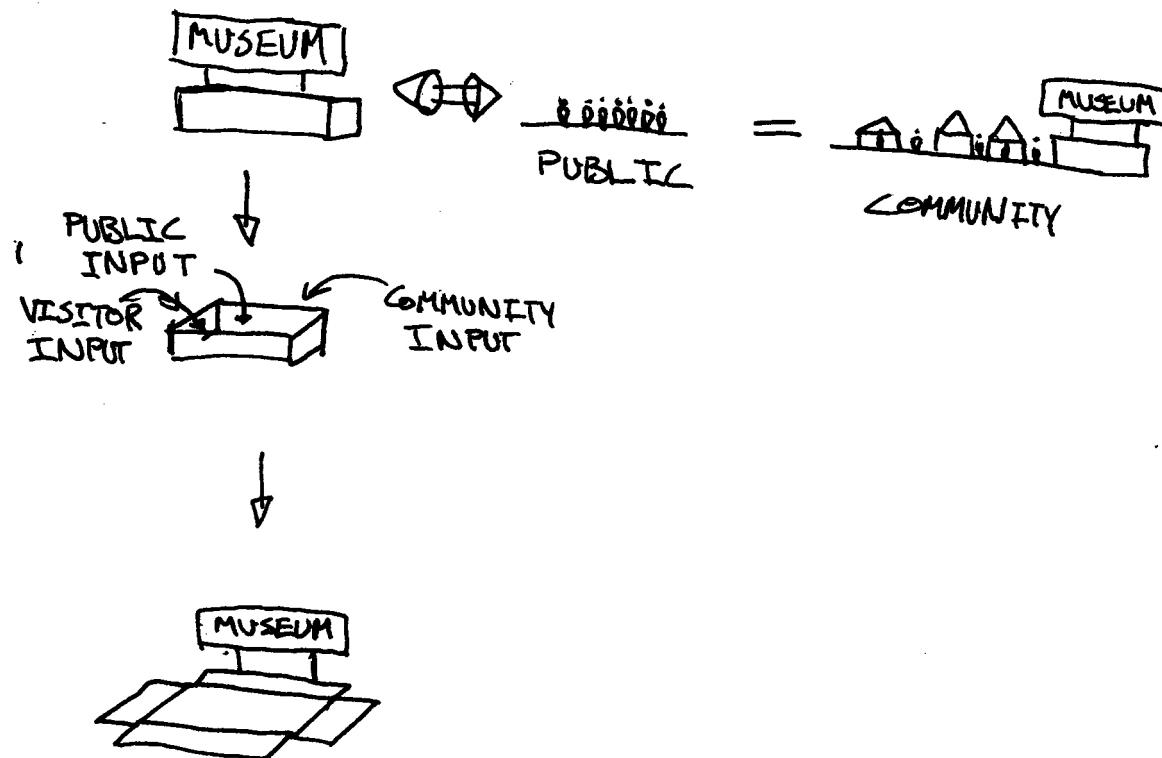




3



MUSEOLOGY AND MEMORIALS

The Study of New Methods of Representing Memory

introduction

Public Interaction:

P u b l i c awareness

educate

Museums
memories

Museums and memorials are studied in order to inform a sensitive design approach.

Museums and memorials create places for memory. They act as landmarks that people use to orientate themselves, hence becoming part of their recollection. Museums can be resources, acting for the community.

A museum creates public awareness by publicly acknowledging past events. Ralo said, “museums aim to educate this generation and the next by fostering caution to current regimes, not to repeat such mistakes as forced removals” (District Six) (2000:153). The sites of such incident can be transformed from benign silence to areas that speak of historical context, restructuring the landscape (Young 1994:7 and Coombes 2003:131).

Museums give groups of people a chance to work through their memories and come to terms with their trauma. Gaining distance on an event brings new emotions and memories to the fore. Previously ‘dominating’ memories can be contested.



Left: Fragments from 75 Horstley Street, District Six displayed according to their location in the house. (Coombes 2004:127).



