



Gerhard Kampe (Herausgeber)  
Thomas Kampe (Herausgeber)  
**beyond forgetting**  
persecution / exile / memory



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Telefon: +49 (0)551 54724-0, E-Mail: [info@cuvillier.de](mailto:info@cuvillier.de), Website: <https://cuvillier.de>

# FOREWORD

Our childhood in post-war Germany of the 1950s and 1960s was characterised by the unspoken. The effects of the traumas of war, persecution, expulsion and repressed guilt were palpable everywhere: in our families, the war-disabled who were still part of the everyday reality on the streets, in church, in the wider social environment. All the way to the still clearly visible destruction of our hometown and the overgrown rubble that was our playground.

What was the reason for these oddities of the world into which we were born?

What was the connection between the images of Auschwitz, Stalingrad and of napalm-burned children in Vietnam on our black-and-white TV and the saturated colourful consumer culture of the stuffy West Germany of the 1960s?

Were the thought-provoking avant-garde art happenings, installations and performances in our home town of Kassel during the Documenta exhibitions designs of a new pluralistic counterculture?

What was the reason that we did not find answers to our timid questions about the past - the 'Früher' - which came to an end in 1945?

As brothers, this search for answers has shaped our personal interests and professional careers. Later - as teachers - we recognised in our differing creative disciplines that such searching and questioning still needs to be taught today within a responsible educational practice.

What does this world need in today's ever escalating poli-crisis?

What role do we ourselves play in a world which is marked by the madness of a global consumer-, techno-, and growth- oriented capitalism and the mechanisms of destruction and oppression that go with it?

Can the past teach us to consciously and critically meet today - in a time of Covid 19, threatening eco-catastrophe, political populism and right-wing extremism?

What future can we as Europeans still co-create and contribute to in dialogue between cultures generations in this unequal, unjust and fragile world?

After decades of seemingly cultivating tolerance, openness and international understanding, overcoming the Cold War and with open borders in Europe, we are now facing the danger of the destruction of our open societies in a globally networked and connected world. This period is again marked by harshness and indifference towards those who seek refuge and asylum in our midst from war, persecution, hunger and misery and who, as the weakest, become the pawn of populist politics.

Nationalist tendencies, separatism and segregation are once again spreading rapidly in Europe, endangering the ideal of peaceful coexistence, built ideologies as a safeguard for a self-determined life on the ruins of cities and seemingly obsolete ideologies. Increasing right-wing extremism and populism threaten our democracy which provides the basis for open coexistence and opportunities for learning from one another.

The challenges of this era can only be met by adopting long-term perspectives. Education is of vital importance in this context. Education which, in addition to the transmission of knowledge and skills, also facilitates 'soft' attributes and skills such as tolerance, openness, empathy and the capacity for critique.

The book and the praxis project 'Beyond Forgetting - persecution / exile / memory' emerged from our desire to share different experiences in the context of the topic, to bring together educational concepts and thematic approaches and thus to initiate a dialogue that sensitises to social challenges and promotes an understanding of democratic principles.

The diverse works presented in this publication are united by the intention to work towards the strengthening of an open and tolerant society and of democratic ways of life and cultures through critical artistic practice and reflection.

As editors, we are grateful for the opportunity to work together with colleagues and students - other critical souls and voices - from different generations, fields and cultures.

Coburg and London, December 2020  
Gerhard Kampe  
Thomas Kampe

# OVERVIEW

## BEYOND FORGETTING – EMBRACING HISTORY WHILE STATUES ARE FALLING

This book explores the intersection between Performance Practices, Critical & Expanded Design, and Memorial Culture, inquiring cross-disciplinary working modes and educational models in response to contemporary and historical persecution and exile. It aims to contribute to the field of Experimental and Expanded Design by probing embodied practices as socially pertinent process-oriented modalities of problem-solving and education. The collection of essays in this publication gives an insight into the possibility of responding to hidden and reluctant histories of persecution and exile through visual, performative and interactive means. The essays examine historical entanglements at a time when contemporary migration and refuge increasingly put western colonial histories into question, and seek to embrace new affective/embodied modes of remembrance and re-discovery.

