memorials
Dear CED Alum and Friend,

In 1996, while attending an ACSA annual meeting in Boston, Steven Holl, Thom Mayne, and I visited the city’s Holocaust Memorial, designed by CED Architecture Professor Stanley Saitowitz (photos below and opposite). Each of us had seen images of the abstract glass pillars, but we were unprepared for the experience. It was a cold, crisp winter day with bright sunlight. As we walked the simple succession of paired pillars, we entered an unexpected emotional world. The steam emanating from the metal grates below created a warm, moist shroud, isolating us from the urban context. Sunlight reflected off of etchings on the pillars, projecting the ghost of concentration camp numbers on our bodies through the steam. I was speechless as I raised my hand to see a random set of numbers staring back.

When it was suggested that the second issue of FRAMEWORKS focus on memorials, I thought immediately of the many important projects covered in this issue—but it was my Boston experience that convinced me there was more to it than just the spate of projects during the last eight years and most recently those associated with 9/11. On reflection, the Boston experience defined an important design direction that is giving new meaning to and creating a rich domain of exploration for modern architecture. The pairing of abstraction with a visceral, sensory experience has given a specific emotional content to some of the most interesting current work, in contrast to the “universalism” of early modernism. The effect is a kind of double whammy: The abstraction belies anything specific, yet the sensory experience evokes a very particular personal and emotional response, making it even more powerful. I find this strategy played out in different ways in projects as diverse as Herzog & de Meuron’s Dominus winery, Jim Jennings’s Visiting Artists House, and Peter Eisenman’s new Berlin Holocaust Memorial. It seems that memorials, by the nature of their emotional programs, are the sites of both artistic and architectural explorations that have led to notable design innovations and have larger implications for our design imaginations. Hopefully this issue of FRAMEWORKS will introduce and stimulate further explorations.

Warm regards,

Harrison Fraker, Jr., FAIA
William W. Wurster Professor and Dean

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
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230 Wurster Hall #1820
Berkeley, CA 94720-1820
510/642-0831

Harrison S. Fraker, Jr.
Dean
Nizar AlSayyad
Associate Dean for International Programs
Frederick C. Collignon
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs
Peter C. Bosselmann
Chair, Department of Landscape and Environmental Planning
Robert Cervero
Chair, Department of City and Regional Planning
W. Mike Martin
Chair, Department of Architecture
Edward Arens
Director, Center for Environmental Design Research
Elizabeth Douthitt Byrne
Head, Environmental Design Library
Waverly Lowell
Director, Environmental Design Archives
Nicola Avril
Director, External Relations

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I. MEMORIAL MANIA SINCE MAYA LIN

The United States is in the throes of a memorial mania that manifests itself in two ways. First, memorials culminate every conflict, act, notable death, or historical moment. They have become the morbid cigarette we consume after tragedy, as if every loss remains somehow incomplete without its permanent place in the public sphere, in spite of the fact that the nature of the public becomes increasingly ambiguous. Second, memorials have succumbed to the forces of multiculturalism and political correctness, and like the pluralistic—some would say balkanized—society they represent, they have become cauliflowers, each one reflecting the messy aggregation of interests of democracy trafficking in official remembrance. Recent events, moreover, have strained memorial traditions in new ways, from the AIDS/HIV epidemic to the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the events of September 11, 2001, and the succession of anniversaries of 20th-century events, including the Holocaust and World War II. In short, American attempts to memorialize are encountering new kinds of issues in a rapidly changing political atmosphere, amid shifting conventions of art and architecture.

This was not always the case. Until World War I, the dominance of the classical tradition in architecture and the figure in sculpture provided a set of conventions for memorials and their spaces with almost limitless possibilities for composition within a limited framework of commemoration. Days of remembrance necessitated a place to gather. The memorial provided a focus for attention for official ceremonies, as well as a site for the laying of wreaths or flowers, the inscription of names, and an allegorical representation of the event, such as peace, victory, or noble death in the case of a war memorial (fig. 3). Since the American and French revolutions, these sorts of memorials have proliferated in step with the geometric population growth of the modern world, in part because modernity ruthlessly mechanized the means of destruction. To put this in Malthusian terms, memorials quickly exceeded the growth of means of subsistence: our ability to nurture memory and care for memorials lags behind our ability to produce them. And yet, in a mass society, in which almost all aspects of culture from birth to death have been farmed out to impersonal institutions, memorials are conspicuous for remaining individual and personal. As cultural behavior, they continue to resist capitulation to the machine, and this is because each one represents what has been called “memorial work,” the collective process of mourning that a community engages in after a traumatic event.

Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. (1982) is a touchstone for many of these issues (fig. 1). The story is well known. Lin won a national competition for the memorial as a student at Yale University. Her minimalist black granite wall, cut into a grassy swell on the Washington Mall, used the simplest means—reflection and the silent rhythm of names catalogued by date of death—in official remembrance. Recent events, moreover, have strained memorial traditions in new ways, from the AIDS/HIV epidemic to the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the events of September 11, 2001, and the succession of anniversaries of 20th-century events, including the Holocaust and World War II. In short, American attempts to memorialize are encountering new kinds of issues in a rapidly changing political atmosphere, amid shifting conventions of art and architecture.

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from memorial conventions and set a pattern for later efforts. While Lin single-handedly brought memorials up to date with developments in art, her memorial instantly incited controversy. Shortly after the memorial was completed, disgruntled Veterans and others pushed for a more figurative memorial, in part because they saw Lin’s design as a negative commentary on the war.

In response, Frederick Hart was commissioned to design a more traditional memorial, which was completed in 1983 (fig. 2). Three soldiers, each predictably of a different ethnic group, gazed wistfully at the wall—three bronze ghosts mourning, and also instructing visitors how to mourn. As controlled and open-ended as Lin’s design is, Hart’s figurative group borders on the maudlin restraint echo this important yet overlooked tradition in memorialization.

II. MEMORIAL TRADITIONS

Hart’s figures, by turn, interject a commentary on the abstraction and restraint of Lin’s memorial, a critique with roots in the beginnings of modern memorialization. In art-historical terms, they also may be seen as a sign of the passing of an era of universally legible, unequivocal artistic traditions. Lin’s memorial supplanted the purported universality of classicism, of figural narration or allegory in art, offering up the new universality of abstraction. Light, reflection, space, movement, and the rows of names that threaten to become infinite, these are the raw triggers of pathos—operating above history, above culture, or so proponents of abstraction would believe. They now compete with war-torn men in fatigues, whose realism is as much a problem as Horatio Greenough’s bare-chested George Washington as an enthroned Roman emperor (1833-36) on display nearby in the Museum of American History. Since World War I, critics of figurative memorials have understood the dilemma of representing modern warfare. “What will they do?” one writer asked, “Make statues of guys in jeeps?”

In fact, this is exactly what some artists attempted after World War I. While the Great War spawned its share of classical victory columns and allegorical figures, it also generated two other streams that continue with us today: abstraction and realism. The expressionistic twisting of Walter Gropius’s Monument to the March Dead of 1921 (destroyed by the Nazis and restored after World War II) shows the first impulse at work, while two more conventional memorials at Hyde Park Corner, London, show the quandary over realism in memorials (figs. 4, 5). The Machine Gun Corps Memorial (Derwent Wood, 1925), also known as the Boy David Memorial, and the Royal Artillery Memorial (Charles Sargeant Jagger, 1921-25) both memorialize soldiers who died in World War I, but they do so in remarkably different ways. The undersize David, a classical allegorical figure drawn from Michelangelo, offers an abstraction of society’s sacrifice of its youth to war, and a biblical reference to an act of heroism that likens David’s slaying to the new technology of the machine gun—the new weapon must have seemed like an unlikely image for a memorial. The Royal Artillery Memorial is much more self-consciously modern. Not only does it nod to traffic with its scale and directionality, it also depicts modern war realistically. Bronzes of men in the uniforms of the day stand guard over the “tombs” and their life-size Howitzer gun. While our eyes may find the Royal Artillery Memorial powerful, it was much criticized in its day for its realism. Americans wrestled with similar issues after both World War I and World War II.

