

ONE

Delinquent Spaces

From the moment it was imagined by President Carter in the late 1970s, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was intended to be much more than just a building or a monument. The enabling legislation that established the USHMM had been fairly simple—the President’s Commission on the Holocaust was charged with delivering “recommendations with respect to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust,” to raise funds to do so, and to find appropriate ways to celebrate “Days of Remembrance” in April.¹ Nonetheless, there was tension even then between the museum’s creation as a *civic* space and the imperative to give visitors the opportunity to engage with the events of the Holocaust at a more individual level. The memorial—what would become the museum and its permanent exhibition—would eventually become a decidedly public space, though the committees responsible for its construction also considered the extent to which the space should evoke a more personal—and less historical—engagement for its visitors. Especially once it became clear that the monument and museum would be built near the National Mall in Washington—the site eventually chosen, now the current site of the USHMM, was the Auditor’s Complex of buildings between 14th and 15th streets, most of which would be razed to make room for a new building—the question of the nature of the space of the monument and museum became all the more important. Hyman Bookbinder,

one of the original members of the President's Council, remembers, "If we had been told 'select a place' . . . I think we would have chosen that very spot. It is part of what all the tourists go to" (qtd. in Linenthal 61).

Once it was clear that the museum would be in a most public site, and as the council members recognized that they were creating not only a monument but also a museum, they turned to the question of the structure's interior spaces: how, they wondered, could the exhibits of a museum create a memory of the Holocaust for a public—an *American* public—whose knowledge of the events in Europe was considered to be thin, while also inculcating a sense in the visitor that these events were *sui generis*, horrifying in their extremity and unique in their impact? How could the design of the museum at once create a consensual public understanding of the Holocaust while giving individual visitors room to be confronted with its events on their own terms? Edward Linenthal and David Chidester describe the tension between these two approaches—what they call the civic and the sacred—as the uneven relation between the encounter with the everyday, or with a narrative description of something we're familiar with, and an encounter with a "sign of difference" (6). What the Memorial Council was trying to balance was the need to create a recognizable historical narrative while also allowing visitors to have a sense of the event's exceptional nature, its inability to be fully integrated into that historical narrative.

As part of the analysis of the history of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum it will be important to see how its designers saw the museum space as one in which a public knowledge of the events comes into contact with a radically particular, uncanny experience that may or may not be the same as knowledge. In particular I want to pay close attention to how this tension is played out in the United States Holocaust Memorial Council's early deliberations about the nature, design, and trajectory of the USHMM's permanent exhibition (PE), because these deliberations—and the disagreements over the public and individual nature of remembrance that would take place inside its space—have significant consequences for how the Holocaust is remembered there. The deliberations extended over the course of more than a decade, from late in 1978 until the opening of the museum in 1993, and were often contentious, sometimes led down blind alleys, and resulted in a great many false starts. It is

particularly in the early stages of the discussions, from the formation of the Memorial Council (hereafter referred to as the council) in 1979 to the resignation of Elie Wiesel as council chairman in 1986 and the choice of Michael Berenbaum to take the lead on museum planning once the building of the actual museum began, in which these tensions play out most clearly. Ultimately, I'll argue that the council's efforts to hew closely to a public, pedagogical, and memorial model for the museum space—in which chronology is emphasized over a less temporal, more immediate engagement with the events depicted in the space—finally triumphed in its discussions, though I'll also make clear the extent to which the dimensions of memory that stop visitors in their tracks cuts across and disturbs that drive toward history that culminates in understanding. In short, the early designs for the space of the USHMM had intended that it would be both public and sacred, though in the end the concern was that the sacred dimension of memory would be *too much* for its visitors to handle.

