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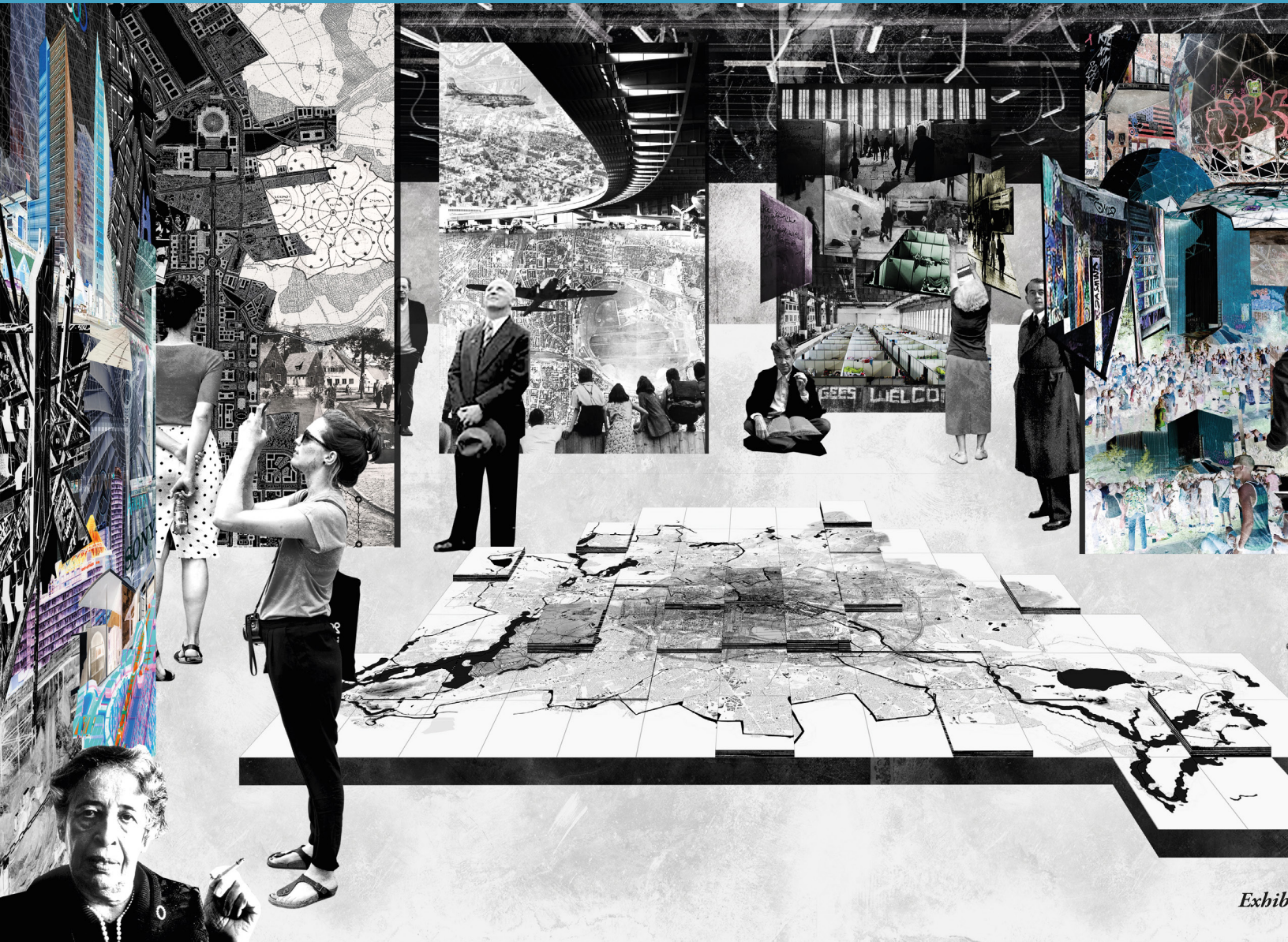
Future Histories Lab

Publication Date

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BERLIN: THE GUILT ENVIRONMENT

GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH STUDIO CASE STUDY



WHY READ THIS CASE STUDY?

How do cities use the urban public landscape to preserve, represent, and memorialize their histories?

Nowhere is the “memory industry” that shapes the design of memorial landscapes more powerful and pervasive than in Berlin. This studio focused on the complex links between Berlin’s post-reunification urban renewal program designed to jump-start the city’s urban economy, and efforts to create an urban public landscape commemorating violent histories, collective trauma, and reconciliation. The studio used the lens of memory studies to trace Berlin’s uneasy efforts to attract foreign investment and tourists on the one hand, and create a ‘guilt’ environment marked by the preservation and memorialization of urban sites linked to the Holocaust, colonialism, and the Cold War.

Led by architectural historian Andrew Shanken and art historian Lauren Kroiz, with the participation of Architecture doctoral candidate Valentina Rozas-Krause, students were challenged to rethink memory and commemoration in Berlin. Synthesizing graphic methods drawn from architecture,

landscape architecture, art practice, and urban planning with literary, art historical, cinematic, historical, and geographical analysis, they worked collaboratively to propose site-specific revisions to Berlin’s memorial environment. The studio produced urban and architectural proposals; scholarly, literary and photographic essays; graphic novels; films; and sound pieces. The final project was an imaginative and provocative guide to the “guilt environment” of Berlin, highlighting commemorative interventions as architecture and design, but also as rhetoric, territory, and dynamic parts of everyday urban life.

Keywords:

memory studies, project-based learning, public history, urban graphic representation, humanities and geographical methods, Berlin.

This case study is part of an archive of the UC Berkeley Global Urban Humanities Initiative and its Future Histories Lab, supported by the Mellon Foundation. The entire archive, including course case studies, faculty and student reflections, digital projects, symposia, exhibitions, and publications, is available at https://escholarship.org/uc/ucb_guh_fhl.