The Iwo Jima Memorial (officially called the Marine Corps War Memorial, by Felix DeWeldon, 1944) is arguably the only figurative memorial to achieve iconic status in the United States between World War I and Lin’s memorial (fig. 6). This memorial, based on a photograph taken on Mt. Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima, where American soldiers raised a flag upon taking the mountain, represented the war directly. The Iwo Jima Memorial overcomes the problems of the Royal Artillery Memorial precisely by being “real,” by presenting itself as veristic, an act of war bronzed. What its photographic origins insinuated, public relations reinforced. Giant plaster models of the memorial went on tour during the war as part of a bond drive, making cameos in Times Square and on Wall Street in New York, and in Cleveland, Detroit, and Indianapolis. This memorial circus, based in photojournalism, undermined the idealizations and allegorical potential of the traditional memorial. All memorials are forms of media and modes of propaganda, but Iwo Jima may be the first to be a thoroughlygoing media creation, one powerful enough to resist the trends in art and society away from figurative memorials. After World War II, with the advent of television, the iconic memorial was trapped in a mimetic relationship with the media, each reciprocal-ly reinforcing or undermining the truth claims of the other.

The decline of figurative art and the rise of abstraction—what we now can see as an out-of-body experience that lasted a few decades after World War II—was played out through memorials as well. After World War II, so-called living memorials carried the day. These “useful” memorials—community centers, gymnasiums, parks, and the memorial highways on which we all drive—displaced the tradition of arches, obelisks, and columns surrounded with soldiers or topped with idealized figures like Victory or Liberty. Few memorials in the decades after World War II relied on the conventions of high art. Think of what a Jackson Pollock or Andy Warhol memorial might look like, and you see the problem. It is no coincidence that the Vietnam War spurred the first Minimalist memorial. While Minimalism already had a pedigree by the early 1980s, Lin was the first to apply it willfully to memorials, and it was a stunning act completely in tune with the tenor of the moment.

III. MULTICULTURALISM, MULTIPLICITY, AND MEMORY

The Vietnam War, which the United States memorialized before the earlier World War II or Korean War, was perhaps the most contentious issue of its day, a war fought amid social unrest and protest: part of the same set of forces that liberalized American society and led to multiculturalism, but also part of the Cold War. Minimalism arose in the same years and gave a wide berth to these multiple viewpoints. It is an art that is assertive with space, not meaning; it sets a stage, but leaves it empty for the spectator, who becomes an
vi. MEMORIAL LANDSCAPES

This multiplicity, however, can create a striking environment when applied at the right scale with a firm, consistent hand. Lawrence Halprin’s Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in D.C. plays at this game, but within a compelling and coherent landscape (fig. 12). Monumental walls of cyclopean boulders shelter a combination of waterfalls, freestanding sculptures (including one of FDR in a wheelchair and another of him with his dog, Fala), famous quotations, and fields of more abstract sculptural elements, all within a linear framework of outdoor “rooms” that chronologically traces his four terms as president. The effect is so grand that one
wonders if even Roosevelt can sustain this scale. Moreover, the collision of the monumental spaces with the less convincing smaller sculptures leads unsurprisingly to a feeling of bathos. The strategy might work better with a major national event, even if we take FDR as the personification of the American experience in depression and war. Yet Halprin, as landscape architect, had the sensitivity to massage all of these elements into a single, lucid experience. Unlike the Korean Memorial, which is less than the sum of its pieces, the FDR Memorial is expansive and whole.

A similar idea lies behind ROMA Design Group’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial (see pp. 12-15), planned for D.C. and conceived as “an engaging landscape experience tied to other landscapes and monuments, not as a single object or memorial dominating the site.” The idea reacts against the monumental, iconic memorial tradition, not through restraint, as Maya Lin had done, but rather through complexity and immersion in a landscape. It is also quite different from the anti-memorials popularized in Germany in recent decades, although it does operate as a critique of traditional memorials. Escalating a “single message,” ROMA Design Group has woven a composition of landscape elements (stone, water, and trees) along a forceful, curving berm faced in stone and engraved with famous quotes from King. Atop the berm runs a tree-lined path marked with intimate niches that serve as “wellsprings” recounting the contribution of “martyrs” to the Civil Rights Movement. Elsewhere monoliths frame views of the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials, linking MLK with an axis of “larger democratic ideals that form the context for King’s words and deeds.” Another monolith carved with a likeness of King serves as a monumental counterpoint to the Jefferson Memorial, a much-needed anchor for the space.

Time will tell if this strategy leads to effective and moving commemoration.

The larger trend expressed in Halprin’s FDR Memorial and ROMA Design Group’s MLK Memorial might give us pause: These are environments whose massive scale and complexity are new developments. Naturally the problem begins with the program, not with the architects. Nonetheless, as memorial landscapes, they immodestly annex landscape in general, threatening to make all public space memorial space. In other words, does the memorial fetish noted at the opening of this essay reverse the problem that modern designers have with the singular, iconic memorial—namely that its gravitational pull leaves little room for a diversity of experience or commemorative practices? Does the new sprawling memorial landscape resist potent commemoration because it fails to define memory and place in terms of commemorative practices? If we disperse memorial spaces, then how do we distinguish between the sacred and the profane, between landscapes of play and landscapes of memory? And is this slippage significant? We might aim instead to shape our memorials in terms of commemorative practices rather than through landscape and artistic practices. The stiff old Civil War memorials or the doughboys erected after World War I may have asserted a single master narrative. They might even be said to glorify war uncritically. But at least they provided an uncomplicated anchor in public space where a community could meet to perform its annual rituals on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. These rites may now contend with barbecues and sporting events, offering a convenient day off from work rather than true days of commemoration, but they have not waned entirely, and other memorial practices have asserted themselves. The question we need to ask is about the shape of memorials in the post-Cold War world, when changes in American society and globalization are deforming memorial practices.

V. MEMORIALS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH

All of this, naturally, anticipates the debates over the World Trade Center Memorial, which inherits these experiments and expectations. It is burdened by the spatial complications of the trend toward aggregative memorials and by the latest fashions in art, including installations and the advance of digital and high tech art. Moreover, the multicultural dilemma in memorialization still has not been solved theoretically, programmatically or formally. Multiculturalism may in fact never be solved with art, and perhaps it should not be. From the beginning, the impromptu memorials set up around the World Trade Center site revealed the splintering commemorative agenda, with memorials to policemen, fire fighters, office workers, and a host of other groups and individuals (fig. 13). These factions would play an important role in directing the process and ultimately the final shape of the memorial, including the insistence on retaining the footprints of the old buildings. This alone constitutes a stunning influence of public sentiment over the design process, even if a design competition determined the ultimate form.

Michael Arad and Peter Walker’s winning design, “Reflecting Absence,” takes its cue from the voids left by the destruction of the towers (see pp. 16-21). In fact, these are not voids in the literal sense, since the entire site was a smoldering pit for months; rather, the voids correspond with our “mental map” of the lost buildings. Arad and Walker imaginatively shaped a memorial space, turning the voids into recessed pools, with cascades of water defining the edges of the former buildings. A grove of deciduous trees intensifies the towers’ absence, and their transformation throughout the year as leaves fall and buds emerge plays with traditional memorial ideas of birth and death. The architects explained these pools as a sensual, unfolding experience. As visitors descend on the ramps that lead into the memorial spaces, they are “removed from the sights and sounds of the city and immersed in a cool darkness. As they proceed, the sound of water falling grows louder, and more daylight filters in to below. At the bottom of their descent, they find themselves behind a thin curtain of water, staring out at an enormous pool.” The chamber again acts conventionally, bearing the names of the dead on its walls. Here convention is not a failure of nerve, but an attempt to communicate pathos through well-worn memorial strategies. In Arad and Walker’s words: “Standing there at the water’s edge, looking at a pool of water that is flowing away into an abyss, a visitor to the site can sense that what is beyond this curtain of water and ribbon of names is inaccessible.” The two chambers are linked under-ground by a passageway and a small space where visitors can light memorial candles or gather in small groups. Additionally, the designers have exposed the slurry wall, the massive foundations of the original buildings. Some of the artifacts and wreckage from the disaster will be placed in an interpretive center, making these palpable parts of the memorial experience. In contrast to this public place, a large stone vessel in a separate room will contain the remains of unidentified victims. As a whole, the memorial deliberately balances an immensely complicated set of demands, including a variety of factions with different ideas, a national tragedy with a strong local component, the need to mediate between consumerist and memorial environments, and the need for a monumental space amidst skyscrapers that can allow for intimate and personal encounters with objects. The design manages to massage all of these elements together without overdetermining the experience. This leaves open the possibility, as with Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial, of a critical response to the site and the event. It does not, however, explicitly accommodate the various groups who have demanded repre-
sentation at the site, and as a national memorial to the event, it should not be so encumbered. These groups will find their memorial places.