Museums as Memorial Spaces

From the beginnings of the modern museum, the space containing the material objects—paintings in the case of the art museum, natural objects and artifacts in the cases of historical museums—was not meant to be *historical*. It was meant instead to create a memorial of historical *presence*. Didier Maleuvre, in *Museum Memories*, writes that what distinguishes art museums from historical museums is that art and the constellation of artistic works contained in an art museum “constitutes a *caesura* of history,” which arrests, rather than reveals, history and historical memory (3). In such a museum, while history is always present, its space is decontextualized, cut across by the presence of objects that are immediately *there* and that call the museum visitor to a location or space apart from historical time. What's important about Maleuvre's point is that the space of a museum, even spaces that are arranged historically in order to create a collective sense of history or even national (or community) identity, also has the capacity—simply by means of the arrangement of the material the space contains—to also decontextualize that collective understanding. That is, even public memorial sites have the capacity to call up for the visitor something other than historical understanding—an

“auratic emergence of memory” (71) is also called up for the visitor. The museum space is of course inevitably historical, since the objects collected in its interior are marked by their place in historical time, with placards providing the date of paintings, or photographs, or artifacts through which the years between the present and those dates can be counted backward by the visitor. But the museum space also gathers together moments, as indexed by objects and the accompanying text, in a way that doesn’t necessarily follow the sequence of history that the museum’s traversable space would suggest. Gaynor Kavanagh calls this gathering together of subjects “episodic memory,” in which the museum visitor calls up, on her own terms, memories that may or may not be related to history but that call up further memories “like rooms leading from one to another” (13). The organization of the interior space of the museum—its rooms, divided by architecture and the logistics of a building as much as, if not more than, by epochal or historical considerations—have the potential to compress time as much as it might help visitors to understand the sweep of history. The immediacy of memory as experienced in the move from space to space, room to room, carves out a space in chronological time, compressing it, and opens up the museum visitor.

On this view, the museum’s interior constitutes not just a physical, traversable location—a place for visitors to come to take in or learn about the objects inside it and, through those objects, a different place and time—but also a space, a conceptual location quite *apart* from its physical manifestation. It is, using Pierre Nora’s terms, a *lieu*, a site, in which what is called to mind functions independently from the historical past and repeats itself endlessly in a series the source of which, the *arche*, is altogether absent (see Nora 15–16). The memorial space of the museum may be public, in which individual members of a polis or a community come together to remember the past. But it is also radically individual, in that those who come to remember *remember differently*: each has the potential to constellate her own past with the present moment of encountering the object, and the future toward which she hurtles through memory is distinct, each one different from the other. So the arrangement of space in the museum—the movement from floor to floor, room to room, material object to material object—doesn’t only move visitors along a historical arc. Whether she does so purposefully or not, the visitor can also move *around* the

museum and gather together an arrangement of objects or artifacts *out of context, out of place.*

It might be too much to say that in moving from location to location, the person gets lost, forgetting where she is (see Grosz 122); still, the spatial arrangement of the “rooms” of the museum has the potential to rupture the social or civic consciousness that the museum takes as its overall aim and, by means of a kind of memorial sublime, disturbs the visitor’s understanding. Partly this is because of the way museum spaces move bodies, something about which the designers of the USHMM were acutely aware, even in its earliest stages. Memorials are sites that bring bodies together, move them around if not along memorial trajectories, and those bodies are rhetorically and materially compelled to movement (see Blair, “The AIDS Memorial Quilt”). As social historian Timothy Luke writes, “Simply by entering display spaces, all visitors/viewers learn something about how they must act or should regard their artefacts” (3). Visitors’ bodies are induced to move in certain ways, and museum designers, well aware of the extent to which a building constrains the bodies of the visitors, take pains to move them just so. This is especially true of a museum like the USHMM, wherein the experience of moving through crowded spaces, often in what feels to some visitors like “waves,” has been said to be reminiscent of how the throngs of people, forced to alight on the platforms of one horrifying camp or another, moved together through the anterooms and chambers that would eventually lead them to their deaths. It’s not clear to me that the United States Holocaust Memorial Council had anything like this in mind, as we’ll see later. But the formation of memory involves all of the senses, and that inasmuch as iterations of memory can be created in the space of the museum (episodically, perhaps), they are created as much through how the body moves through the museum space as through the visitor’s understanding of what he or she sees.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has often enough been accused of “Disneyfying” the Holocaust, or of producing a spectacle of suffering by giving visitors access to modes of experience that the victims also must have experienced.² And there is no example more cited than the railway boxcar through which visitors walk as part of the permanent exhibition’s third floor (and to which I’ll turn in the next chapter). The museum space is arranged in a way that passing