In his essay 'What Might Education Mean After Abu Ghraib: Revisiting Adorno's Politics of Education' (Giroux 2005), Henry A. Giroux elaborates on Adorno's critical pedagogy within a contemporary global neo-liberal context of aggressive US and Western imperialism as a new barbarism. Theodore W. Adorno suggested in his seminal essay *Education after Auschwitz* (1966) that the only education of any relevance must be an education towards self-reflection, criticality and empathy. Adorno saw a barbarism historically inscribed in civilisatory processes. Their explosive potential can only de-fused through a critical refusal of traditional authoritarian and totalitarian social

psychosocial structures and habitus, through a self-reflective and empathy-forming 'turn to the subject' (1966: 2).

Giroux suggests that Adorno's essay 'raises fundamental questions about how acts of inhumanity are inextricably connected to the pedagogical practices that shape the conditions that bring them into being' and which silence the public into passivity in the face of injustice and atrocities (2005: 21). He argues for an education for a future in which 'learning is inextricably connected to social change, the obligations of civic justice, and a notion of democracy in which peace, equality, compassion, and freedom are not limited to the nation state but extended to the international community' (2005:21).

German and UK university education in the arts has changed from providing an open-ended critical space for cultural experiment and social inclusion as experienced by the editors during the 1970's and 80's towards semi-commodified and modularised vocational training. The transdisciplinary project 'Beyond Forgetting 1938 - 2018: persecution/exile/memory' and this publication ask questions how arts education and practice – in the Design and the Performing Arts Sector – can move beyond a neo-liberal reductionist system of training and commodification towards critical practice and education today. How can we construct timely models of educational and artistic practice, as a non-conformist 'practice of freedom' where 'men and women deal critically and creatively with

Thomas Kampe

Professor of Somatic Performance and Education,  
Bath Spa University / UK

reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world' (Freire 2000:34)? Both, Giroux and educator Rhiannon Firth (2016) critique affirmative educational models that reduce the participant to technically highly skilled bystanders, in the light of global changes towards growing global inequality and moves towards anti-democratic totalitarian governance across the Western World. How can we develop timely educational models as acts of resistance against a neo-liberal 'de-politicized culture [that] undermines capacity for collective social action' (Firth 2016:12)? How do we re-awaken the potential for active social intervention within and beyond our fields, by delivering creative pedagogies that facilitate an embodied capacity for empathy, critical understandings of global socio-historical entanglements and a probing of collective activist practice? How do we dare to stay with the trouble of responding to the times we live in?

The project 'Beyond Forgetting 1938-2918' was designed as a cross-disciplinary, transnational and intergenerational inquiry and exchange. It aimed to ask questions beyond disciplinary concerns to engage with complex worldly realities and socio-historical relationships between cultures. Western performing arts practices – and to a great extent somatic practices of embodiment – claim to carry socially critical and culturally transformative potential. The Modernist avant-garde of theatre, dance and of reform body-culture – Körperkultur – understood itself as culturally disruptive, non-conformist, as vehicle for a lib-



er-ated self, or as herald for utopian more equal societies. While such universalist – and indeed white privileged – modernist positions have been put into question, they offer critical histories and embodied methodologies that have been tested and theorised – ready to be used as springboard for contemporary inquiry. Contemporary performance practices and education modalities, often drawing on 'somatic' approaches fostering agency and empathy of the participant, tend to seek and question new ways of world-making, social organisation and knowledge transmission between participants. They offer embodied-affective models

of practice which resonate with environmentalist Kate Rigby's (2017) call for a socio-cultural transformation that requires a 'journey of resistance, reconnection and regeneration', opening out 'alternative flights of imagination, more inclusive ecologies of emotion, new ways of bodily being and becoming-with-others'.

The book is published at a historical moment when US and European colonial histories of domination, oppression and destruction are being scrutinised in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement, the so-called refugee crisis along the borders of Europe, and a resurgence of white supremacist nationalist movements.

At the same time, an ever-increasing awareness of global inequality – driven through faster accessible digital media information – and global pandemic conditions urge us to rethink western consumer-capitalist social imaginaries built on the colonial structures and heritage of modern Europe and the Americas. At a time when statues representing oppressive colonial heritage are being pulled down in and beyond the Anglo-Saxon world, how and what do we commemorate our European and German heritage? The barbarism of the Shoah with its first violent excesses in 1938 and the current effects of colonisation – forced or economic-led migration from the southern hemisphere – are the direct consequences of white supremacist empire politics, offering a toxic mix of economic domination and exploitation and racist ideology. How do we de-centre the whiteness in our practices and in our thinking? And who is the 'we' that has the privilege to write, re-write or decolonise history?

