grandiose gestures of a vengeful patriotism that insists on claiming that death is somehow worthwhile or at least not in vain. This is especially pertinent in the case of civilian deaths.

When we call something a civilian death we mostly mean that the person is peripherally if at all involved in the conflict or is at least taking no deliberate or active part in it. Soldiers have often proved willing to acknowledge the humanity of their enemies as they have witnessed the arbitrary disposition of death among friends and foes and their mutual

1. James Young writes about this in his *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, Conn., 2000).

vulnerability to mistakes and misjudgments on their own side. Civilians have even more in common and even more reasons to find common cause. That is why it was so hard to find any images of dead Iraqi women and children on the major US news networks during the most destructive stages of the war. The national interest was not inclined toward muddying the waters with images of innocent and vulnerable bodies of those they chose to designate as enemies.

In the spring of 2010 project director DeLappe exhibited fifty-nine of the submissions in a physical installation in place and time—the Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery at the University of Nevada-Reno. He opted to stage the projects on thirty-inch by forty-inch whiteboards, replicating exactly the format specified by the organizers of the World Trade Center Site Memorial competition launched in February 2004. This competition famously gave us the Libeskind plan, but it also gave us over five thousand other projects that were not to be built, projects that have remained, in other words, virtual. So there is a formal kinship between the Iraqi Memorial projects and the vast majority—all but one indeed—of those competing to represent the American civilian dead of 9/11. It is, in this case almost fittingly, the fate of most of the world's artists that their works remain unconstructed, unseen, and unappreciated by most of their contemporaries. But they can still be imagined. The submissions DeLappe received are uncanny companions to the projects that will not be built in New York City; both pay homage to the civilian dead, and both will remain unbuilt.

In contrast to the 9/11 memorial proposals, which required specification of location, materials, access, lighting, and cost, the Iraqi Memorial projects range from small, private gestures to concepts on a global scale, spanning the entire range of modern media: architecture, painting, performance, video, photography, body art, found objects, and so on. They are haunting in that, once seen, they promise to be always about to arrive, about to take physical form as built monuments in the conventional manner. We cannot help thinking of them as possible, or desirable, even as the format is specified as virtual. Nadia Awad's *This War* is a sketch of life-size figures made of reed bundles, their heads covered with white sheets, that would be floated down the Potomac past the US government buildings in a stately progress toward the sea. Once imagined, the idea is unforgettable. Think of the silence, the lack of explicit accusation or designation, the mystery of who these figures represent, the gradual recognition of associations—reeds, marshes, Iraqi rivers, Sumerian funeral rituals—that would lead some beholders to make a connection to the war in the Middle East. And imagine sensing the impermanence of the experience, the real time of its happening, then and there in Washington, DC, as the rafts float past, while

sensing also that this could go on forever, as the ongoing list of the world's dead requires a commemoration that cannot end or end soon.

The river is also at the heart of Athanasia Karaloannoglou's *Marked for Life*, a project that imagines the rivers of Baghdad made red by underwater lighting for one day a year, 19 March, at once commemorating the outbreak of the war and indicating at the same time that after this one day life goes on but that the commemoration must always come back and is never to be forgotten. The traditional season of kite flying falls near the anniversary of the start of the Iraq war. Rashad Salim's *Kite Memorial* invites citizens of Baghdad to participate in workshops to create kites inscribed with the names of the dead to—in the artist's words—"reclaim the sky."² The moving fluid in Tyler Adams's installation is oil, oil as blood, timed to register the accumulation of dead persons on the iraqbodycount.org website. The names of the dead projected onto the Washington Monument in Andréa Stanislav's submission also move, spiraling down the sides of the monument "like water."³

The submissions that call for us to imagine lived encounters are equally powerful, equally unforgettable. Alyssa Wright's *Cherry Blossoms* is, once known about, something we keep expecting to come across. So too is Jack Toolin's *My Space for Your Life*, a project startling in its simplicity and because of its simplicity; the hastily scrawled names on paper reflect the speed of the dyings themselves as the stochastic real-life proxies on our streets image the complete arbitrariness of who lives and who dies under the conditions of modern warfare. It could be you, it could be me.