through it as part of the visitors' path through the museum is nearly unavoidable. Aside from what it depicts—an instrument of transportation, a kind of icon for the industrial nature of the Holocaust, a material remnant of the events—it also forces the museum-goer to put herself in the place of the victim, even if only to pass from one part of the exhibit to another. The visitor doesn't "experience the Holocaust directly," as Oren Baruch Stier writes of the boxcar (223), but in passing through this part of the exhibition the museum's designers made two arguments at once. The artifact is, first, an index of the *past*, and its place on the museum's third floor contextualizes it for visitors as part of the machinery of destruction during the years between 1941 and 1945. The boxcar also makes individual visitors conscious of the *present*, the moment in which the visitor passes through this portion of the exhibition, in many cases very uncomfortably. Here, the public memory makes contact with and collapses into a more radically individual one. And as we'll see in the next chapter, it was just this collapse that worried so many members of the USHMC and its Content Committee: many of those who objected to the use of the boxcar worried that the bodily effect of this space would be so severe as to collapse the distinction between history and memory, thereby complicating the trajectory of this part of the permanent exhibition.

Speaking of the way the walker in the city traverses its streets and byways, Michel de Certeau describes the space of the city as a public space par excellence, because as each person makes his way through the streets, he "weave[s] places together" (97), not just the streets but the routes through them. Though the maps of the streets are visible, each walker's trajectory is invisible on that map. The map—chronology, trajectory—can cause the walker, the museum visitor, to lose sight of that movement. The public knowledge or memory of the street names and routes to be followed leave those invisible routes, the possibility that individuals will move, and move together, in ways not rhetorically or architecturally envisioned on the map, unseen. But they're there, and those movements happen. It's this bodily movement, this counter-public (dis-) engagement from the trajectory of memory, that also has the potential to allow for the creation of *other* routes, and other memories. When he describes how the space marked by the chronological but enacted by those who traverse it as a "delinquency" (129–130), de Certeau is referring to the ways "memories emerge, are contested, transform, . . . mutate, and multiply" (Phillips and

Reyes 14). And it was just this possibility that worried members of the President's Commission, the USHMC, and the Museum Development Committee. If the point of the museum was to map a memorial trajectory that forged a public understanding of the Holocaust and allowed visitors to enact their own relation to the event, they ran the risk of creating delinquent memories that disturbed that public understanding. The discussion that took place almost immediately after the USHMC was created reveals just how difficult it was to fend off the threat of those more delinquent memories.

Shaping Memory

The discussions and eventual decisions about the space of the United States Holocaust Museum in the early deliberations mainly focused on how the interior geography of the museum reflects the choices of the stories to be told how it creates, in the visitor, not just an intellectual but also a *bodily* response to the Holocaust. How should the interior spaces of the museum, and the trajectory of the story, implicate the visitor in that story, forcing her to create, rather than to retrieve, memories, and just what will these memories "contain"? How could the permanent exhibition and the USHMM more generally achieve a balance between a relatively stable, mappable, and didactic space with another type of space, one that encouraged a sense of openness and that allowed for more delinquent memories on the part of visitors, memories that might have a bodily and disruptive effect?

The chronology of the Holocaust museum's creation and ultimately the building that was erected on the mall is fairly well known. Edward Linenthal's book is the most comprehensive account of the museum, though others—including James Young, Sue Vice, and Harold Kaplan—have written fairly extensively on its generation as well. My goal here is not to go over this same ground but instead to concentrate on the evolution of the museum's *inner* space, the shape of its PE. In late 1978, President Carter signed the executive order that established the President's Commission on the Holocaust, and by the following spring, twelve commissioners were appointed. By the time the council was formed in 1980, it was clear that any memorial or museum would have to be built in Washington, ideally on the mall; it was less clear how to define the Holocaust, or whose memories would

be invoked in a memorial (Jews', Americans', Poles', or Russians'). And once the plot of land on which the memorial or museum would sit had been identified, and with the transfer of the site to the Holocaust council by 1983, the issue of *space* became paramount.