VI. EMERGING FORMS

In 2004, the Board of Directors of the National AIDS Memorial Grove held a competition for the design of a National AIDS Memorial. The brief challenged competitors to think in terms of the whole seven-acre site nestled in a dell in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. The open-ended invitation to use the dell, which already sustains a variety found in memorial markers to AIDS, suggested the sort of memorial landscape of the FDR and MLK memorials. But the subject of the memorial, the AIDS epidemic, offered a range of new issues. Not only would the project memorialize those lost to the disease, but also, the board hoped, the design would stimulate thinking about AIDS and memory, promote hope for those touched by the disease, increase awareness of AIDS as a global tragedy, educate the public, raise awareness about the Grove, enhance its beauty, and "secure, through design acclaim, the care of the Grove in the future." A tall order. Unlike the destruction of the Acropolis or the destruction of the Guggenheim, AIDS is a dispersed, misunderstood, constantly shifting, and ongoing tragedy.

AIDS is a dispersed, misunderstood, graphically focused and visually iconic, yet always changing, constantly shifting, and ongoing tragedy. Not surprisingly, given the program and to understand the social and cultural meaning of the AIDS epidemic, is meant to evoke hope, since out of the charred remains of a simulated forest fire new life would emerge. Were the design attached to real ritual burning, one could imagine an immensely evocative memorial, one tied to annual commemorations and to the natural cycle of death and rebirth. This would match the unresolved nature of the AIDS epidemic, and it would do so viscerally. But since the idea must be reduced to a static, sculptural suggestion of this process, much of the dynamism and interactive possibilities are lost.

Professor Raveevem Choksambatchai of the College of Environmental Design, working with Department of Architecture graduates Jacob Atherton and Michael Eggers, and the author of this article as consultant, were also finalists in the competition. The team’s project included a field of dense, red, resinous rods that would glow with phosphorescence at night and an audio component which voices eerily count nonconsecutive numbers (fig. 14; also see pp. 38-39). Humming-birds would be seen as a return to the 19th-century architectural tradition. challenhed competitors to think in terms of the whole seven-acre site nestled in a dell in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park. The open-ended invitation to use the dell, which already sustains a variety found in memorial markers to AIDS, suggested the sort of memorial landscape of the FDR and MLK memorials. But the subject of the memorial, the AIDS epidemic, offered a range of new issues. Not only would the project memorialize those lost to the disease, but also, the board hoped, the design would stimulate thinking about AIDS and memory, promote hope for those touched by the disease, increase awareness of AIDS as a global tragedy, educate the public, raise awareness about the Grove, enhance its beauty, and “secure, through design acclaim, the care of the Grove in the future.” A tall order. Unlike the destruction of the Acropolis, which already sustains a variety of memorial markers to AIDS, the AIDS epidemic, is meant to evoke hope, since out of the charred remains of a simulated forest fire new life would emerge. Were the design attached to real ritual burning, one could imagine an immensely evocative memorial, one tied to annual commemorations and to the natural cycle of death and rebirth. This would match the unresolved nature of the AIDS epidemic, and it would do so viscerally. But since the idea must be reduced to a static, sculptural suggestion of this process, much of the dynamism and interactive possibilities are lost.

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Along similar lines, Leor Lovinger, MLA ’03, and Gilat Lovinger’s design for the Flight 93 National Memorial, titled “Disturbed Harmony,” a finalist from more than 1,000 entries in the competition, manipulates an immense landscape to bring out the strange collision of the terrorist hijacking and the vernacular landscape of rural Pennsylvania (see pp. 22-25). A 2.5-mile granite wall (called the Bravery Wall) meanders through the gentle undulations of the land. It is both a memorial wall and a timeline of the event, so that the last moments of this harrowing flight slowly unfold as one walks along the wall. The surreal juxtaposition is both spatial and temporal, drawing out seconds of frenetic tragedy that took place in the cabin of an airplane into a contemplative experience of verdant farmland. A generation ago, the urge would have been to monumentalize the site of the crash with a ruined airplane, a plaque, or a sculptural element that marked the spot. But here the memorial landscape makes sense; it uses the land to explain the event, and it does so in the service of a memorial experience. The form of the memorial, in other words, derives from its commemorative function. In some sense, the Lovinger’s design is traditional, a wall inscribed with names and a narrative, but its scale and site plan elaborate incisively on this tradition.

One wonders what future generations will think of this memorial mausoleum. Will it be seen as a return to the 19th-century obsession with forging permanent memorials in the face of unprecedented change and the violent upheavals of the Industrial Revolution? Is the current memorial binge also an attempt to find temporal anchors in a world undergoing rapid changes driven by digital technology, virtualization, and biotechnology, including cloning and genetic engineering? What we do know is that memorials, like their creators, come and go. The intense scrutiny of the present will fade with the years. Time will render meaningless even the most contentious memorials: Imagine a future moment when a child asks a parent to explain a wall of names on granite and the parent does not know it is the Vietnam Memorial. Rome memorialized with such vigor that precincs became over-crowded with memorials, forcing the city to periodically sweep them away, making room for the next round. We’ve all seen memorials to Lenin or Stalin toppled and, more recently, statues of Saddam Hussein lassoed down. The ancients might also give us pause in other ways. After the Persians sacked Athens, Athenians observed a 50-year period of waiting before they built on the temple mount, an immensely patient, solemn, and wise response to destruction—one we might learn from in New York. Such maturity, however, is unthinkable in America’s First City, especially in its financial center, where land values demand instant gratification—although we might note that the Acropolis is hardly a low-rent property. In our eagerness to do something at Ground Zero, we forget that memorialization and the profit motive are forever orphaned on odd patches of public land. The cynical response to all of this is to conclude that no matter what design we choose in our memorials, they reflect currents in art and architecture, and, as forms of social commentary, they become outdated within a generation or two. In effect, most memorials are built not for posterity or for longevity but as part of the mounting process. They constitute an essential part of people in the present working through loss. Their obsolescence is tied to their efficacy, a sign of the end of grieving, and memorials that live on suggest a cultural snap, a lack of resolution. Still, the architectural historian in me wishes that all of these memorials outlive their usefulness.

3. Ibid., 14, 31.

Andrew M. Shanken is an assistant professor of architecture at the College of Environmental Design.
MARTIN LUTHER KING MEMORIAL
Bonnie Fisher MLA ’80 / ROMA Design Group

In 2000, ROMA Design Group won the international design competition for the Martin Luther King National Memorial in Washington, D.C. There were more than 1,000 competition entries, and members of the design jury included Ricardo Legorreta, Charles Correia, the designer of the Gandhi Memorial, and Randy Hester, professor of Landscape Architecture at UC Berkeley, amongst others. After winning the competition, ROMA formed a Joint Venture with the Devrouaux & Purnell in Washington, D.C. for the implementation of the design. Construction is expected to begin by November 2006 and be completed in 2008. Graduates of UC Berkeley that have contributed to the project as part of ROMA Design Group include Bonnie Fisher, MLA ’80, Joel Tamei MArch ’97, Dipi Garg MUD ’03 and Carl Baker BA Arch ’99.

The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial is designed to increase our awareness of Dr. King’s message regarding human rights and civil liberties and to help build an understanding of his legacy in shaping the meaning of democracy in America. The project is conceived within the environmental tradition that characterizes more recent memorials such as the Vietnam War and the FDR memorials, rather than the single monument or commemorative building of previous eras. The King Memorial utilizes landscape elements—water, stone, and trees—to heighten the experience of place and to evoke the kind of emotional response that Dr. King conveyed in his poetic use of language. It contributes to the larger Olmstedian landscape of the National Mall and is located on a four-acre site that will be created by the relocation of the existing West Basin Drive. The site strengthens the axial relationship between the King, Jefferson, and Lincoln memorials and expresses the evolving message of democracy through the continuum of time, from the Declaration of Independence to the Gettysburg Address to the Civil Rights speech Dr. King delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963.