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Cover Image: Student work by Pol Fite Matamoros and Monica Lamela Blazquez.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

BERLIN: THE GUILT ENVIRONMENT

*GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES
INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH STUDIO*



4 Units, Spring 2020

Architecture 209 / History of Art 290

Instructors:

Lauren Kroiz (History of Art)

Andrew Shanken (Architecture)

Graduate Student Instructor:

Valentina Rozas-Krause (Architecture)

This studio invited students to analyze, criticize, represent, and reimagine the form that memory and commemoration take in Berlin by asking how existing landscapes work and what new commemorative interventions might be necessary.

THE TEACHING TEAM



Lauren Kroiz

Lauren Kroiz is Associate Professor in the History of Art Department at University of California, Berkeley. Her research and teaching focus on art and modernism in the United States during the twentieth century. She is a Faculty Curator of photography, paintings, and works of art on paper at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, as well as affiliate faculty in the American Studies Program and the Center for Race and Gender. She has taught a range of topics in the history of American art, photography, material culture, and modernism, including courses on avant-gardism, race and representation, thing theory, technologies of imaging, meanings of medium, and globalization.



Andrew Shanken

Andy Shanken is an architectural and urban historian with an interest in how cultural constructions of memory shape the built environment (and vice versa). He also works on the unbuilt and paper architecture, themed landscapes, heritage and conservation planning; traditions of representation in twentieth-century architecture and planning; keywords in architecture and American culture; and consumer culture and architecture. He is interested in historiography, particularly of architectural history, and the intersection of popular culture and architecture. He is currently the Director of American Studies, Faculty Curator of the Environmental Design Archives, on the Faculty Advisory Committee at the Townsend Center for the Humanities and the Global Urban Humanities. He has a joint appointment in American Studies.



Valentina Rozas-Krause

Valentina Rozas-Krause is completing her PhD in Architecture at UC Berkeley in 2020. Starting this fall, she will join the University of Michigan as Collegiate Fellow in the History of Art Department. This postdoctoral fellowship is part of the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) Collegiate Fellows program, which prepares scholars for tenure-track appointments at the University of Michigan. During her postdoctoral appointment Valentina will work on her book project *Memorials and the Cult of Apology*, based on her dissertation, and start her next research project *Postcolonial Windhoek*, on the urban and architectural legacies of German colonialism in Namibia. She completed the Graduate Certificate in Global Urban Humanities and organized the GUH symposium *Techniques of Memory*.



Before the pandemic forced a switch to remote instruction, students made visits to map collections. For some students in music and economics, spatial analysis was new.

COURSE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

Since the city's reunification in 1989, Berlin has intertwined its urban renewal with landscapes of reconciliation and commemoration. The "New Berlin" that politicians and city authorities imagined in the 1990s after the Wende (or Fall of the Berlin Wall), was to be forged by international investment, materialized in high-profile commissions to "starchitects," alongside preservation and memorialization of the city's past, often seen through the seemingly inevitable lens of the Holocaust, and more recently colonialism. Yet the relationship between developing a European metropolis and preserving sites of memory is troubled: projects throughout the city reveal how these ideas are reshuffled under the pressures of tourism, apology, foreign investment, and local activism. This makes Berlin the archetype of the contemporary "guilt environment."

The course reconsidered Berlin's commemorative landscape as a model for thinking about urban memory. It looked not just at the Holocaust, but also at Berlin's role as an imperial capital of the 19th century, a Cold War divide, a place of reconciliation, and a site of immigration, all intricately bound up in urban change and development. As a way of coming to know the city through time, students worked collaboratively to propose revisions to Berlin's built environment, with products as diverse as urban and architectural proposals, scholarly, literary or photographic essays; graphic novels; films; and sound pieces. They chose a site to propose a memorial intervention, again in any number of formats. Readings ranged from scholarship on memory, commemoration, trauma and atrocity, to more specific readings on Berlin. Much of the course took the form of directed research on specific projects, so that each student's reading and trajectory was slightly different. A planned field trip to Berlin had to be canceled because of the pandemic. Students represented their research through a variety of visual and written final projects.

EXTENDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course synthesized graphic methods drawn from architecture, landscape architecture, art practice, and urban planning with literary, art historical, cinematic, historical, and geographical modes of analysis. While sites of memory have often been studied as individual interventions, particularly through the lens of trauma, politics, and identity, this course looked at them as rhetoric, territory, and as parts of the everyday, all within a wider urban analysis. Since the landscape of memory intersects with commemorative practices, issues about performance, temporality, and affect were woven through the course.

A key theme of the course was the relationship among development, tourism, imperialism, trauma, immigration, globalization, and memory. Students interrogated specific memorial interventions in order to understand how the many memorials to different events fit together—or remain discordant—within the urban fabric of a city obsessed with memory. As James E. Young once wrote, there is no place in Germany free of tragedy. It might be argued that Germany is like any place else, but even more so. How has the built environment responded to, reflected, or resisted this memory saturated city?

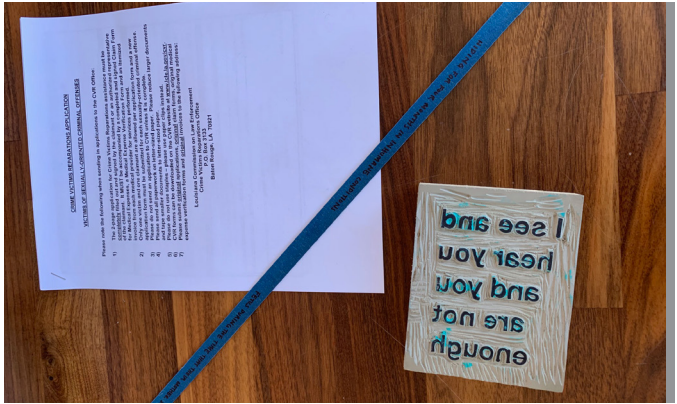
Nowhere is the memory industry more pervasive than in Berlin, and yet Berlin might be seen as the center of memory studies in a broader sense. The discourse on cultural memory begins with the Holocaust and moves through traumas across the globe, along the way taking in the experience of colonization across cultures. This studio proposed to study Berlin as a microcosm of the larger debates on urban memory while it examined these larger debates to study Berlin. While Berlin was the focus, it was also a starting point to think through larger issues of how memory is sedimented in the built environment.