As Linenthal reports, and as the sometimes-painful negotiations that took place in the council reflect, none of the council members had any experience in museum planning or design, and few if any had worked with land developers. Would there be separate spaces for the memorial, the museum, and the education center, or would they be housed in the same building? The fact that there were already buildings on the site, which the council thought it would have to work around, made matters even more complicated. In December of 1984, the council was granted permission to raze most of the buildings on the site, and the task of finding an architect to create a new building began in earnest. The process would entail working simultaneously with architects—who would create the structure in which the complex would be housed, which would essentially become the “memorial” portion of the council’s initial charge—and conceptual artists—who would create the interior space that the museum and educational center would inhabit. The council went through several designers and developers between late 1984 and 1987, when the work of the council seemed to be stalled. It was during this time that a host of plans for the museum’s concept were considered. These included the Red Book—which contained an early concept design of the narrative of the Holocaust to be told in the PE, vestiges of which are included in the current museum—the Concept Program for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Concept Outline Proposed for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, among others. All of these plans were ultimately rejected because the council and its Museum Planning and Museum Development committees could not agree on the outlines of memory, nor could they even agree on *whose* memories should be included (only the victims’, the victims’ and perpetrators’, those who “witnessed” the events from afar). By 1983, a Museum Planning Committee had been formed and consultants Anna Cohn, David Altshuler, and Chris White had been called in. Over the next four years this group worried over the interior spaces of James Freed’s building. By 1985, the concept outline—which contained the central narrative of the PE—had been presented to the council for approval, but it would not finally be adopted until two

years later. It was only in 1987, with the resignation of Elie Wiesel as the council chairman and the reintroduction of Michael Berenbaum into the process as the chief consultant (and later as museum director), that the process finally began to gain forward momentum and the outlines of the current museum became clear. From 1987 through the early 1990s, the council, through its Development and later the Museum Content Committee, spent most of its time discussing how best to move visitors through the memorial spaces of the museum, what they would learn, how they would understand the artifacts housed and the stories told in those spaces, and what the consequences of those memories would be. These discussions make clear not only how the interior spaces of the museum were to function but also what would be contained in, and by, those spaces. And as I'll show over the pages that follow, they are marked by the tension between public memory and more "delinquent" ones.

One of the earliest conceptual schemes for the combined museum and memorial presented to the Memorial Council is a 1979 document entitled "Summary of Views Received to Date, Museums and Monuments." It was created to help guide the council in how it defined the aims of the building they were charged to construct ("Summary of Views"). The memo falls into four parts, reflecting the tensions in the council's understanding of their charge at that early stage: "Living Memorial," "Monument," "Museum," and "Physical Memorial." The memo makes explicit the idea that "the Holocaust Memorial should consist of a living memorial *and* a memorial monument" (1; emphasis in original), and that it should include, ideally, three parts, "a monument, a museum, and an education center" (3). These three functions of the museum can be related to different types of memory. This triadic division of memory shows how the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and its various committees attempted to keep different kinds of memory separate in its early deliberations, only to have them collapse into one another as its vision for the memorial museum became more concrete in the years between 1983 and 1987. The "Summary of Views" memo of 1979 shows their attempt and also the confusion and contradictions inherent in it: while the third point of the memo makes clear that a "living memorial rather than a statue or other form of art presentation" is called for in a Holocaust center, it also notes that while the commission favors the former, "a monument is in order" as well. "People

respond to living reminders,” tangible expressions “of the empathy which this country has for the martyrs” (2), while the living memorial should be “continually upgraded” so that it may focus on “problems of the day that may lead to new horrors of the same kind” (2). Its educational mission, the memo continues, should

provide multi-media type of educational displays, that would be informative for all age groups of our society. These displays would focus on both the “unique” Jewish as well as “universal” meaning of the Holocaust. The committee urged that the display expose . . . the danger [fascism] poses for society, American “constitutional rights” and Western civilization. (5)

At this stage the committee’s views on the nature of its “Holocaust Center” run the gamut. In addition to providing a monument to the dead, the council also wants the museum portion of the structure to provide a reminder to visitors of what happened during the years of the Holocaust and to give visitors a sense of what its implications are for the present. The tension in this early memo makes concrete the incommensurability of a collective or cultural memory, whose narrative will be made clear in the informative or educational mission of the Holocaust center, with an individual recollection that may be informed by the material constraints of contemporary concerns (the “problems of the day”). The center was charged to provide both a narrative accounting of the Holocaust—a knowledge or history—as well as an opportunity to remember the dead, or the survivors, or the catastrophes of the present.