This memorial is not designed to be experienced in a single way, with a single message, but rather to have a broad accessibility that appeals to all of the senses, with diverse, repetitive, and overlapping themes. The introduction of an arcing berm into the dominant horizontal of the site creates a complexity of spaces suitable for moving, viewing, sitting, meeting, speaking, and congregating in large and small groups. The circular geometry of the memorial juxtaposed with the triangular configuration of the site engages the tidal basin and frames views to the water, creating a space that is peaceful and expansive and that, in its form, nurtures inclusivity and a sense of community. Within the space, the words of Dr. King are incised on a curving wall of water, heightening visitors’ sensory experiences and adding to the understanding of his message of freedom, justice, and peace. The memorial engages the visitor by revealing the struggle of the movement and the promise of democracy, with the “Mountain of Despair” (the twin portals of stone flanking the entry) opening onto the “Stone of Hope” (a solitary monolith hewn from the two entry pieces). The image of Dr. King emerges from the “Stone of Hope,” standing vigil and awaiting delivery of the promise “that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

This is a memorial that celebrates Dr. King’s hope and optimistic spirit, as well as the value he placed on active citizenship rather than complacency and submission. It is not intended to be a eulogy, nor to focus on death or enshrinement. As Dr. King said, “Death is a comma, not a period.” When the cherry trees blossom in the springtime marking the season of his death, they will celebrate Dr. King’s life and achievement. The memorial is intended to be personally transformative for visitors, building a sense of commitment to the promise of positive social change and higher levels of achievement related to human rights and civil liberties. For more info on the MLK Memorial, visit www.buildthedream.org or call 888-4-THE-DREAM.

Project Team:
The Joint Venture project team is led by Paul Devrouax, Managing Principal; Boris Dramov, Design Principal; and Bonnie Fisher, Landscape Principal (M.L.A. ’80).

Key staff of ROMA Design Group’s current effort include Mini Ahn, Craig McElveen, Jim Leritz, Joel Tamei (B.Arch., and M.Arch., ’97), Dipi Garg (M.U.D., ’03), and Robert Holloway.

Key members of the design team for the competition include Boris Dramov, Design Team Leader, Bonnie Fisher (M.L.A. ’80), Burton Miller, Robert Holloway and Carl Baker (BA in Arch., ’99). In addition to ROMA, other key members contributing to the design competition include Christopher Grubbs (Illustrator) and Dr. Clayborne Carson (historical consultant).

All images courtesy ROMA Design Group. Renderings by Christopher Grubbs Illustrator.
THE WORLD TRADE CENTER MEMORIAL:
Two interviews with Peter Walker

by Jennifer Brooke

FEBRUARY 2004

Jennifer Brooke: Could you explain how you came to be on this competition team and what it has been like to work with Michael Arad, a relatively young designer?

Peter Walker: One of the questions Michael was initially asked about was the plaza, which originally he had left completely open. The jury also insisted that he put in some cultural buildings. The other area they asked him about was the park, and they said, Why don’t you talk it over with some landscape architect. When I got the call from Michael, I did not really know which scheme he represented. I had seen the competition schemes in the paper, but none of the names looked familiar. Once we found out which one was Michael’s, I told him we would be interested. We started to live by the fax machine and telephone, and we were feeding information back to the jury by answering questions verbally about our intentions, accompanied by a few [faxed] sketches.

Shortly after that the jury wanted to have a meeting with the two of us. I flew back to New York on Saturday and called him up and asked, How are things going? He said that the jury wanted a meeting on Sunday at 9:00 a.m. So I said, Fine, let’s meet at 7:00. You and I need to know what each other looks like. So we had breakfast and he brought his boards, and there we were in the hotel and we were down on the floor with his drawings. So we gathered them all up and we went up to Gracie Mansion, and the focus was on the park—we had worked like you do at school—producing thumbnail sketches. Fortunately the jury could deal with it. So that was a good meeting, though very short—30 minutes.

I came back to Berkeley, and on Tuesday we got a telephone call regarding questions about some things the jury was still worried about, and whether we would be willing to resolve these things. When you are a petitioner, what are you going to do, say no? So we said yes. They said, Fine, we will send you a letter of understanding. Will you sign it? I was a little apprehensive, because we really weren’t very keen about some of the things that they wanted us to look at. So they faxed it, I signed it and faxed it back. Michael did the same. They called back an hour later and said, You have it.

We had more meetings in Berkeley and in New York with Libeskind and the agency. The public presentation with the governor, the mayor, and press from everywhere was on Wednesday morning. So we negotiated through that weekend with Daniel and finally found a place for the cultural buildings, and I think about 3:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon, not on paper but in sketches, we had our scheme. Michael did not have an office, not even a secretary. He was working out of his bedroom, and I was there without anybody from our office. If I had been smart about it, I would have taken someone. Late Sunday we got the model pretty well finished in terms of where the cultural buildings would go. All that afternoon and night I was working on the landscape plan at the scale of the model using yellow trace and rulers. The following morning they took my tracing, put it on the model, and drilled holes through the trace to show where the trees were. He destroyed the drawing while he was making the model. It was OK. It worked! It looked pretty good. Wednesday was the television day. We had our first TV show at about 7:30 AM and in between the jury, the governor, the mayor, and doing the presentation, we were wiped out.

JB: Why do you think the jury chose this particular entry? What about it do you think pushed them over the edge in your favor?

PW: I like to think they liked Michael’s idea because it is quite somber and tomblike. Many of the others were very theatrical and required tremendous amounts of maintenance. Not that this one doesn’t. But they were very complex. One of the problems in doing the park was to not lose the ground plane, which is the key to the voids. If the voids were going down through shrubbery, it would not work.

The last thing that I think appealed to the jury was this idea of moving from somber darkness to light, which is really talking about death, mostly, but extending the dimension of the scheme to something that was also living. When you come up, you should feel that life can go on. You should have this sense of life. Through the use of plant materials we are going to do things to dramatize seasonal change like we did at Saitama, Japan, and make that cycle of the seasons apparent.
I think it is like any memorial. You grow it year by year, in the spring and on Sept. 11. You get a little effect out of a little. There is a grassed area, a memorial plaza, a stone, and we are using stone paving in the form of the memorial, and if you enter one way, you see a different ground cover: some mosses, some lichens, and 80 percent grass because it is going to take a beating. The parapets are natural form of planting that contrasts the site. If you enter one way, you see a different way of working. It’s more like being a politician, where you are constantly making public presentations in one form or the other. We are one mouth into this. It’s got to calm down. The difficulty with all the media attention is that when I’m in Berkeley, I sometimes spend half a day on interviews. The World Trade Center Memorial is nice in that everyone wishes you well. The New York Times did a series of articles that are just terrific, posing questions about how the water features in the project can actually be managed. They have asked questions about safety (not security in the terrorist sense). Currently there is a big issue about whether these memorial spaces are precisely over the tower footprints. What has happened is that the infrastructure has moved into the footprints, which makes it difficult not to slip over on either side. The question of the footprint is a real issue to a certain number of people and by getting it out, it’s like a public meeting—you may take the heat out of that particular issue. In other words, it raises the question early enough so that you don’t get blindsided later on. The media is very sophisticated, very knowledgeable about politics. We have an awful lot of masters on the project, plus two of the largest real-estate and construction agencies in United States, plus HUD at some point, in addition to the governor’s office and mayor’s office, which are gigantic. The families are a tremendously diverse group, with many different points of view. The thing that holds them together is their grief, which is very immediate when you are in the midst of it.

**JB:** The Vietnam Memorial changed the way people think about memorials. Do you think this memorial has the same potential to do that, or do you think it is at such a different scale that it is completely different?