The studio inverted Berlin's typical memory trajectory by coming at the city's Holocaust memorial infrastructure through two historical bookends: the absence of colonial memory and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Students studied the relationship between the memorial landscape of the Third Reich alongside the fabric of unification and recent efforts to memorialize a long-suppressed colonial past. Students traced the web of commemorative spaces and sites and propose interventions in that web.

Memory studies has emerged as an intrinsically trans-disciplinary sub-field. Since memorials take many forms—literary, artistic, architectural, performative—they have attracted contributions from scholars from every humanistic discipline. Consequently, they offer a natural bridge between design disciplines and the humanities. The hope was to consider Berlin’s memory sites in this wide frame, produce creative responses, and present them as a guide in the manner of Rebecca Solnit’s atlases of New York and San Francisco. The medium of each entry was open to the students, including written essays, photo-essays, videos, performances, architectural designs, interior designs, art pieces and urban master plans. Guest critics were invited to review the final competition entries.

The final product of the course was to be a memory guide to explore Berlin: a hybrid between travel book, atlas and academic publication. The guide was to highlight the students’ group and individual projects and interventions alongside maps of Berlin through time, historical and contemporary images, histories and myths. Both straightforward and ironic, the guide would have used the format of a city guide in order to serve as a tool to explore multiple dimensions of Berlin, while at the same time humorously reflecting on memorial tourism in Berlin. Because of the interruption of the pandemic, a single guide was not created. Instead, students created a variety of project representing their explorations of the “guilt environment.”

“Beyond Verbal” assignments asked students to represent their research visually or through interactive activities rather than just through writing.



COURSE SUMMARY

ARC OF THE SEMESTER

WEEK 1- INTRODUCTIONS

In week one of the class we got to know each other, our practice space, the aims of the course, and heard guest speaker Paul Farber.

WEEK 2- GUILT

We discussed the assignment for next week: “Beyond Verbal assignment #1.” Groups of two were assigned by instructors. Cartoon, collage, graph, map, timeline, drawing, diagram, and/or photographs could be deployed to examine the theme of guilt.

WEEK 3- APOLOGIES AND REPARATIONS

Each student presented one text from among the readings list. “Beyond Verbal assignment #2”: each group (of 2) was assigned a guide book of Berlin. They read through the guide and presented an alternative/additional narrative and illustration of a new trail through Berlin, applying assigned readings.

WEEK 4- MAPPING BERLIN

“Beyond Verbal assignment #3”: in groups of 4, students presented an alternative design proposal for reunification, based on guilt, reparation, memory, or related themes.

WEEK 5- BERLIN NEIGHBORHOODS

Students designed an ideal itinerary of their assigned neighborhoods to be presented in class with a slideshow. They incorporated the assigned neighborhoods into the previous mapping project, and presented the ideal itinerary alongside a list of interviews, archives and sites to visit, and a focused bibliography of their case study.



WEEK 6- BERLIN ITINERARY

Students prepared to present their chosen reading in class, together with their site research proposal.

WEEK 7- READING FOR BERLIN I

Students presented individual readings together with site research proposal on two neighborhoods or cases.

WEEK 8- READING FOR BERLIN II

Students presented individual readings together with site research proposal on two neighborhoods or cases.

Students transformed their ideal Berlin itinerary into a concrete plan to develop their research. Because the trip to Berlin was canceled because of the pandemic, students had to improvise.

WEEK 9- READING FOR BERLIN III & SYNTHESIS

Students presented individual readings together with site research proposal on two neighborhoods or cases.

WEEK 10- SPRING BREAK, TRIP TO BERLIN 03/20 - 03/29 (CANCELED DUE TO PANDEMIC)

WEEK 11 TO 14- STUDENT-LED SESSIONS

Student-led sessions based on their individual case studies

WEEK 16- FINAL REVIEW WITH GUEST CRITICS

Presentation of individual site-based projects.





Winter 1990/1991 Event Calendar

brought to you by the
Board of Reunification of Berlin
(BoRoB)

Nov 9: One Year Anniversary of the Fall of the Wall

Dec 4: Community Fußball tournament

Dec 16: Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Design Workshop

Dec 20: Poetry Slam & Art Crit

Jan 5: GrafMeet!

Feb 19: Memorial Design Competition

Feb 25: Community Meeting

STUDENT WORK

A HISTORICAL BERLIN EXPERIENCE

By Vanessa Jackson

A HISTORICAL BERLIN EXPERIENCE ...IN JUST FIVE SHORT STOPS!

download
FREE
tour tips
here!

VOTED
"QUICKEST
BERLIN
HERITAGE TOUR!"

Experience Berlin and its history in a mere five stops! History as distilled and condensed by our experienced guides! Quick and easy! Join our tour today!

5

Brandenburg Gate
Berlin's signature attraction. A visit to Brandenburg Gate and the Berlin Tourist Info Centre in its south wing can be easily combined with a leisurely stroll along the Unter den Lindenboulevard with its numerous places of interest.

4

Hotel Adlon Kempinski Berlin
A luxury hotel in Berlin, Germany. It is on Unter den Linden, the main boulevard in the central Mitte district, at the corner with Pariser Platz, directly opposite the Brandenburg Gate and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

3

Unter den Linden Boulevard
From the Berlin Cathedral to the Brandenburg Gate, and many other landmarks in between – the magnificent boulevard Unter den Linden takes you right through the middle of Berlin.

2

Zeughaus
The Zeughaus is one of the most important buildings in Berlin. It houses the Deutsches Historisches Museum.

1

Berlin Cathedral
The monumental Cathedral Church in Berlin is a major attraction – a richly decorated church interior, fascinating history and impressive architecture.