British scholar Foluke Adebisi (2020) reminds the reader that academia – in research and education and its governance – needs to operate as a radical beacon of light in a post-truth era, 'to reveal the

illusions and historical erasures that have enabled post-factuality. Thus, decolonisation continues to be urgent, timely and necessary'. He continues to argue that 'decolonisation seeks to disrupt the colonial logics of commodification of space, nature, humanity and variably valued labour'. Yet the neoliberal university can only survive through the colonial logics of commodification of space, nature, humanity and variably valued labour.

In similar ways to pedagogical thinkers such as Adorno, Freire, Giroux or Firth he proposes a critical education that creates a path 'that unveils the possibility for change' by revealing the mechanisms of the construction of our reality. Such path must address the historical and socio-economic analyses of the colonial overarching system of domination, exploitation and commodification.

How can we as academics and educators maintain to activate our field as a critical space? Beyond Forgetting emerged initially from initiatives at Bath Spa University and Coburg University of Applied Sciences and Arts to work with students and advanced practitioner/scholars through interactive workshops and presentations where practitioners reflect on critical and socially engaged practice. This publication offers a document of reflections and practice by participating students which emerged through models of critical education probed by Gerhard Kampe at Coburg Applied University and by Pelin Celik at University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin.

It also offers a series of essays by artist/scholars from diverse cultural backgrounds ranging from Morocco, Iran, Germany, the UK and the US, who initially presented their work at the symposium 'Beyond Forgetting 1938 –2018: persecution/exile/memory' in July 2018 in Coburg.

The models of critical education, practice reflection, and essays are presented within four sections in this book, each of them reflecting on or through practice.

## DESIGN WITHIN A SOCIETAL CONTEXT

The first section offers essays on experimental projects and their results, outlining a transdisciplinary model of the teaching of design within a societal context.

Pelin Celik and Gerhard Kampe discuss the necessity and chances for a new definition of the roles of design, reflecting the rapid changes in the profession in more appropriate ways. Pelin Celik refers to a new ethical understanding of design which, with sensitivity to social oscillations or resonances, is able to critically reflect and to newly discover and interpret the – originally – socially utopian responsibility of design. In conjunction with the new role of design, Gerhard Kampe directs the attention to changing questions that focus on meaning, content and context, complemented – but not dominated – by practical and aesthetic abilities. Accountability, ethical understanding, critical questioning, sensitivity, empathy and flexibility must be seen as essential components of a sustainable design theory. This provides students with the opportunity to experience their discipline in the context of the social and environmental context and to develop their own ethical stance.

As an unique example of transdisciplinary teaching, the international project 'Beyond Forgetting 1938 –2018: persecution / exile / memory' with artists, designers, students and affected people represents an experiment in the Integrated Product Design course of study at Coburg University of Applied Sciences and Arts. Here, design students had to

leave the safe and familiar environment of product development and search for socially relevant topics that determined the course of the project themselves. Workshops with artists, performers, affected people, supporters and designers formed the basis for the conceptual works, which were presented to international experts at the final symposium. Gerhard Kampe, Stephan von Borstel and the student-activist collective F.E.E.L. Effect discuss their intentions and experiences within this transdisciplinary project.

Parallel to the Coburg project, students of Industrial Design and Communication Design in the course 'Theory of Perception and Communication' at University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin worked under the direction of Pelin Celik. They created a series of postcards that reveals their engagement with historic and contemporary conditions of war, destruction, escape, pain and survival from a contemporary perspective.

The section concludes with an article by designer, author, and design researcher Andreas Koop, who describes aspects of the visibility of the 'old' and 'new' political right. His writing articulates how design principles and color connotations are subject to the transformation of time or often transferred from other contexts, and sharpens our awareness of the subtle – sometimes banal – use of design of the political extreme right.

## EMBODYING MEMORY/HIDDEN HISTORIES

The second section offers a series of case studies of artistic practice in relation to Holocaust memory. Each of the four reflections opens out processes and problems in response to exile, persecution and commemoration through multi-disciplinary embodied-affective means.

Richard White's work gives an insight into a participatory walking practice as mode of critical and affective re-enactment of the experience of persecution. White, who has staged several participatory walks in the UK exposing the hidden and reluctant histories of slave trade legacies, reflects here on a recent walk-dialogue between the UK and Germany which retraces memories and experiences of Nazi Death Marches of Concentration Camps inmates.

His work makes use of the affective experience of 'walking with' and story-telling, in dialogue with visual installation practice, the encounter with objects, and with digital social-media tracking and mapping technology, to evoke a holistic and critical perspective on the memory of victims of the Shoah.