Who is remembered? Who is mourned? Who is responsible for remembering and mourning, and how can artists respond? An undercurrent of responsibility is apparent in some of the most powerful submissions to iraqimemorial.org. They implicate artist and audience and employ countermonumental gestures that bring together the personal and the political. This they share with Wafaa Bilal, an expatriate Iraqi whose work is not part of this project but who raises questions closely connected with many of those generated here. Bilal's brother was killed by an air-to-ground US missile in 2004. His performance *Shoot an Iraqi* invited virtual visitors to his temporary living quarters in a Chicago gallery to shoot at him through a webcam, using an electronically controlled paint ball gun. His later project *And Counting* performs a literal marking of death by tattooing on the artist's back a map of Iraq made up of thousands of invisible dots, one for

2. Rashad Salim, in "Exhibition," iraqimemorial.org/proposals_list.php?last=Salim&first=Rashad

3. Andréa Stanislav, in "Exhibition," iraqimemorial.org/proposals_list.php?last=Stanislav&first=Andréa

each death, permanently inscribed but visible only with UV lighting. Along with these, and always visible, there are marks designating some five thousand American deaths. One realizes, in other words, that one must choose to shine the UV light, choose to take the next step, choose to face up to Iraqi deaths.⁴ What should be well known remains hidden, requires the shining of a light. The artists of *iraqimemorial.org* share Bilal's desire to shed light on what so many of us seem to be unable or unwilling to see: the cost of war numbered in the lives of others who are not Americans.

It would be wrong to derive only comfort or inspiration from the submissions to be found at *iraqimemorial.org*; the impossibility of absolute noncomplicity with the killings is for many of us too evident for this. But there is something that is much better than nothing in the response of these artists to what will inevitably stand in history as a shocking indifference to the deaths we in the West have ourselves brought about. Given the continuing deaths of Iraqi civilians, the project remains ongoing, still to come.



FIGURE 1. Rashad Salim, *Kite Memorial*, performance, United Kingdom.

4. See Wafaa Bilal, interview with Amy Goodman, *Democracy Now*, 9 Mar. 2010, www.democracynow.org/2010/3/9/105_000_tattoos_iraqi_artist_wafaa

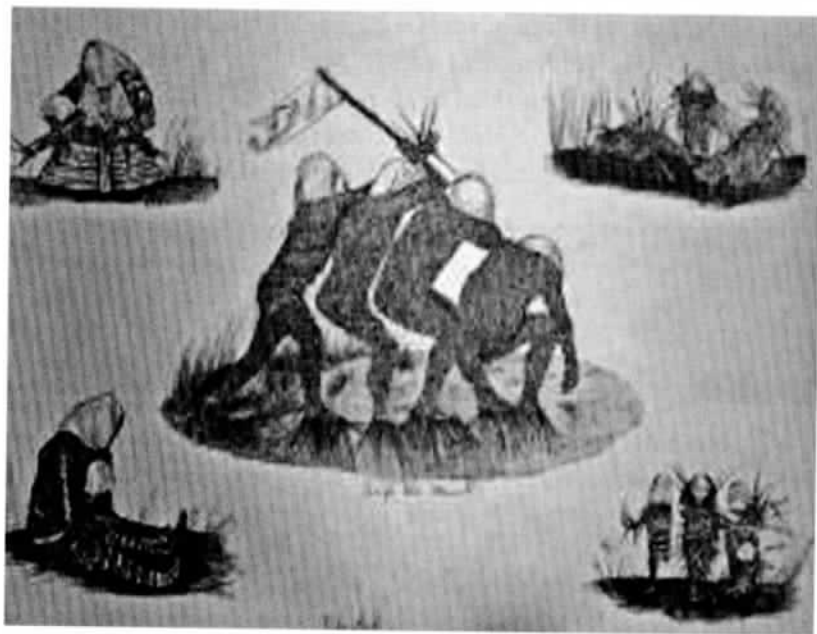


FIGURE 2. Nadia Awad, *This War*, sculpture, United States



FIGURE 3. Jack Toolin, *My Space for Your Life* (working title), internet art, United States