5

4

3

2

1

KREUZBERG /

NEUKÖLLN

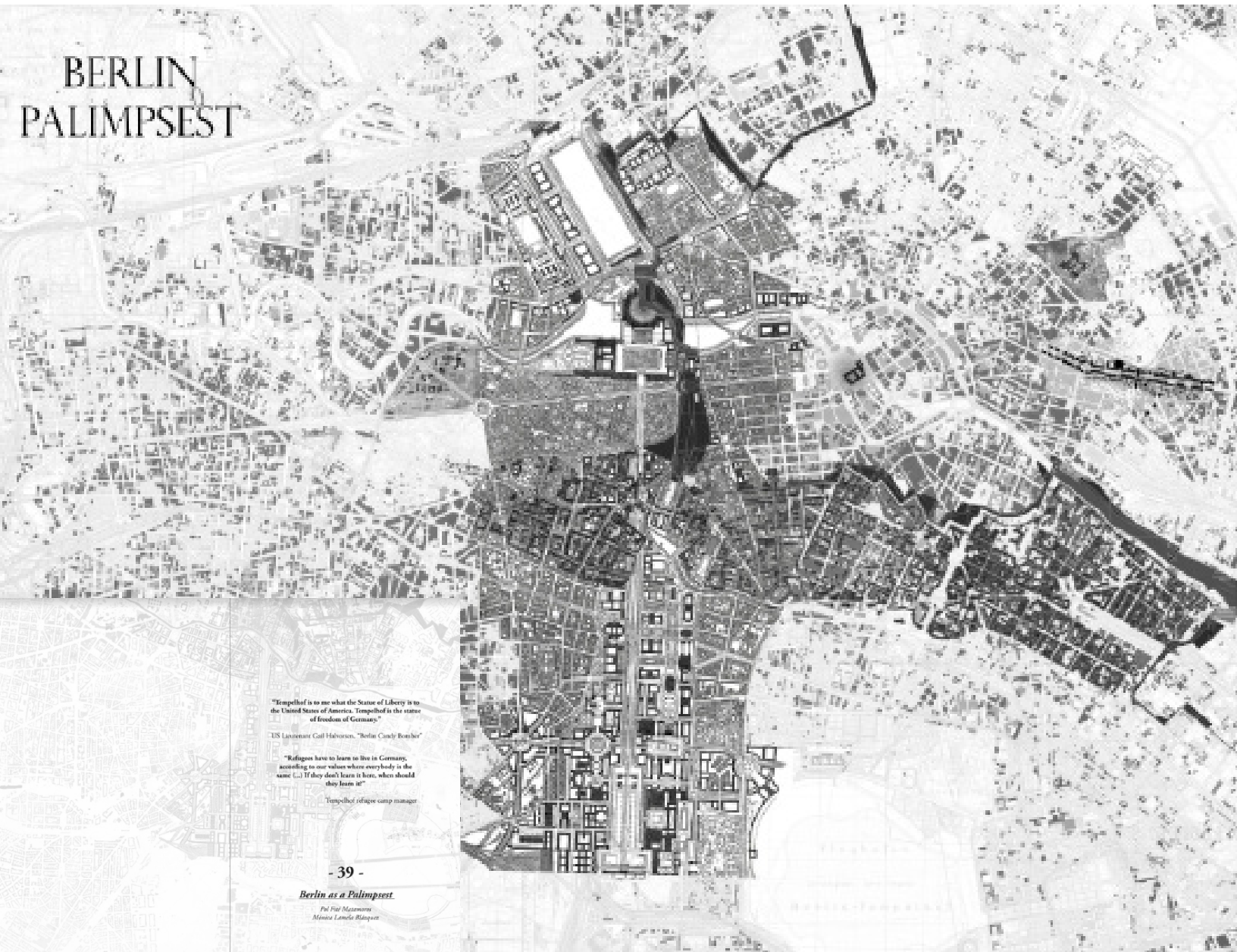
☪ Prominent sites of Turkish history & culture in Berlin

🏠 Sites of protest and resistance

☕ Coffee shops opened in late 2010s as a sign of gentrification

BERLIN AS A PALIMPSEST

By Pol Fité Matamoros &
Mónica Lamela Blázquez





Intermezzo 2

As a target of the city’s renewal policies [Behutsame Stadterneuerung], Tempelhof Field became a site of contestation between multiple actors: the city saw in it yet another opportunity for rebranding, for attracting investment and augmenting the city’s housing stock. Different groups from civil society saw in the void of the obsolete infrastructure an opportunity to critically rework the liberal city’s engagement with its multiple historical strata—see, for example the self-explanatory group ‘Citizens’ Initiative for Commemoration of Nazi Crimes On and Around Tempelhof Field’ founded in 2010. And, finally, residents from its adjacent neighborhoods saw, in its vast fields, the potential for a true public space that would compensate for the continued no-man’s land character that both the successive camps and the Wall had brought to the area.

The heart of Berlin’s urban life:
Collage featuring people appropriating
the site of the former airport.



In the meantime, however, the city had other plans for these 300 hectares of highly central urban land: new commercial areas, offices, 4,700 new homes, and a large public library were being aggressively championed by Mayor Klaus Wowereit and his planning team. The government sought legitimization through public participation—that is, by manufacturing consent through superfluous decisions over landscape design—and by promising a 30% proportion of affordable housing—something quite hard to believe given the government’s record score of zero affordable units in 10 years.

But the government miscalculated the actual strength of public mobilization, the amount of action that a new public space could foster in neighborhoods at the geographical and ideological fringe such as Neukölln and Kreuzberg. Thus, two protest groups soon raised to contest Tempelhof’s future: Tempelhof für Alle—a neighborhood association working along the lines of “Stop Gentrification” and “Take Your Right to the City”—and Squat Tempelhof—advocates of literal physical reclamation of Tempelhof as part of a broader occupy movement in Berlin. On June 20th, 2009, the ‘Squat Tempelhof 20.06.09’ protest marked a decisive turn for Tempelhof: some 2000 riot policemen stood on one side of the fence to prevent, successfully, protesters from jumping into the airfield. But in doing so they also managed to make the Tempelhof fight a city-wide issue with widespread media coverage. Thus, forced by citizen-mobilization and press over-attention, the city called for a referendum in 2014 where 65 % of the voters chose to keep Tempelhof Field as it was: a thriving urban space in permanent in-betweenness.