The pertinence of this innovative multi-dimensional work is sharpened through the live-streamed participation of the late Esther Brunstein, a survivor herself, and through verbatim records of lived experience of survivors of Nazi Death Marches and participants of the walks themselves.

In similar ways, the reflections by artist Stefan von Borstel on his re-designing of the memorial centre of the ex-concentration camp of Breitenau near Kassel, Germany, open out questions regarding the telling of stories of victims and survivors through narrative, visual and affective/atmospheric ways. Von Borstel details his use of materials – metal, wood, photographic reproduction as a commemorative installation, which enables the visitor to contemplate, be affectively moved, and to critically reflect on this place of persecution situated in the romantic Fulda Valley in northern Hessen. The installation contrasts the bureaucratic Nazi-system of registration and giving numeric order to the horrific and injustice,

with fragments of personal stories and verbatim records of victims – those who died and those who survived. The installation honours the voices of the victims, rather than offering biographies of the perpetrators. His installation opens out his own positioning as a place of questioning this fatal German history, understood as an opportunity to move beyond without forgetting.

My own essay excavates archival material of the visionary Jewish choreographer Gertrud Bodenwieser (1890-1959) and her company dancers in the early period of their exile from Vienna between 1938 and 1940. It follows Bodenwieser, who was the first European Professor for Dance and Choreography at Wiener Staatsakademie, through the tragedy of her resignation and exile to Paris and Colombia, to her re-uniting with her Viennese Ballet Company in Australia in 1939. The essay tells a nearly forgotten story of the terror of fear, and the hiding and the re-inventing of identities during and after the second World War. The trauma of enforced exile and racial persecution is exemplified through letters and performance reviews of dancers Melitta Melzer and Emmy Steininger-Taussig. The writing emerged through practice-led research on the re-enactment of Bodenwieser's practices, inspired by the author's prolonged and inspiring period of first-hand experience study with the Jewish-born Bodenwieser dancer and choreographer Hilde Holger (1905-2001) in London.

UK-based performance maker Matthew Emery concludes this first section with reflections on his own participatory walk-about theatre practice as a living gravestone. Here, his 'Suitcase Memorial' offers a simple example of an embodied response to historical and contemporary exile that aims to intervene, disturb and ask questions in poetic and conversational ways.



## OBJECTS/MEDIA/TRAUMA

The third section gives voice to practitioners engaging with topics of cultural trauma, displacement and persecution in relation to post-WW2 experiences through a broad range of media – virtual and mixed reality, cartography and literature.

UK-based multi-media artist Sophie Dixon proposes her work on the memory of forced expulsion of the German speaking communities from Communist western Czechoslovakia in 1946 as a case study 'on events at the centre of sudden and irrevocable change', examining 'what happens between such events and our later interpretations of them'. Her subject still forms a period of reluctant history in Germany and the now Czech Republic, as the Sudetendeutsche were generally linked to German Nazi ideology and their expulsion in 1946 has been a complex and shame-filled chapter in both countries' history writing.

This complex and nearly hidden history of expulsion is being excavated from the ruins of buildings in the village of Srbská, prior Wünschendorf, by Dixon through a several year long period of time spent in the region. Dixon gradually gathered and digitised a substantial archive of testimonies, photographs, documents, and objects from a broad range of locations all over Germany with the desire to preserve these materials and at the same time make them accessible.

Her writings reflect on research as human-geographer and looks at the possibility of making the lost re-visible through video installations and the use of virtual- and mixed-reality practices. Here, photographic work is mixed with real objects and reimagined ghostly spaces made visible from verbal and written accounts of former residents of abandoned villages.

The visual erasure of memory, trauma and history is at the heart of the writing and practice of Iranian-born artist Bahar Majdzadeh. Her work on Memory Cartography and the erasure of space embraces cartography as a critical artistic process of reconstruction of a nearly lost memory of political oppression, persecution and mass murder in the Islamic Republic of Iran (I.R.I.) since the 1980s. Her writings expose the banal mechanisms of facilitating state-authorized violence and persecution through the official re-writing of maps and the naming of streets and spaces by the Iranian regime, thereby erasing memory of spaces of populace of political opposition.

Majdzadeh describes her practice, influenced by Austrian artist cartographer/artist Nikolaus Gansterer, as a politically potent 'memory map' reflecting the relation that people have with places that have been destroyed or no longer exist. Her work reverses the dominant erasure strategies of the I.R.I. cartographers, by redesigning and re-reading the cartographic image, 'so that what disappeared and was forgotten returns to memory'. She reminds the reader that the use of memory maps, as a 'listening to ghosts' is commonly found in history books about genocide and cultural trauma.