One of the reasons the years between 1979 and 1984 were so troubled and the work of the commission was so slow, as Linenthal notes in his book, is that its individual members were unable to reach a consensus as to how to “define” the Holocaust, whose history should be included, and how to address the various political and national constituencies (Armenians, the Roma, homosexual and mentally ill victims of the Nazis, to mention a few) that were involved in the history of those years. But it’s also true that those years were characterized by an uncertainty about how to unify the various strands of the Holocaust center that would be built in the nation’s capital. The contradictions borne out in the 1979 “Summary of Views” memo—invocations of the past, a focus on the present, questions about the uniqueness

or universality of the Holocaust, among many others—were not fully resolved by 1982, though the council had come some way toward ordering them. Rather than conceiving the monument, the memorial space, and the museum as separate entities, a document entitled “The US Holocaust Memorial Museum” makes clear that by the early 1980s, the council saw the various components of the center as merging into a single facility. The museum was to be dedicated to “the preservation of Holocaust history, commemoration of the victims, and education regarding the facts and implications of this awesome event” (1; see also “Concept Program” memo).

Nonetheless, while the building would house both the memorial space and a more public, historical space, “the memorial space is of highest priority as a conceptual challenge. It will serve not only as the symbol of the entire complex, but also as the conceptual link between the memorial museum and the other sacred American monuments located nearby” (2). So while the creation of a collective memory of the events of the Shoah was central, the commemoration of victims and the space devoted to that commemoration was seen as more crucial. This was emphasized even more in a memo dated November 22, 1983, from Elie Wiesel, which was the earliest draft of the council’s first glimpse of the Museum Development Committee’s conceptual vision of the museum. “The centerpiece of the memorial,” according to the draft, “will be a hall of remembrance, whose visual symbolism will emphasize the countless names of Holocaust victims in a stark, yet sacred atmosphere . . . for contemplation and *personal commemoration*” (Untitled Memo, Elie Wiesel; emphasis added). The museum by this time would have five primary functions and spaces reserved for each: a memorial function, which will be served by the hall of remembrance; a historical function, which will be served by the permanent exhibition; an interactive educational function, which will include space for temporary exhibits and for video and audio learning stations; a more traditional educational function, with space for lectures, public conferences, and classes; and finally an archival function, for which space would be reserved in the form of a library and archives. An early draft (undated, but probably from late 1983 or early 1984) of the report of the Development Committee to the Memorial Council (entitled “To Bear Witness, to Remember, and to Learn”) includes a narrative and table of space requirements for the facility, which was important at this point because of the problems created

by the parcel of land available for the USHMM.³ Even here it's evident that commemoration took precedence over Holocaust history in the form of the permanent exhibition's conceptual narrative. There would be ten thousand square feet devoted to the Hall of Witnesses, while the Hall of Remembrance (which was initially seen as the core of the PE) would take up only twice that space, or twenty thousand square feet. The bulk of the space, or nearly one hundred thousand square feet, would be given over to what was at that point being called the Hall of Learning, which would include space for a research library (17,000 square feet), changing exhibits (7,500 square feet), the public education pavilion (including auditoria, modular learning spaces, and classroom space for courses and teacher training) (42,000 square feet), and interactive learning terminals (30,000 square feet). In spite of the separate space devoted for each, the confusion of memories, however, remains in the draft's narrative:

Every public program space in the museum must be used to bear witness to the awesome realities of the Holocaust, to evoke in visitors empathy and reverence for the nearly six million Jews and of others who suffered and perished, and to provoke in people of all ages and backgrounds questions that engender yet more questions, education that heightens human consciousness. Moreover, the obligation to remember must be fulfilled with absolute authenticity and expressiveness. (3; Berenbaum, Red Book).