Contesting Tempelhof’s future. Collage superimposing proposals for the 2009 international ideas competition, Jakob Tigges’ proposal to build the world’s biggest artificial mountain, and protest banners.

The Berlin Palimpsest, divided into 75 booklets. In red, the three booklets developed by the authors (beyond the main layers common to all).

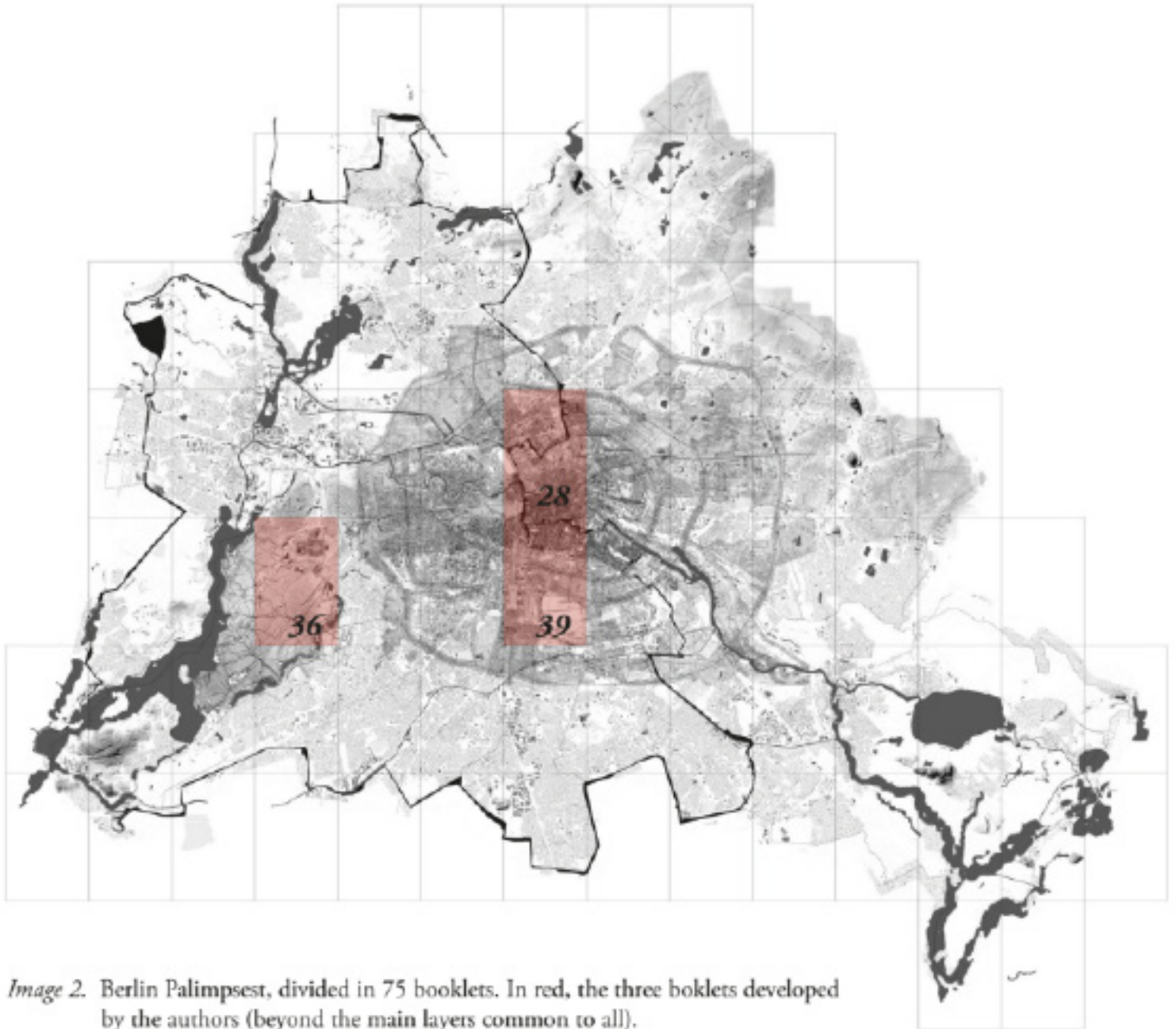


Image 2. Berlin Palimpsest, divided in 75 booklets. In red, the three booklets developed by the authors (beyond the main layers common to all).

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Studio Reflection

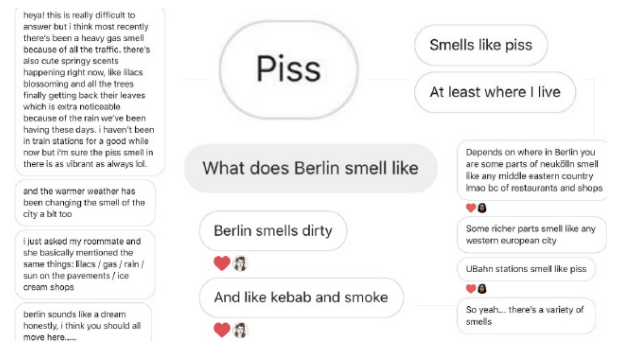
By Saif Radi, Spring 2020

The GUH Berlin studio has been a wild journey. From the first few weeks of class when we sat together without fear of contagion - what ignorant bliss - to the zoom critiques where we silently direct-messaged each other with words of encouragement, congratulations, and humor. In the beginning I learned mostly what was on the syllabus: divided Germany, guilt theory, reparations, the history and structure of Berlin, etc. But even before COVID-19 changed our lives and working environment, the non-verbal assignments taught me how to think outside of writing.

The encouragement of nontraditional work in the studio setting opened my eyes to the value of scholarship that is not only interdisciplinary, but could exist in different mediums. An argument could be presented as a performed scene, a collaged pamphlet, or with bananas and be just as strong, if not stronger. As an art historian, I embodied the role of the “artist-scholar” common in contemporary art as artists delve into research topics and present them through their art; this empathetic experience will no doubt be valuable in my future scholarship. I learned a lot about scent in my own project, its biological and psychological mechanics, its role in emotion and memory, and its ability to be experienced individually as a presenter and imagined collectively across Zoom.