FIGURE 4. Athanasia Karaloannoglou, *Marked for Life*, public art, Greece

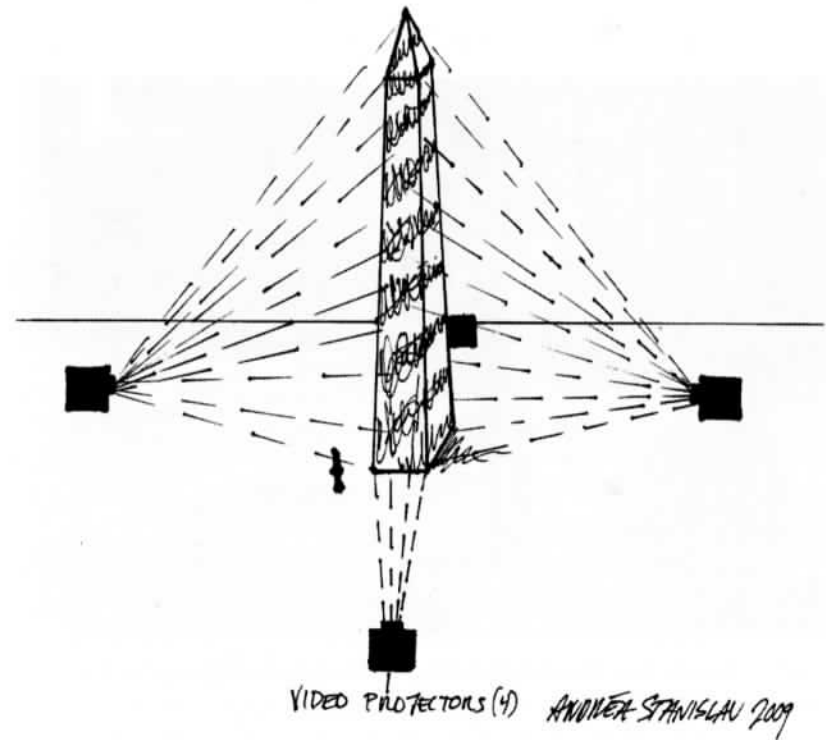


FIGURE 5. Andreea Stanislav, *Iraq Memorial*, video/film, United States

Introduction to the French edition of *Must We Mean What We Say?*

Sandra Laugier

Translated by Daniela Ginsburg



FIGURE 6. Alyssa Wright, *Cherry Blossoms*, installation, United States

Must We Mean What We Say? is Stanley Cavell's first book, and, in a sense, it is his most important.¹ It contains all the themes that Cavell continues to develop masterfully throughout his philosophy. There is a renewed usage of J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts, and, in the classic essay "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," he establishes the foundations of a radical reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein (later taken up in *The Claim of Reason*), the connections among skepticism, acknowledgment, and Shakespearean tragedy (which one finds in *Disowning Knowledge* and, in a positive form, in *Pursuits of Happiness*); there is the reflection on the ordinary that runs throughout his later works (*In Quest of the Ordinary* and *A Pitch of Philosophy*); and, finally, there is the original aesthetic approach that defines Cavell's work, through his objects—which range from William Shakespeare to Samuel Beckett and pass through Hollywood comedies and melodrama, and opera—and, above all, through his style and method.²

The following essay is the introduction to *Dire et vouloir dire: Livre d'essais*, trans. Sandra Laugier and Christian Fournier (Paris, 2009). This is the first translation into any language of Stanley Cavell's *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays*, forty years after its publication.

1. See Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (New York, 1969); hereafter abbreviated *MW*.

2. See Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York, 1979), hereafter abbreviated *CR*, trans. under the title *Les Voix de la raison: Wittgenstein, le scepticisme, la moralité et la tragédie* by Sandra Laugier and Nicole Balso (Paris, 1996); *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare* (New York, 1987); *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), trans. under the title *A la recherche du bonheur, Hollywood et la comédie du remariage* by Laugier and Christian Fournier (Paris,