This memo is interesting because it shows the council's conflicted understanding of what the space of the museum is meant to *do* and what its effect on the visitor is meant to be. "To bear witness" and "to remember" are here used as if they were the same term, reflecting a sense that an American born in the second or third generation after the Holocaust may be able to remember events she was not alive to see by bearing witness to documents, photographs, and other evidence derived from the events. I've written elsewhere about the theoretical difficulties this presents, particularly because by confusing a representation for the thing itself one runs the risk of making an idol of the object, a fear Cynthia Ozick has also written about.⁴ In terms of the relation of memory and history, the work of the museum is to give visitors a vehicle through which to "bear witness" to the "realities" of

the events that comprise the Shoah, to understand in historical terms the chronology of events, and the material presence of what was lost in the form of the six million and their culture. But the memorial impulse, also deriving from the “countless names of Holocaust victims” as well as the design of the building-as-living-memorial, has to do with commemoration more than with history and a certain fidelity to the facts (those “questions that engender yet more questions” and that “heighten consciousness” though perhaps don’t produce learning or knowledge as such). In other words, though by design the museum has at this point still given pride of place to the invocation of memory, it’s not at all clear just what sort of memory it wishes to invoke—a public memory, an individual one, or something else.⁵

Public Memory, Delinquent Memory: The Red Book

The meandering plans for the museum were now about to reach the five-year mark with very little consensus in the council for how to move forward except for the broadest of statements, like the ones previously cited, about how to allocate space to the monument/museum’s various functions. At that point, Anna Cohn and David Altshuler were asked by the council to present a full plan for both the museum building and for the interior space of the PE. The plan—bearing the same title as its earlier draft, “To Bear Witness, to Remember, and to Learn”—came to be known as the Red Book and was presented by Cohn, Altshuler, and others (the Museum Planning Team) to part of the council in late February of 1984 and to the full council in mid-March of that year. Like the earlier draft of this report, the Red Book included space considerations for the various components of the museum/memorial/educational complex. It also discusses in some detail how the museum would be shoehorned into the space allocated for it between 14th and 15th streets, suggesting that a new building—of four stories and of monumental design—would need to be built in order to do all of the things the council wanted the memorial/museum to do, and even laid out a schedule for the planning and eventual building of the museum itself. The bulk of the report, however, involves planning the interior space of the museum.

In this new concept design, despite the earlier documents’ assurance that public education is the *raison d’être* of the USHMM, another

aim for the PE had become at least equally as important as its public function. “Every space in the museum’s interior must be used to *bear witness to the awesome realities* of the Holocaust, to evoke in visitors empathy and *reverence* for the six million Jews and millions of others who suffered and perished, and to provoke in people of all ages and backgrounds questions that engender more questions” (Red Book 11; emphasis added). The Red Book goes on to describe, in narrative form and through spatial description (conceptual designs and a three-dimensional model accompanied the Design Team’s presentation of their report), the Hall of Witnesses (the PE), the Hall of Remembrance (a space for reflection), and the Hall of Learning, along with some notes on the museum’s acquisitions policy. About the Hall of Witnesses, the report notes, “Visitors must experience *a sense of immediacy* in direct relationship with the persons, artifacts and documents that bear witness to the Holocaust” (12; emphasis added). In other words, while “the questions that engender more questions” are very much part of the museum’s mission to provide an “education that heightens human consciousness” (11), the museum also intends, in its PE, to create a set of more local, and more radically individual, points of engagement with museum visitors.

The Hall of Witnesses must be designed to address the broadest and most diverse audience, confronting every individual in a personal way. The vast majority of visitors to the museum, even in the museum’s first years and all the more so with the passage of time, will enter the Hall of Witnesses with little or no direct experience with the events and era of the Holocaust. Thus the emphasis here must be to introduce essentially new and unfamiliar ideas and values with *authenticity, immediacy, and sensitivity*. (Red Book 13; emphasis added)

The aim of educating a public—one with little or no understanding of the events in Europe, the vast majority of which would be born after the events, or so young during their occurrence that they have no memory of it—is plainly one of the principal aims of the Red Book’s strategy for the PE. The language it uses, though—those visitors have “no direct experience with the events and era”—suggests that the immediacy with which the PE should make contact with visitors is less didactic than it is experiential. I’ll take up the question of

authenticity in the next chapter; the question of immediacy seems to me to be connected to the idea of the visitor's direct, bodily experience of the events of the Holocaust and the designers' emerging sense of how that experience opens up visitors to *other* experiences beyond cultural or public recollection.