Right: The inside of the District Six Museum - light reflecting off the plastic 'Streets' exhibit on the floor (Coombes 2004:127).



ritual = shared
memories

cultural heritage

museums

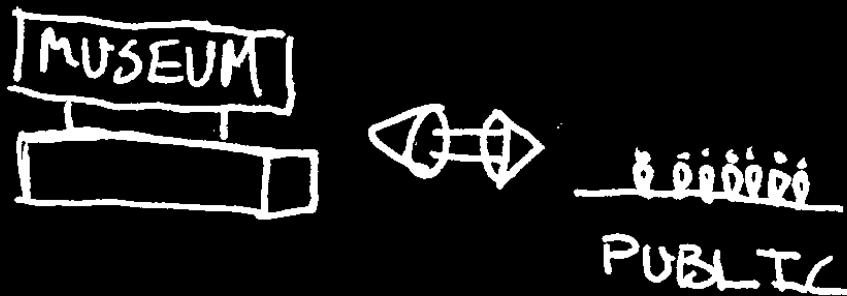
public face interactive
spectacle
shape public memory

memory = Resource

The act of remembering with others becomes a ritual within its own right. Acknowledgement of events by personally visiting a site helps people come to terms with traumatic events. It also creates new memories and shared memories for a group of people. The ritualised remembrance marks the reality of ends (Young 1993:2).

According to Coombes, museums are part of our cultural heritage. They shape public memory and act as a public spectacle (Young 1994:9 and Coombes 2003:11) and hence are directly linked to the public realm. The museum and memorial passively shape memory and the content has the potential to actively engage with people's memories if it acts as a source of knowledge.

Sketch of Museums interacting with
the public (RE:2007).





Above: People fascinated by the 'Streets: Retracing District Six' exhibition at the District Six Museum. (Coombes 2004:130).



trace the past

viewer = participant

community = client

past
↑
↓
present

Place of Memory

matrix in the landscape
memorial^{recollection}
orientate meaning
obtrusive
provoke landscape

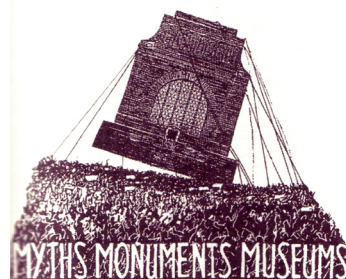
Young and Fentress said that writing freezes memory. It only captures memory as events, hence only events are remembered and it concretises particular historical narratives. All that can be exhibited is a trace of the past (Coombes 2003:143).

The viewer must be brought in as a participant. The museum content should be made by public participation rather than displaying art, in so doing the collective and individual need to be taken into account (Coombes 2003:8, 9 &125). Young said that different formats of memory input create different meanings (1993:viii). Coombes suggested that the community should be the new client (2003:161).

Memory depends on a vast array of material, aesthetic, spatial and ideological attributes that converge on one site (Young 1993:xi). Any memorial is perceived in its geography. It sits among other points in a matrix in the landscape (Young 1993:7) acting as a point of reference which people use to orientate themselves. It is better that a memorial is obtrusive, provoking the landscape. If it is something pleasing, it fades, receding into the landscape (young 1993:7).

Sketch of the Museum in with the community. (RE:2007)





3. Penny Siopis, poster for "Myths, Monuments, Museums" conference, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 16-18 July 1992. Courtesy of the artist.

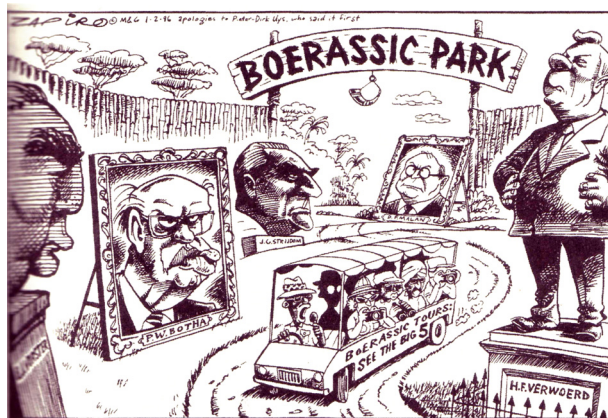
NEW PREMISES?