I envision the future of this project expanding to include more scents, each with a quote that explains a personal connection to someone. I liked how some of the sources for my scents were quotes by Lauren and Andy, and I feel more personal memories would strengthen the project. I want this project to grow towards a collection of individual experiences rather than a taxonomic breakdown of what is in the air of present day Berlin. Through more interviews and memoirs I hope to collect counterintuitive scents that link a specific person’s memories to Berlin- popcorn, mango, roses, car interiors- to emphasize the highly individual role of scent as an aspect of the environment in memory.

I would also like to reach out to Sissel Tolaas, whose studio is in Berlin, to interview specifically as a scent expert in the city. If we do get the chance to create a physical exhibition, I am still thinking of how we can safely exhibit scents to the visitors. Car exhaust and cigarette smoke are probably out of the question because of their carcinogenic effects, but synthetic scents like baking bread are commonly used in grocery stores and bakeries to encourage sales. Installing a room diffuser and purchasing fragrances created for retail by companies like ScentAir or AirEssentials could be an option for a physical gallery.



Studio Reflection

By Melody Chang, Spring 2020

The GUH Berlin studio was a hybrid experience in so many ways. Not only was half of the semester in-person and the other half remote, the students were interdisciplinary. We grappled with universal human conditions like guilt and remembrance but with attention to the experience of one city. We considered globally significant moments through the built environment. The course was part seminar, part studio. Each of these elements has a rich life independent of their coincidence here. What shared historical, contextual, analytical, creative vocabulary could our class take for granted as a point of departure? It was quickly apparent that showing up for this extraordinary opportunity not only required an integrity of effort and generosity of spirit but also mature wherewithal as a student. To realize the course's mesmerizing ambition called for choose-your-own-adventure authorship.

The instructor team provided structure in specific ways plus a high level of overall guidance. This led to a rare combination of self-led and instructor supported growth. Far from stale weekly submissions of rote assignments, the instructors invited us to cultivate our own processes without losing rigor or vigor. They were clearly invested, thoughtful, available, and thorough in providing regular feedback. The semester felt like one long, on-going supportive conversation inside of a hot feedback loop furnace. Their trust gave me the freedom to work independently and experimentally, to grow in confidence in following my intuitions, and to take unfamiliar paths in pursuit of knowledge. I faced the limit of my self-consciousness as a maker of things. Lifting one foot and then another off academic ground, I drifted towards other mediums. I entered new worlds where creative forms come with their own methodological questions and powers of knowledge-making.



Because of this opportunity for ownership, I learned a lot about the strengths and limitations of different mediums. In this studio we organically selected a final creative form after research and reflection. I found it takes a lot of maturity to decide what medium best expresses the story. It was important to me that the functions and limitations of the form conceptually resonated with the themes and therefore contributed to its explorations. (I'm now interested in the opposite order of operations, e.g. form is chosen on the front-end and research is completely subordinate to that.) Regardless, I gained a lot of muscle tone around "process." I committed to being on a path with consistent effort and found that the iterative process unfolded things to me about process itself and about the story.

My ambition for this project is to host the GIFs on a website as part of a visual essay that features limited, curated selections of all the material I gathered: photos of the Center for Political Beauty's work, quotes, tweets, scholarly literature, and my own analysis. Together, the presentation of information will offer connections and provocations.

Over the summer I want to complete the remaining work so that it is ready to join in an online class exhibit or adapted for gallery space. (I like the idea of digitalizing the puppets and laser cutting mass quantities. These can be distributed as a multi-purpose invitation to an event/site, distributed as puppets so that people can infiltrate their own lives with taboo and transgression, or peppered around light sources in Berlin/Berkeley as a guerilla-style light installation. Imagine turning on your headlights in an airport parking garage after returning from an international flight and seeing the silhouette of the Reichstag projected against the concrete wall. The repetition of images across space recalls the temporally looping GIF.) I am open to other ideas and future collaborations. Presently, I plan to spend a portion of the stipend on a domain name for one year (\$12), one-year student subscription to Squarespace for building and hosting a site (\$72), and potentially purchase a used overhead projector if the class reunites (\$85). Apart from materials I purchased this semester (\$90), I intend to put the balance towards a visit to Berlin when travel restrictions lift and incorporate additional components e.g. interviews into the visual essay.

FACULTY REFLECTION

RENDERING BERLIN

*Faculty Reflection from Andrew
Shanken, Valentina Rozas-Krause,
and Lauren Kroiz*

One ambition of “The Guilt Environment: Berlin” was to overcome the typical rhythms and pedagogy of conventional seminars: read, churn exegetically, write, repeat, write a lot at the end. This was, after all, a “studio,” or really studio-esque, a hybrid creature born of two art historians and an architect-cum-architectural historian who wanted to create a milieu where students from every corner of the humanities and design disciplines could find their footing—together. In such interdisciplinary settings, the private languages of the disparate disciplines sometimes fill the common table with a dog’s breakfast of ideas and methods. To overcome this, we wanted to create lucid paths into material that was theoretically and morally challenging, invite students to the edges of their comfort zones and beyond, and, perhaps above all, encourage intellectual and creative work that in its very form could open up novel ways of knowing the world. In practical terms, this meant leading students who felt at ease reading and writing to experiment with making things, while guiding makers to write. With any luck, these boundaries would blur and we could shine a bright light on the very process of thinking and making—on the those disciplinary boundaries, expectations, and

conventions that structure graduate education. It also meant stimulating disciplinary synthesis by grouping students from different departments together. Indeed, we had students from Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Planning, Art Practice, Music, Public Policy, and History of Art enrolled in a mixture of academic and professional programs at the masters and Ph.D. level.