The drawings that were made to accompany the Red Book in the presentation to the council in late February and mid-March 1984—they would be altered throughout the spring as council members wrestled with the shape of memory—suggest just this bodily immediacy. In fact, the design of the PE (its physical shape) asks quite a lot from visitors (Chris White Design Associates Drawings).⁶ Those drawings suggest that the PE would include ten principal “areas,” spaces of varying sizes through which visitors would pass, each one representing a phase of the Final Solution, though it devotes significant space to the typical lives of Jews and others both before and during the years between 1933 and 1945. It's worth paying attention to the plans in the Red Book for the *shapes* and *contours* of the spaces. The first of the areas would introduce visitors to the events of the Holocaust (“Convergence”). The area would have been built around a large, curved central wall, which would include photographic or other renderings of crowds of people, with the words “father, sister, mother” and so on superimposed on each. The outside curved wall would include photographs of individuals (including one of a father and son) also labeled. The “Chris White Design Associates Drawings” includes—on the recommendation of the council over the subsequent months—an area called “The Worlds Before,” an area which rivals the other largest area of the exhibit (“the ghettos”) in size. It is a vast, open space filled with upright flat, person-height quadrangles arranged in a circular pattern. Suspended from the ceiling hang additional flat quadrangles, each of which would contain a photographic image of scenes from Jewish life, including students sitting at school desks, individuals at picnics, and other scenes of thriving Jewish communities across Europe. The arrangement of the photographic scenes is orderly, suggesting that visitors would circulate around the photos together, either moving from the outside walls to the inside or, just as likely, beginning at the center and moving outward.

From this point, the spaces would have become more evocative. In the area of the White Associates design called “Deprivation,” visitors move into a smaller space, also arranged in a circular pattern, and

also including flat quadrangles, larger this time and going almost to the ceiling. These include mostly text, though there are one or two photographic images of individuals, of the Nuremberg Laws and other evidence of National Socialist policy. Suspended from the ceiling are two Nazi flags. From here, visitors would move to “Eviction,” which is, essentially, a corridor with a severely angled ceiling sloping downward as one reaches the conclusion of the area. Along the walls of the corridor are three-foot high by five-foot long panels, apparently backlit, that depict scenes of the violent eviction of Jews from their homes. This corridor—essentially a chute—could very easily be imagined as a narrowing of the focus of the visitors, not only conceptually (as the deprivations clearly stripped away the belongings, and the citizenship, of Eastern Europe’s Jews during these years) but also physically.

At the other end of the corridor, into which visitors emerge, is the area reserved for the ghettoization of Jews. Like “The Worlds Before,” this is a large open space that includes upright quadrangles, arranged as angular dividers containing displays of artifacts (including open books and household items such as a bowl or a bowl-shaped object) that also contain explanatory text. Suspended from the ceiling are occasional photographs of individuals or pairs of people (one of a bearded man, another of two youths). The accompanying text in the Red Book suggests that these areas are meant to “conve[y] an awesome loneliness and a sense of inevitable constriction,” while the objects on display—very few were imagined by the council for inclusion at this point, for reasons I’ll discuss in the next chapter—are meant to “punctuate the engulfing entrance to this gallery” (Red Book 14). The visitors’ movements in this gallery (particularly “Evictions” and “The Ghettos”) would have been haphazard and chaotic, with very little sense of order in the arrangement of the space once they emerged from the narrow “Evictions” passageway. The arrangement of the display panels—spaced in varied distances from one another and with a kind of planned randomness to the angles at which the panels veer away from one another—surely would have created bottlenecks among the throngs of visitors, their bodies close and jostling. To the extent that such a bodily closeness would have simulated the much greater discomfort of those in the very crowded ghettos that are the object of this portion of the display, it would likely have disturbed many of those visiting this part of the museum’s permanent exhibition. This would have been all the more pronounced in the narrow corridor

designed for the “Deportation” section of the PE: though its ceiling was to be less severely sloped than that of “Evictions,” it would include backlit images along one wall, with text along the other. This space would have opened into the “Camps/Selection” area, a relatively small, triangular-shaped space tapered from entrance to exit, which was clearly meant to ensure that visitors understood the “funnel-shape” of selections, into which many entered and from which few exited.