**PW:** I don’t know. The Vietnam Memorial contrasts a sort of Olmstedian landscape against a minimalist model. This memorial is really playing at a larger scale against a very urban landscape. So in this way they are very unlike each other. The WTC memorial spaces have a below-ground spiritual dimension that the Vietnam Memorial does not have. This memorial is entered by going down from light into darkness and out to the light again. It has a theatrical dimension. I think that lack of theatricality in the Vietnam Memorial is what is so great about it. The idea in the WTC Memorial is not like that. People are going to compare them, but they really are completely different.

**JB:** If a person could visit the memorial and walk away with one thing, what would you like that to be?

**PW:** I think it is like any memorial. You hope they retain some composite but distinctive image that will stay with them. You want to compete with the great monuments. You also want to have something that fits on a postcard so that you instantly know what it is. Something iconographic. I think that’s the strength of Michael’s initial scheme. I’m sure that’s what attracted the jury.

**JB:** Due to the significant role landscape plays in this memorial, do you think this will change the way the general public perceives landscape architecture as a profession. Do you think this project has the potential to do that?

**PW:** I think that there is a fair amount of lip service given to landscape architecture. People who live in cities really like their parks, but they are not seen as designed, even though they are. They are seen as historical expressions, like Bryant Park, or they are seen as expressions of nature, like Central Park. I think the artifice gets lost, and I think the proof of that is, when they cease to be maintained or cared for, no one complains. I don’t think they are seen in the sort of crystalline way architecture is seen. And I don’t think this is going to change much. It probably will change things for us as designers, because clients will show a willingness to do things that they would not have otherwise thought about. I can’t tell you how many times in this thing I have used Battery Park or Bryant Park as an example of what I was talking about and found that most people don’t think of them as specific artifacts. So I think this may add to the vocabulary. A vocabulary is obviously already there, but it’s not a vocabulary people are using to make policy.

**JB:** Given all the players involved and all the constituencies that have a vested interest in the project, how difficult is it going to be to get this built the way that you and Michael have sat down and talked about it?

**PW:** I think it is going to be difficult, but we have some power in the situation because the vision has been more or less accepted by everybody and if it is not realized, someone will object. I don’t believe there is anybody who really wants to get rid of the design idea. We have not heard of many who oppose the scheme. As I said, everybody has been really supportive. Even the people who have objections seem to understand the scheme.

**JB:** Where are you now in the design process for the memorial? Is there an end in sight?

**PW:** We’re moving forward. The last year has not been unproductive. This is probably the most demanding design project I’ve ever had. We are just now finishing design development on the project. We’ve got more than a typical DD package done; we also have our trees tagged, the pool plumbing worked.
out, and coordination with Calatrava and Snohetta underway. Much of the coordi-
nation is coming to a head. Many of the consultants started after us but have
had an easier time. We’re in the position
of having to do coordination like this
while we’re in design development. It
would have been a lot easier to coordi-
nate if we had been able to do it earlier.

**JB**: Significant design elements for the
memorial, particularly the ceremonial
procession from above ground to below
ground have undergone significant
changes. How is the design team deal-
ing with decisions to alter such an
important aspect of the original design?

**PW**: When we first started with the con-
tceptual plans as they were laid out in
the competition scheme, we did not
have a solution to all the problems.
Many of these decisions have improved
the project. We expected to do design
alternatives. Our task was to produce a
memorial that worked according to the
conceptual direction of Michael’s plan,
but also produce a public open space
that didn’t destroy the memorial. Michael
has really kept his eye on the memorial
part of the project, while I’ve kept an eye
on the public open space. The plaza
must be respectful of the memorial and
not destroy the mood. The mood is what
needs to be balanced with all the sug-
gestions for things such as concerts in
the plaza. The mood is very important.
Like we’ve done on other program-sen-
sitive projects like the Nasher Sculpture
Center, we’ve had to take some things
that we don’t want to see, but that are
still necessary to the functioning of the
project, and make them invisible. The
design process is the same as other
projects in that there are ideas and you
have to fight for some and let others go,
but in this case we’ve had to take on all
corners from all directions.

There will be 5 million people a
year visiting this site, but they don’t all
come at once! Even so, it should be
possible to maintain the solemnity of the
place despite its public nature by con-
trolling the number of people in any
space at one time and carefully consid-
ering the devices to control their behav-
ior. Things like buying tickets, the numbers of people moving from one
space to another are all being specifi-
cally considered. Too many people in
one room or location could take away
from the mood of the place, so it is
important to control movement with
careful manipulations in the landscape
materials. For example, movements of
people going to and from work can be
handled with pavement choices and
barriers. We considered putting a wall
around the site at the beginning—a low
parapet, or even a hedge with one or
two access points—but we wanted to
be more subtle than that. It is different
than the Vietnam Memorial, which sits
in the park and works in relationship to
it. In our case there is no park. We are
the park. Parks are prized in a city such
as New York. Park space in the city is at
a premium, and the parks are beloved.
The difficulty here is that there will be
use restrictions, and we have to design
for them. This park will not be able to be
used the way people are accustomed to
using other parks, for Frisbee, dogs, and
shortcuts for commuters.

**JB**: Have there been any pleasant sur-
prises since you have begun? Things
you didn’t expect?

**PW**: We’ve been able to accomplish
tings in the bureaucracies that we
never expected. And the people! We
have met people that have been
extraordinarily helpful in cutting through
the red tape, championing causes,
addressing the more cruel questions
that are constantly put to us. Some of
these people will be friends for the rest
of my life. These are people that are on
the board, they are family members,
they are agency members, and even
one or two members of the press that
have been very careful to tell the whole
story and avoid looking for the most
contentious bytes of information. The
mayor and the governor of New York
have also shown incredible support and
dedicated interest in the project and
that has been great.

**JB**: This isn’t really the kind of project
you build, take photos of, and revisit
a few years later. How does this project
fit into the trajectory of your career?

**PW**: It might kill me! [Laughs] This proj-
et is different than most others I’ve
worked on, because it is open to the
public but is run by a foundation. It is
also unlike many other projects I’ve
worked on in that it is endowed. Unlike
a project like a public college campus,
where you finish and it gets turned
over to the students and administra-
tion, a private group is running this.
This will be a continuous operation,
and I’m sure that we will continue to be
involved. Our office will be on call in
the horticultural sense but also with
the people management. I’m sure there
will be some revisiting of elements, and
they won’t stay exactly the same.

When you are dealing with landscape,
plants deteriorate and need mainte-
nance, and we will of course need to
respond to things that happen that no
one could anticipate.

I’ve never had a client like this,
one that was both knowledgeable and
eternal. I think about Le Notre and
Olmsted and the skills they had in
dealing with large institutions similar
to this, and I just wish I had more
years to work in this part of my
career. I should have had clients like
these years ago! Some landscape
architects reach this point earlier in
their life. Most landscape architects
have to slog through the smaller and
less interesting projects that it takes
to get to something like this. Now,
because of this project, we have more
projects of this caliber in the office,
not memorials necessarily but proj-
ects that I just wish that I had 20 more
years to work on. Pe}

Jennifer Brooke is an assistant profes-
sor of landscape architecture and envi-
ronmental planning at the College of
Environmental Design.
In January 2005, Disturbed Harmony, by Leor Lovinger MLA ’03, was chosen as one of five finalists out of more than 1,000 entries for the Flight 93 National Memorial. The winning scheme will be announced in early September 2005.

On Sept. 11, 2001, our cities, our landscapes, and our lives were under attack. Their rhythms and harmony were disturbed. That day, the 40 passengers and crew of Flight 93 acted as the country’s first line of defense.

Our concept for a Bravery Wall, with its inscriptions crossing the rolling rural landscape, was inspired by the stories of the telephone calls between the heroes of Flight 93 and their loved ones, through which we all learned about their collective acts of sacrifice and courage. As the wall moves north to south toward the Sacred Ground, ending at the Circle of Heroism, it symbolizes how 40 individuals, bound by fate, confronted evil and chose to act. Because of their actions, Flight 93 will be remembered forever—not in infamy but for their unconquerable human spirit and messages of hope and love.

The scale of the proposed Flight 93 Memorial Park and the rural setting provide the opportunity to create a unique experience. The dragline tells the story of a land in the process of reclamation. Learning about the site’s mining history and witnessing its reclamation resonates with visitors to the memorial, as they acknowledge the past while looking ahead and anticipating the healing of our wounds.