16 - 18 JULY 1992

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
HISTORY WORKSHOP



Below 4. Zapiro, Boerassic Park. Mail and Guardian, 1 February 1996. Courtesy of Jonathan Shapiro.



Above: Penny Siopis, poster for "myths, monuments and museums"
Zapiro, Boerassic park, mail and gardian, 1February1996. (Coombes 2004:19).



competing
memories

allow
new meanings

social truth > historical truth

Traditional Monument

Traditional monuments do not acknowledge their own origins. Instead they call attention to past events. They do not show fragility, aiming to blend into the landscape. They seem to have no dependence on others for life. The realistic figuration in some of these monuments tends to thwart multiple messages.

Traditional monuments aim to console viewers, redeeming past tragic events and trying to mend memory (Young 1993:28). Young said that monuments bury history in myth (1993:20), asserting an historical 'truth' on the public memory. Fentress said that if a group thinks it's true, that is more important than historical truth (1992:25). This form of 'truth' is not based on facts but on multifaceted stories open to interpretation.

Members of Warsaw's local Jewish community at a memorial (Young 1993:183).





Above: Newspaper clipping of Chancellor Kohl of West Germany and Rabbi Joskowicz of Poland at Auschwitz Concentration Camp. (Young 1993: 145).



Contemporary Memorials

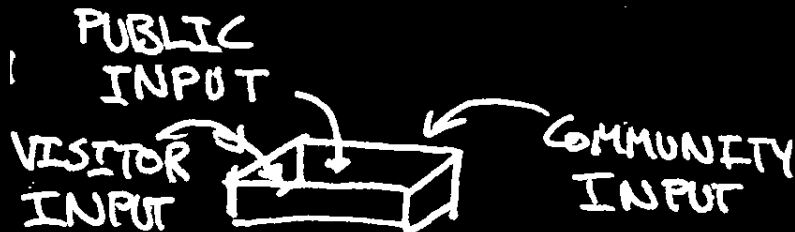


There is a call for more interactive museums (Coombes 2003:151). Multiple inputs raise conflicting views and cultural differences over the same event, creating more inclusive and reflexive multi-dimensional views of history.

Interactive museums acknowledge their context and time. They make an attempt toward acknowledging that they are constructed in a certain historical and political reality. They take into account that they create a place in national memory. They call attention to their own presence to provoke memory. There is an understanding that memory is not passive but ever-evolving, bringing with it new meaning. They do not accept the burden of memory but throw it back at the city and the people (Young 1993:30).

Contemporary memorials do not attempt to console or create an overview of memory. People are forced to acknowledge their own burden of memory. Young said that memory should fuse public and private memory. "Minds that are reflecting on the past precipitate in the present moment" (1993:15). A museum or memorial has the inherent capacity to generate human reactions (Young 1993:10) as opposed to a functional building, such as a library. As a museum, it has an additional layer of meaning.

Sketch of Multiple inputs (RE:2007).



to Orleans
A USA
15.96

I hope that District 6
will become what it once was!

Lonny Hlund
(Journett Fern Sockthun)

Christen Blomkvist
(Principle Sweden)

6
K. P. M. A. N. A. R. E. N. G. A.
27.11.96

APARTHEID !!!
IS A CRIME
27.6.96
SHANYENGANA M.