Another ambition was to think through issues of memory, with the city of Berlin as our quarry. While the course title punned about the “guilt environment,” we also believed that guilt could pry open some space in the crowded field of memory studies. To look at Berlin through the bifocal lens of guilt and memory was not to essentialize or stereotype Berlin—guilt, sadly, is everywhere. Freud linked it to a contest between the individual libido and civilization, building a psycho-anthropological edge beyond which historical inquiry struggles for solid ground. We began by quipping that Berlin is like every other city, but even more so. Yet Berlin is not Frankfurt or Bremen, nor is it Paris, Rome, London, or name your world capital. Its historical and historiographical purchase on the topic was unlike any other city in the world.

Since the city’s reunification in 1989, Berlin has intertwined its urban renewal with landscapes of reconciliation and commemoration. The “New Berlin” that politicians and city authorities imagined in the 1990s, after the Wende (or Fall of the Berlin Wall), was to be forged by international investment, materialized in high-profile commissions to “starchitects,” alongside preservation and memorialization of the city’s past, often seen through the seemingly inevitable lens of the Holocaust, and more recently Colonialism. In other

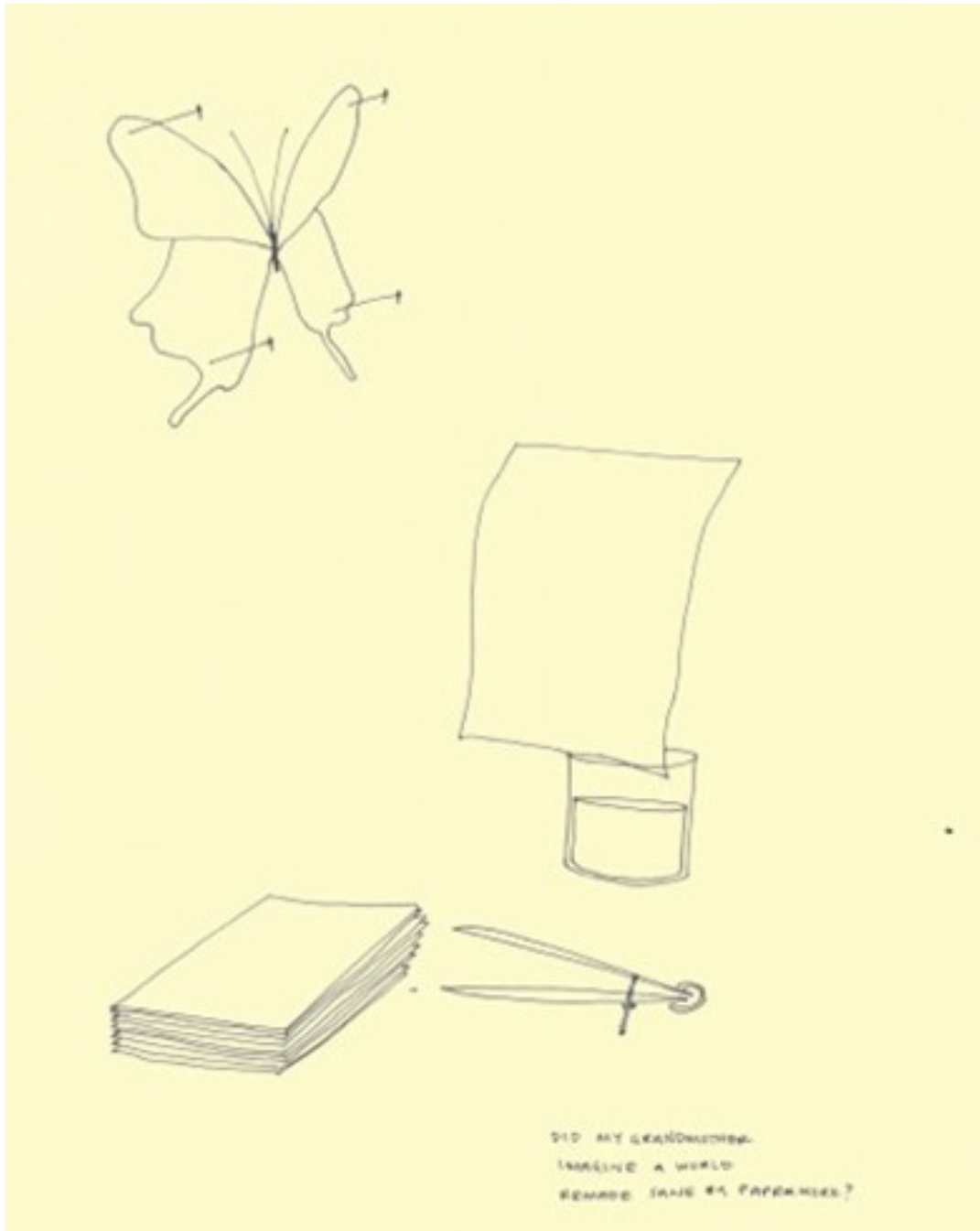


Figure 1: Anna Riley, Sketch in preparation for the Beyond Verbal assignment, working with Melody Chang.

words, two dynamic and seemingly contradictory processes have been at work in Berlin: rapid change and intense scrutiny of the past. In fact, these two common companions in modern cities. This relationship between developing a European metropolis and preserving its sites of memory offers up all sorts of modern troubles: projects throughout the city reveal how these ideas are reshuffled under the pressures of tourism, apology, foreign investment, and local activism. This makes Berlin an archetype of the contemporary guilt environment. The studio analyzed, represented, and reimagined the form that memory and commemoration could take in Berlin by asking how existing landscapes work and what new commemorative interventions might be necessary.

The first step pedagogically was to invent an assignment that encouraged students most habituated to writing to explore modes or mediums of expression that went beyond words. We called this the “Beyond Verbal” assignment and its first iteration was due the third week of the semester—we wanted to set the tone early and get students making things. Instead of a traditional reading response, we paired students and asked them to respond to the reading through any medium besides a written text: cartoon, collage, graph, map, timeline, drawing, diagram, photograph, video, music, performance. They could incorporate words, but they couldn’t be the central component. The readings, which plumbed issues of national guilt, reparations, and apology were dark and difficult, conceptually and emotionally. Having previously taught a seminar together called “City of Memory,” in which students largely stayed in their academic lanes, we had some trepidation about how this assignment would work.