The Bravery Wall, the memorial’s spine, has a strong presence in the 2,200-acre site, yet it will complement the landscape rather than overpowering it. The Bravery Wall unfolds before the visitors as they move through the park, providing many levels of intimacy and opportunities for remembrance and contemplation. Wind, sunlight, sky patterns, and snow transform visitors’ experiences of the wall, making every visit unique.

The full length of the Bravery Wall, crossing the Field of Honor, conveys the magnitude of loss of human life on Sept. 11, as one imagines 3,021 people standing hand-in-hand, stretching the wall’s entire 11,000-foot length across the landscape. An anniversary walk will transform this line in the landscape into a ribbon of life, as participants remember those lost and learn about Flight 93 and the heroes, acknowledge their sacrifice and heroism in the face of infamy, and gain a better understanding of the enduring human spirit.

The hard rock qualities of the granite used in the Bravery Wall blocks are a fitting testimonial to the strength exhibited by those aboard Flight 93. We propose an earth-toned granite, similar in color to the local fieldstone, that will blend with the environment and withstand the harsh site conditions for centuries to come.

As visitors watch others experience the memorial, commune with the wall, and hear the echoes of the heroes’ voices, they may be drawn to reflect on the values by which they live their lives. Though we are creating a national memorial, which will be a place of inspiration and hope for all who see it, the site will forever remain the setting for the Sacred Ground, the final resting place of 40 very uncommon souls.

Project Team: Leor Lovinger MLA ’03, Gilat Lovinger, and Office of Lawrence Halprin.
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial stands as a symbol of America’s honor and recognition of the men and women who served and sacrificed their lives in the Vietnam War. By separating the issue of individuals serving in the military during the Vietnam era and U.S. policy carried out there, the Memorial Fund hoped to begin a process of national reconciliation. Description of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.1

Each wall is 12.6 ft. in length for a total length of 252.4 ft.—or slightly less than the length of a football field. Description of the Moving Wall2

On May 1, 1981, a jury of architects, landscape architects, and artists plucked submission no. 1,026—a set of moody pictures drawn in blue and green pastels—from a pool of more than 1,400 proposals for the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The drawings were accompanied by an evocative essay, handwritten on a single sheet of paper, that described the memorial’s proposed immensity: two walls, each more than 200 feet long and made of polished black granite, converge at a point, forming an expansive Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The jurors of the competition were architects, artists, critics, and cultural theorists, as well as well-known figures from the business and entertainment worlds. Moody pictures drawn in blue and green pastels were presented in the form of a competition. The winning proposal, designed by Maya Lin, ignited a public controversy that would last for the next several years.

Meanwhile Jean Baudrillard, the French social theorist, published the first edition of Simulacra and Simulation in fall 1981. In this pivotal work of postmodern theory, Baudrillard posited that our conception of the world is no longer “real” or “unreal”—but, instead, “hyperreal.” One’s sense of hyperreality, Baudrillard suggested, is constructed through the process of simulation, or the mass production of objects based on a “generative core.”4

One of Baudrillard’s primary claims was that the production of simulacra has supplanted a society’s efforts to produce copies, counterfeit, or replicas of idealized forms. Instead, reproductions exist through independent— or known quantity. Variations are the inevitable result, because the model itself is not a finite number. Simulacra and Simulation can be described as a grand, sophisticated claim toward the power of subjectivity—or the notion that individual realities are constructed through signs of the real, or through the process of codification, rather than through an objective representation of the real itself.

A STRONG, CLEAR ORIGIN

The publication of Baudrillard’s theories on simulacra and simulation paralleled a spectacular effort to produce an object that would become the preeminent model for “proper” memorialization, not to mention one of America’s most recognized “originals.” Among architects and designers, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has set what some might call an inescapable precedent for the design of commemorative memorials. It is one of the most widely discussed memorials among historians, art and architecture critics, and cultural theorists, as well as an internationally circulated icon of America as a whole.8

Although the length of the design and construction process measured less than two years, it was defined by both internal and external controversies from the start. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, whose principal financers included Texas billionaire Ross Perot, raised more than $8 million to fund the memorial.7 When veteran Jan Scruggs founded the VVMF in 1978, one of the motivations behind the construction of a memorial was that it would help to quell the discord among veterans. But internal divisions were only deepened by Scruggs’s decision to effectively exclude the input of his fellow veterans, or the community for whom the VVMF supposedly stood. In November 1980, the VVMF—eager to push the plan through “Washington’s notoriously difficult architectural gatekeepers”—appointed Paul Spreiregen, a prominent Washington architect, to oversee the competition and selection of jury members. The result was a panel that included a compilation of eight artists and design professionals—but no veterans, family members of dead soldiers, or, for that matter, women or minorities.9

On May 6, 1981, the VVMF had to subdue its own surprise in declaring Maya Lin, a 21-year-old senior at Yale, the winner of the competition. (One of the more memorable moments in Freida Lee Mock’s 1995 documentary A Strong, Clear Vision is Scruggs’s account of the awkwardness associated with first meeting with Lin in her college dormitory.) Nonetheless, the committee stood behind Lin—the author of what one juror described as “a simple and meditative design”10—as she was dragged into the national spotlight and forced to conduct a highly public defense of her proposal. The perceived emotional coolness of her minimalist design, not to mention the unconventionality of its designer, had only intensified the furor harbored by a group of veterans who were already livid over their exclusion from the selection process. On Oct. 24, 1981, in a New York Times op-ed column, Tom Carhart—a veteran and Purple Heart recipient—characterized Lin’s proposal as “a black gash of shame and sorrow, hacked into the national visage that is the Mall.” At public hearings in the Capitol, Lin defended the simplicity of her design with an uncanny, unwavering resolve and, in line with a statement previously published in the Washington Post, rejected suggestions to change it in any way: “I don’t think anything should be done to the design that adds or detracts from its power. I’ll be stubborn about that, I guess.”11 In November 1982, the memorial—constructed exactly as Lin had envisioned it—was unveiled, in situ, on the Washington Mall (fig.1). In 1984, however, a bronze statue of three servicemen and an American flagpole were added to the memorial site to appease some veterans’ objections to the original design.12

JOHN DEVITT GOES TO WASHINGTON

No sooner than the official VVMF was unveiled had a plan for veterans to reclaim the memorial started to take shape. John Devitt, a former First Cavalry door gunner for the U.S. Army, sat among an audience of 6,000 at the VVMF’s dedication ceremony on Nov. 13 (two days after Veterans’ Day) in 1982. Because he was unemployed at the time, Devitt’s trip to Washington had been sponsored by donations from members of his local community in San Jose, Calif. Devitt was aware of the controversy leading up to the memorial’s opening and shared some of the skepticism and resentment that had been publicly expressed by his fellow veterans—but he attended the ceremo-
ny nonetheless, grateful to his family and friends for their fundraising effort.

Devitt’s trip to Washington turned out to be life-altering. He returned to California deeply moved by his visit to “the Wall,” as veterans have nicknamed it, which he described as both healing and cathartic. “I walked up to ‘The Wall’ and felt this intense pride,” Devitt said in an interview with Jim Belshaw, a writer for Veteran magazine, in December 2000. “I hadn’t felt that since the day I left Vietnam. It was one thing nobody had mentioned in the twelve years I’d been home. Everybody talked about guilt. I had tried guilt and it didn’t work. I was so glad to see their names—copies of Devitt’s copy—further expanding the spiral of individual meanings. The VVMF developed a traveling replica, the Wall that Heals, in 1996. Coors Brewing and Service Corporation International (SDI) have also developed traveling VMWs.

The success of the Moving Wall has spawned the design of subsequent replicas—or copies of Devitt’s copy—further expanding the spiral of individual meanings. The VVMF developed a traveling replica, the Wall that Heals, in 1996. Coors Brewing and Service Corporation International (SDI) have also developed traveling VMWs. Members of Vietnam Combat Veterans, an organization formed by Devitt in 1986, have referred to these replicas as “rip-offs,” implicitly because Devitt has not been given due credit by these corporations as the inventor of the original copy. It seems that VCV looks more favorably upon the founders of a virtual replica, called the Virtual Wall, which can be visited at www.virtualwall.org or via a link on the Moving Wall’s website.