Moroccan scholar Brahim Benmoh's essay on cultural trauma and 9/11 literature examines representation of the effects of trauma in Don DeLillo's novel 'Falling Man' (2007). Benmoh focuses on the integration and representation of research on trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder in literature context, opening out issues of real and imagined spaces, and the phenomenon of secondary and virtual trauma and their effect on a subjects' identity and their psycho-social field. Quoting scholar Kristiaan Versluys, he proposes that 'trauma is not healed; it spreads like a contagious disease' (Versluys 2009).

## DIALOGUE & INTERACTION

The final section of the essays focuses on Dialogue & Interaction. It presents praxis reflections from several countries, which offer various perspectives on working with groups of people with migration or refugee background.

The recollections of the student-activist collective F.E.E.L.- Effect reflect on the conditions in refugee camps in Greece, Serbia and Macedonia, and on their own volunteer involvement in NGO support organisations. The text offers a brief insight into journeys to the Balkans between 2017 and 2019 and the group's encounter with Maker Spaces such as Habibi.Works project in Ioannina, Greece. Habibi.Works offers people from refugee camps an interactive space to 'reclaim some freedom to design their everyday life' and develop 'a sense of self-empowerment again' through workshop facilities and opportunities for creative interaction with the world after months of being immobilised and disempowered in official refugee camps in Greece. The report also gives an insight into the work of support groups which aim to supply and distribute basic food and hygiene articles to under strictly controlled conditions in government run camps. The F.E.E.L.- Effect volunteers shed light on the living conditions in clandestine camps, so called 'spots', in various places around Subotica, Serbia, close to the Hungarian border. Here, the brutality and hardship of refuge in forests or abandoned houses is documented through photographs which do not shy away from revealing the reality of living conditions around the fenced-in borders of fortress Europe. The work is still pertinent in the light of the recent tragedy of the devastating fires in the Moria camp on the Greek Island of Lesbos in autumn 2020 where 12000 people were being displaced, with little hope for relocation to mainland Europe.

The essay *Punti di Fuga* reflects on a dialogic project with German citizens and humans with migration background in the vicinity of a refugee camp in the German town of Tharandt, near the city of Dresden. *Punti di Fuga* was a multi-disciplinary intercultural project initiated by Sicilian artist Stefania Milazzo in 2015, as a counterpoint to an increasing xenophobia in Saxony through the growing rightwing PEGIDA movement. The essay draws on verbatim feedback by participants in movement and nature workshops in Tharandt to reflect on the potential of designing the experience of new creative relationships of being-with through affective-embodied practice exchanges.

London-based actor, theatre-director and activist Stephen Tiller looks back at his life, and at the influence of his Jewish heritage on his own artistic work and creative engagement with marginalised, excluded, forgotten and silenced communities in the UK and Europe, the former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Uganda and Gaza. The essay reflects on three iterations of Gian-Carlo Menotti's opera *The Consul* that he devised with refugee-groups and professional performers between 2010 and 2018, and their relevance to a contemporary world of race hate, ethnic cleansing, displacement, and nationalism. Tiller's personal and poetic reflections on the past and present bring forward the often marginalised memory of the Al-Nakbar, the catastrophe of Palestinian expulsion of 1948, as he concludes: 'Memory. Forgetting. Exile. Erasure. Our vigilance and our care that memory, and histories, should not be erased is once more needed. As much as it ever was in 1939. Or 1948'.

The final essay by US film maker Yehuva Sharim 'When Napkins are Our Only Bandages: Displacement and the Making of Images' brings forward dialogues with contemporary migrant communities in the United States in the context of his own documentary film practice. His poetic and fragmented reflections give space and voice for situational and affective impression of his dialogue partners. Sharim proposes his film-making as acts of love, in motion, where his 'entire body is making images. Filming and filmmaking are processes of revelation, discovering perceptions

unseen, exuding a new knowledge, an insight into who we used to be (memory), what we are (space, body, and sentiment), and who we could become (creativity, imagination)'. The reflections on his community-film work blurs boundaries of authorship, creating an entanglement of voices of the vulnerable, marginalised and broken and finally, in an utterance of hope, asks for more creative dialogues of documentation – his collaborator Ali asks: 'When we will end filming the trilogy, what shall we do then? Can we have another trilogy together?'

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