The results were staggering. Anna Riley and Melody Chang wrestled with the absurd attempt to quantify suffering as part of reparations, which

“The studio analyzed, represented, and reimagined the form that memory and commemoration could take in Berlin by asking how existing landscapes work and what new commemorative interventions might be necessary.”

they note uses the perpetrator’s schemes of measurement to assess their penalty. They lamented the “reduction of life into a numeric value” and tried to find a pictorial or instrumental means of exploring this “abstracting and alienating” process. Central to the dehumanizing process is that victims have “to enter the clerical fold where the particularities of their situation hardly translates in the tyranny of paperwork.” At the same time, they sympathized with the anonymous low-level administrators in whose hands reparations often rested. In their words, they “created devices to assist these administrators,” instruments that “reflect the human impulse to rationalize, measure, count, administer and control an affective terrain that may very well be beyond our intelligibility.” At the same time, they reflected on “an ancient human process of using devices to locate ourselves, a sort of process of wayfinding morality in a sea of multi-directional truths.”

Riley and Chang were interested in translating everyday objects—rubber stamps, stacks of envelopes, clerical detritus--into such



instruments of judgment and how these paradoxical objects both protect the administrator and are the vehicles through which they grant reparations. They created a metaphorical measuring tape for assessing emotional pain, in part to show the limits of our tools, and with that the limits of reparations. The order and spare beauty of Riley’s drawing in figure 1 stands in ironic contrast to the issues they raise.

Figure 2. Melody Chang and Anna Riley explaining their project on reparations with the altered measuring tape stretched across the table.

Two more “Beyond Verbal” assignments followed. The first aimed to get students to engage with Berlin geographically, to familiarize them with the city as one might in preparation for a visit. We let them form larger groups this time, lent each group a Berlin guidebook, and asked them to create a new “trail” through Berlin, informed by any of the course readings, which for this week included pieces on the Berlin Wall and reunification, the colonial legacy in Berlin, and victimization in the 1980s. We were intentional reticent to create a more detailed prompt. Trail could be interpreted literally or metaphorically. We explicitly avoided the word map and urged them to think about what possibilities various kinds of mediums open up or foreclose. That week we met at Berkeley’s map library and spent the first half of the session learning about Berlin’s layered history from the pre-modern period through the present in ten maps. With these—and many other—maps in mind, we turned to their “Beyond Verbal” itineraries.

By now several students had begun to hone in on their topic, if not their general approach, but more than half of the class was still exploring openly. After some initial uncertainty about how to embrace the open, exploratory nature of the “beyond verbal” assignments, we sensed a change in tone this week. Students began to make full use of the freedom, to think poignantly about the medium they chose and its potential, and to synthesize the readings

“Beyond Verbal”

Assignment

into their approach. Pol Fite Matamoros and Monica Lamela Blazquez explored the palimpsestic nature of Berlin as a way of thinking critically about its history. They produced a stunning collage-map that unfolded that operated through jarring juxtapositions of scale, regime, period, and medium itself. It followed the logic of the unfolding of a map or a brochure, but replaced the predictable, rational, and seemingly amoral cartography of tourism and wayfinding with the jarring unpredictable, irrational, and morally troubling realities of Berlin’s history.

The third and final “Beyond Verbal” assignment focused on the Berlin Wall and reunification. It asked students to present an alternative proposal of reunification, based on our readings and discussions about guilt, reparation, memory, or related themes. Students worked in groups of their own making.

We had first imagined that students would work collaboratively to propose revisions to Berlin’s built environment, with products as diverse as urban and architectural proposals, maps and collages; scholarly, literary or photographic essays; graphic novels; films; and sound pieces. We envisioned that they would choose a site to propose a memorial intervention, again in any number of formats. We arranged a ten-day field trip to Berlin, with archival visits, extensive tours of sites, collaboration with art students



Figure 3. Pol Fite Matamoros and Monica Lamela Blazquez. Foldout palimpsest of Berlin’s historical development, Speaking to this image, the students wrote the following long caption (1).

1. From Hitler’s Germania and its hatred for the city as a Bolshevik and Jewish ghetto, to the legitimization projects of both communist and capitalist regimes during the Cold War, to its post-reunification “worldling” developments, Berlin has been a space of (re)presentation and reconstruction, of erasure and building ex-novo. By periodizing Berlin’s 20th century in these three “acts” and its two “intermezzos,” this project interrogates the tensions and continuities in the de-urbanist logic inaugurated by Hitler across Berlin’s palimpsest. To do so, we designed an additive approach organized around a series of booklets or snapshots that operates through juxtaposition, aiming at a more complex understanding of the city’s urban fabric by adding difference to the point of saturation.

working on memory in Berlin, and presentations on their chosen sites. Much of the rest of the course was arranged around directed research on their specific projects, so that after the first few weeks each student’s reading and trajectory would be slightly different. As a final project, we hoped to collaborate on a guide to the “guilt environment” of Berlin. Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic made travel impossible and forced the entire class to improvise ways of exploring their topics from afar. We managed to meet remotely for the remaining weeks, to hold final reviews, and to continue the collaborations that had been forged throughout the semester.

Figure 4: Produced by Anna Riley and Melody Chang, their final card project.



Other

Writing:

This approach made a colleague who was raised in Berlin irate. He shook as he castigated the course: who were we to study his city, to call it an epicenter of guilt? He felt as if we had no right to study Berlin, which he felt was like making him an object of study. “What skin do you have in the game?” he asked. His reaction was jarring, even anti-humanist. Was he proposing walls around topics defined by nativity? I quickly realized it reflects Berlin’s special place in modern history, especially since World War II. What other major European city would have elicited such a strong response?

“The third and final “Beyond Verbal” assignment focused on the Berlin Wall and reunification. It asked students to present an alternative proposal of reunification, based on our readings and discussions about guilt, reparation, memory, or related themes.”