THE ORIGINAL COPY

Devitt devoted the next 11 years to the development of a traveling half-scale version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, an object commonly referred to as a “replica” of the original. Although there are at least nine known copies, Devitt’s was the first. The traveling memorial, first titled the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Mobile) in 1984—but now, in its third iteration, known as the Moving Wall—has visited nearly 1,000 communities in the U.S. during the past 20 years. Although most of the sponsoring communities can be classified as blue-collar or working-class, the Moving Wall has made several appearances in metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and Atlanta. The Moving Wall has also traveled overseas: In July 1993, the Moving Wall was installed on sites in Guam and the Mariana Islands, where the United States maintained strategic military stations during the Vietnam War.

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In addition to a heightened sense of personal pride, Devitt felt charged with a mission to move the experience of the Wall beyond the arena of the Washington Mall. “When you think about it,” Devitt wrote, “two or three million people visit the Wall every year. There are ten or twenty times that many people who, for whatever reason, will never be able to make the trip to Washington. I wanted them to be able to see and feel what I had.” In other words, Devitt was not so much inclined to crystallize the power of his experience at the Wall as he was compelled to reproduce it.

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The success of the Moving Wall has spawned the design of subsequent replicas—or copies of Devitt’s copy—further expanding the spiral of individual meanings. The VVMF developed a traveling replica, the Wall that Heals, in 1996. Coors Brewing and Service Corporation International (SDI) have also developed traveling VMWs. Members of Vietnam Combat Veterans, an organization formed by Devitt in 1986, have referred to these replicas as “rip-offs,” implicitly because Devitt has not been given due credit by these corporations as the inventor of the original copy. It seems that VCV looks more favorably upon the founders of a virtual replica, called the Virtual Wall, which can be visited at www.virtualwall.org or via a link on the Moving Wall’s website.

A WALL MOVES TO BRIDGEPORT, WASH.

The Moving Wall was displayed on the soccer field behind Bridgeport Elementary School October 25-31, 2003 (fig. 3). The installation was orchestrated by local residents Gene Schmidt and Ken Krugel, both of whom had visited the original VVM in Washington before the Moving Wall’s appearance in Bridgeport. Krugel, a Vietnam veteran, first visited the VVM in 1984, nearly two years after it opened on the Mall. He was hesitant to visit the memorial—as he claims many veterans were—and expected to encounter “a second-hand memorial.” Like Devitt, Krugel was unexpectedly moved by his visit to the VVM. He recalled spending an entire day—and night—at the memorial, an experience that served as a template for his vision of the Moving Wall’s appearance in his hometown. “We had the perfect setting for the Moving Wall in Bridgeport,” he said. “I’ve seen it installed in other places, in city parks or on brown dirt. But we had it against the hills, and near an orchard. With the subdued lighting, the fog, and the trees, it was very much like the setting in Washington.”

Krugel aided Schmidt, superintendent of the local school district, in assembling a team of 300 volunteers to help with the logistics of the Moving Wall’s setup and display. Since 1999, when Krugel and Schmidt began planning for the Moving Wall’s arrival, they had envisioned the school’s athletic fields as the perfect site for the installation—not only because it was both a picturesque setting and on level ground but because of the field’s location adjacent to the Bridgeport Cemetery, the burial ground for the five local soldiers who were killed in Vietnam. The volunteers erected an aisle of flags and several tents to display memorabilia—the flags, plaques, photos, and identification tags left at the Moving Wall, which are adopted as part of the traveling exhibition.

FROM (MOBILE) TO MOVING

When Devitt first conceived of the Moving Wall in 1982, his primary goal was to evoke an emotionally powerful experience, not to replicate the exact physical features of the original memorial. He modeled its physical form as a carrier for the 58,202 names that are carved into the original. For Devitt, the names “were what counted, the primary concern” of the original memorial, was his main consideration in devising the traveling memorial. The names on the Moving Wall are arranged chronologically—as they are on the original—employing a design strategy devised by Lin to express a spatial connection between the number of U.S. casualties and the progression of the war. While the listing of names allows for the recognition of each individual soldier, the body of names, as a whole, communicates a wider political message about the immense scale of lives sacrificed to sustain U.S. involvement in the drawn-out war.

Devitt first attempted to reproduce the names photographically, but he found the polished granite surface of the original to be so reflective of its surroundings that the individual names became illegible in photographs. As a result, Devitt decided to silkscreen the names onto five Plexiglas panels, and the first moving memorial, the VVM (Mobile), was completed in time for Veterans’ Day 1984. Devitt recalled its immediate impact at its unveiling in Tyler, Texas: “We hadn’t even put up the fifth panel when a Gold Star Mother placed a beautifully decorated candle at the base of the panel where her son’s name was displayed.”

In devising a system to “carry” the names, Devitt’s main challenges were durability and portability (figs. 4, 5). The
The Moving Wall is recognizable as an attempted duplicate of the original VVM (Mobile), but in most senses its form represents a vast departure from that of its model. Because it is not sunken down into the ground and has little width or depth, the Moving Wall acts primarily as an attempted duplicate of the original. In addition, the Moving Wall’s aluminum panels are flimsy compared with the gravity and permanence imparted by limestone, granite or marble. The Moving Wall’s reflective surface. Similar to the original Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., the Moving Wall displays the names of over 58,000 dead and missing soldiers.

Schmidt enlisted Krugel, the local postmaster, to help with logistics. The pair began fundraising well before the Moving Wall’s appearance in Bridgeport was even confirmed. “We got on the waiting list,” Krugel said. “But I didn’t know if we’d ever really get it.” Schmidt’s outlook was more optimistic: “I knew it would be just a matter of time before we’d get it. And in any case, we needed to start planning and fundraising as soon as possible. For a small town like ours, it was a major undertaking.”

Relative to the tiny town of Nespelem, the city of Bridgeport may seem larger than it actually is—with a population of 2,000 residents, Bridgeport might be aptly characterized as a big small town. In a city where people struggle to make ends meet—half Bridgeport’s residents live with a median household income of $28,000 or less—Schmidt knew he could not rely on the community to make unsolicited donations to fund the Moving Wall display. It costs about $4,000 to display the Moving Wall for one week—plus nine days’ worth of food and hotel rooms for the traveling stewards. All display fees are used by Devitt’s organization, Vietnam Combat Veterans, to cover the Moving Wall’s travel and maintenance costs. “This is not an effort to make the Memorial Fund of VCV, Ltd. rich,” the group’s guidelines state. “It is to ensure that The Moving Wall is not used or abused.” In addition, local communities assume the costs of extras—everything from flags and marching bands to toilets and compensation for 24-hour-a-day guards (figs. 6, 7, 8).

Schmidt and Krugel collaborated with local individuals and groups to raise the necessary funds. Through this process, which involved hundreds of residents, the Moving Wall became symbolic to the Bridgeport community, generating a level of significance and meaning well before the replica had even arrived. Schmidt and Krugel asked Sen. Maria Cantwell to write letters to John Devitt on the community’s behalf, and the pair procured the help of the Columbia Quilters, a group of Bridgeport residents who raffled off a quilt and donated the proceeds to the Moving Wall fund.

Schmidt also obtained financial support from Bridgeport’s veteran community. According to Krugel, the older World War II and Korean War veterans felt that the time had come to recognize the younger generation of vets who had served during Vietnam, many of whom were treated with hostility after returning from active duty. Krugel had experienced such disdain firsthand stepping off of a Greyhound bus in Los Angeles in 1969: “I wasn’t in uniform, but I had a military haircut. And someone spat on me three times. Obviously that is something I’ll never forget. There were stories of drug abuse, massacring children, and rape, all of which certainly happened. But not all vets took part in this—I certainly did not. To say the least, it was not a popular war.”

REPLICAS—OR SIMULACRA?
On the Moving Wall’s website, Devitt has posted the following statement to eliminate confusion between the original, not-for-profit version and other “so-called replicas” that have been sprouting up around the United States: “The Moving Wall is not just a generic name for any of the traveling replicas that copied The Moving Wall—it is a name that was given specifically to the nation’s first traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial during its fourth display back in February of 1985. The first visitors to the nation’s first memorial designed and built to be brought to the people were moved beyond words. Many expressed their thankfulness that absolutely nothing was expected of them—there was nothing for sale, no solicitations for money and no advertising. They found only the names on the wall and the memories that visitors brought with them. The Moving Wall is the only traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial that was actually designed and physically built by Vietnam Veterans with public donations.”