What a painful reminder
of the crimes of Apartheid!
Let all those afflicted find
in the solace of the spirit
of a new South Africa
Pondokoni Ciula Khana
of the Republic of Namibia

GLICKS DRAPERS
225 HANOVER ST.
DISTR. SIX
IN MEMORY OF THE
GLICK & KRAWITZ
FAMILIES WHO TRAD
THERE FOR OVER 40 Y
I AM LEAH KRAWITZ
& MY HEART STILL ACH

The indomitable
man spirit will
prevail.
W. AMBOQ
beyond hant claims
Commissioner

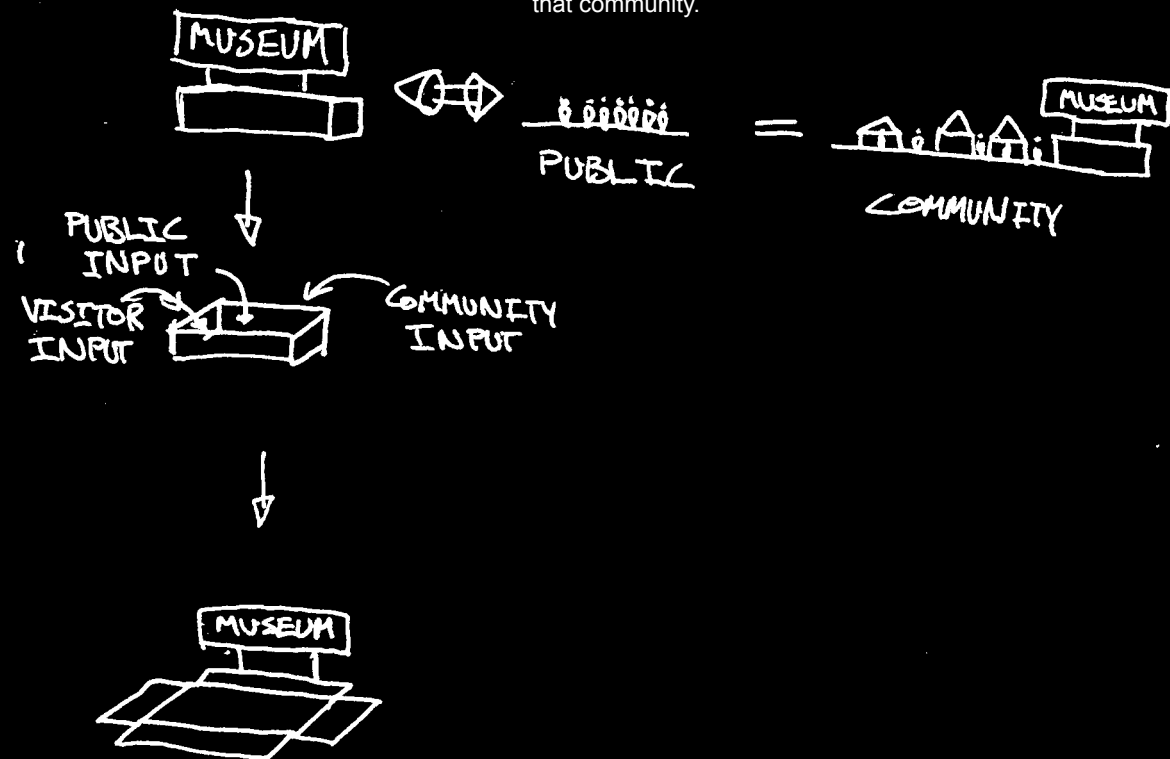
Above: Names, addresses and notes made by residents on the Memory cloth. (RASSOOL and PROSALENDIS 2001: 34)



Conculsion

The museum and memorial passively shape memory, and the content has the potential to actively engage with people's memories. Museums and memorials trace the past. They create places for memory, places for rituals and places for new shared memory. As a landmark, they orientate people and form part of their recollection. Museums form the public face of our cultural heritage, educating people to never repeat these mistakes. Contemporary museums pass the burden of memory-work on to the visitor. Internal and social truth is more important than historical truth. Museums should act for the community and fuse public and private.

Museums need to interact with the public.
 The public is the Community. Museums
 need to contextualise themselves within
 that community.



A museum acts as a receptacle for multiple,
 conflicting inputs. It should then act as an open
 'place' where people can engage with memories.