But is the copy of the original Vietnam Veterans Memorial best characterized as such? Is “replica” or “copy” an accurate designation for the Moving Wall, which, at approximately half the size of the original, packs neatly into four large boxes and travels the United States on a trailer (fig. 8)? Baudrillard and his postmodern bedfellows have overthrown the concept of the “true” copy, or the notion that exact reproduction is even possible; in Baudrillard’s view, there is no more interpretive distance between the “real” and the “imaginary.” As it follows, there are no more copies—just simulacra. Baudrillard’s view of social progress, a scenario in which “every order subsumes the previous order,” renders the idea of the replica, and any belief in the existence of a “true” copy, mere nostalgia. The first order of the simulacrum is embedded in the second order, which is then absorbed by the third, making a total regression back to the era of the counterfeit impossible.

Even if the Moving Wall is widely referred to as a “replica,” it functions more like Baudrillard’s definition of a simulacrum, with each installation existing independently of the original VVM and making up one part of a spiraling network of individual experiences. In August 2005, Krugel described the Moving Wall less as a copy and more as a simulation of an effect—similar to Baudrillard’s notion of a “generative [experiential] core”: “It’s not granite, and it’s not down in the ground. It arrives on a truck and [is] put together with screws and bolts. But it’s not just about the visual experience—it’s about the emotions. When I think of other monuments, they’re just there. This just happens to be one that moves.”
AS “REAL” AS IT GETS

In Schmidt and Krugel’s estimation, approximately 8,000 people visited the Moving Wall in Bridgeport, some traveling from as far as 200 miles away—but only 2 percent of them had ever visited the original in Washington. “Even if they can afford the trip, many people don’t want to go. They feel nervous about confronting those emotions—especially in public. For those 20 and under, Vietnam is a lesson in history. But for those 40 and above, those are very real and oftentimes painful moments to remember.”31

The nearly 4,000 school children who visited the Moving Wall did so at a safe remove; for kids, the experience is mostly educational. But for some visitors, the experience proved to be painfully personal. While the Moving Wall was in Bridgeport, Krugel and his wife paid several visits to the parents of one of the five soldiers from Bridgeport killed in the war. “We sat in their living room for an hour until we could even tell them why we were there. And then, we talked to this couple for four hours. The mother started to bring out picture albums from the soldier’s high school years. ‘They were so resentful that they didn’t volunteer. That says a bit about how this couple and a lot of Bridgeport viewed the war.’32

A few days later, Krugel accompanied the parents of the slain soldier to the Moving Wall, where they grieved and displayed their son’s honorary medals. “That memory alone,” Krugel recalled, “makes the whole operation worthwhile.”33

Krugel also viewed the effort to bring the Moving Wall to Bridgeport as an opportunity to symbolize the unification of the local veterans community which, like most organizations with members of different generations, has suffered from internal divisiveness over the years. “There’s a saying among vets,” Krugel said, “that goes, ‘Never again.’ As in: never again will vets of one war not support vets of another.”34

“SO MANY” MEMORIALS, “SO MANY MEANINGS

Last April, in reference to the nine separate visits of traveling VVM memorials—including the Moving Wall—to southern Arizona (fig. 9), the Arizona Daily Star published an article, titled “Are They Too Much of a Good Thing?” In the feature, several local residents are quoted as agreeing that while traveling replicas like the Moving Wall were “a good idea,” there was the possibility that they could lose their meaning if the walls are displayed too frequently. Mike Brewer, a veteran living in Tucson, took a more equivocal stance, citing high public demand as the likely reason for the proliferation of the memorials. “If you look at the math,” Brewer told the Daily Star, “the war was 13 years long, 2.5 million served in Vietnam and 9 million were in the military during that era. The war touched a lot of people. And even with so many models on tour, they have not saturated the market.”35

With “so many” replicas, and the exponential meanings generated through their production and display, a theorization of the Moving Wall resists total comprehension. As the Moving Wall is continually located and relocated on sites throughout the United States (figs. 10, 11, 12), it effectively defies a singularization of its meaning, and interpretations become multiplied through the ongoing process of simulation. Although millions of people continue to visit the original VVM in Washington, Baudrillard’s writings on the process of simulation—as applied to the case of The Moving Wall—provide a framework with which one is able to de-emphasize its importance as a discrete object and, in turn, recognize the presence of “so many” memorials and an even greater number of individually constructed realities. The Moving Wall implies more than the absence of an objective reality; it can be thought of as a traveling figure that generates multiple meanings in the absence of a singular truth. Unlike many of the minimalist memorials that we see today, it does more than merely gesture toward this eternal void. Instead it highlights the presence of more realities than we can know or name.36

6. The extent to which the VVM has influenced the design of future memorials was evident among proposals to the recent Ground Zero Memorial (2003-04), Flight 93 (2004-05) and National AIDS Memorial (2004-05) design competitions. For an example of how the VVM is exported internationally as an icon of America, see http://travel.discovery.com/convergence/american/vietnamvets/vietnamvets.html.
11. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

This paper is an extended version of the research, writing, and discussions that originated in a graduate seminar Architecture and National Identity, taught by Greig Clyjer in spring 2005. I am grateful to Professor Clyjer and to my classmates, many of whom helped to shape the thoughts presented in this paper.

Except for figure 1, all images are courtesy of John Devitt, the Moving Wall, and the Bridgeport, Washington School District.

Julie Kim is a third-year M.Arch. student. She is currently working on a research thesis about reproductions of original architecture.
In her design practice, CED architecture professor Raveevarn Choksombatchai has always integrated the visceral with the abstract, deftly constructing compelling architectural narratives without resorting to literal storytelling. Nowhere is this more evident than in three memorial designs—the Minnesota Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Woman Suffrage Memorial, and the National AIDS Memorial—where memories are evoked as a physical response to the presence of the historical, the cultural, and the phenomenal.

Each of these designs is an attempt at weaving the past with the present, the facts with the emotional memories, the manmade with the natural, all with the goal of building a complete sensory experience. Taking cues from the recent history of memorials, each design pushes the boundaries of the memorial narrative while allowing the nature of the specific site and the memorialized event to fully emerge. The resulting experiences let visitors connect the personal to a larger framework of memory and landscape.
A process of change lay at the core of the women’s suffrage movement; the memorial reveals change through physical transformations that mark the passage of time. Challenging the “timeless” neoclassical character of the Washington Mall and the traditional paradigm of memorialization, the design registers three specific marks of time related to specific events and phenomena—political time, biological time, geological time—by means of physical interventions. A stainless steel woven trellis climbs a slope—with each vertical post marking a year in the suffrage movement and each horizontal steel bar marking the lifeline of an individual suffragist—and is complemented by plantings of native prairie and woodland wildflowers and by the earthwork.
AIDS is a global crisis, the first great epidemic in the era of mass information. The catastrophe is singular, a slow train-wreck of death, infection, and loss. This ineffable, time-elapsed tragedy defies all previous paradigms of memorialization. We propose a new paradigm to respond to these conditions.

Since 1981, when AIDS was discovered, we have responded with shock, fear, and awe at the horror of the epidemic. Today, AIDS and HIV exist in our consciousness with an illusion of familiarity.

Our awareness of the epidemic operates like an automaton; we have become numb to the knowledge and unable to comprehend the massive impact of the epidemic upon the human race.

Lest they become mere statistics, the dead and infected must become part of our collective consciousness and conscience. This proposed design intends to experientially jolt the viewer and reveal the impact of these massive, incomprehensible numbers.

In this instance, the usual strategies of memorials—personal names and symbolic gestures—fail to express the magnitude of the loss and inadequately rouse consciousness. There is no place to put one’s own worded portrait: the experience is the only “material” one takes away. In short, they do not perform the “memorial work” demanded by AIDS and HIV. As a counter proposal to a traditional memorial, we eschew remembrance of individuals and of AIDS as a historical event. Instead this design critiques how we cope with the epidemic globally and as a human race.