Finally, visitors would enter the area devoted to the camps, a larger space that tapers outward from the entrance (rather than inward as in the previous space) and that contains flat upright panels about the height of a person, on which there are images of individuals and in front of which are chest-high pedestal display cases (one of which, for example, contains a pair of eyeglasses). The back walls of the space contain text, and the door at the far end of the space opens onto the PE’s final areas: “Ending (Liberation)” and “Evaluation.” The former is a short corridor of about nine feet in height that includes three panels on each side wall containing images, presumably of the liberation of the camps, while the latter is a large circular space, with a high ceiling and clusters of tiered steps (like risers). Chris White’s conceptual drawings of this area include the image of a group of people—about eight including men and women (one of which, depicted as standing, might be a docent), mostly young—talking with one another. At the conclusion of the PE, disoriented crowds of visitors who would have entered the “Camps” area would finally make their way toward the larger open area devoted to liberation and, at the end of the PE, to an airy, high-ceilinged “evaluation” area depicted as a place of human encounter. This spatial trajectory was clearly meant to end the museum’s tour of the Holocaust on an uplifting note; but it also was meant to replicate, through the manipulation of the bodies of the visitors, the feelings associated with having a lack of control over one’s whereabouts relieved by the sense that one could talk about it afterward.

The bodily movement of visitors through these spaces goes in several directions at once. While visitors follow the chronology of events, they are also being *moved*, sometimes following that chronology and sometimes not, between and among the points marking that chronology. They are being disordered and disoriented, and this disorientation doesn’t so much move them *through* the chronology of the

Holocaust as it moves them *within* it, potentially moving them not so much to a consensual understanding of what happened but instead to something outside or in excess of understanding. They are moved not into a communitarian space—though this is very much what the conclusion of this version of the PE was meant to achieve—but into a space apart, one that isn’t mapped by the spatial trajectory of the Red Book’s plan but is delinquent, one that disturbs the historical chronology.

Memory and Chronology

As might be expected, the discussions that ensued about this rendering of the USHMM’s central space (often referred to in documents as the “Core”) were disheartening to Anna Cohn and Chris White. Council members thought the design was confusing, the timeline mystifying (with the encounter with the camps coming before visitors were introduced to Nazi Jewish policy), so they threw the design back to the Museum Design Committee (with Cohn and White leading the discussion). Council member Miles Lerman’s comments are typical:

I stressed the point that as a lay person the reverse concept is somewhat confusing because we must bear in mind for whom we are building this. We are building it for people who hopefully come here decades from now, and will not be sophisticated. We are building it to educate school children who visit this. It is essential that we don’t make it too artistically complicated for them to grasp the importance of this awesome event. For this reason I suggested, and I said I am not a member of your Committee and it’s merely a feeling of a member of the Council who cares an awful lot about the project that we are creating, that we re-discuss the concept and hopefully go back to a system of telling the story in an orderly, in a chronological way. (Minutes, USHMC Executive session meeting, 14 March 1984)

Most telling about the Design Team meetings is how they reflect their sense of space and its relation to remembrance. Anna Cohn

described the council's reaction to the "ghetto space": that it contained "mini-environments" (including hunger, music, the Judenrat, resistance, schooling, and so on) and there wasn't enough in the space's design to integrate these environments. She goes on to argue that the Design Team has to "create a level of subliminal recall in the ghetto to the earlier space ['Worlds Before'] so that people can note the changes that took place between a whole environment and a rent whole" (Museum planning session, 6 April 1984, 4). The question for Cohn and White is how to create a sense of memorial connection in the museum visitor between the two "worlds" while also making plain to the visitor the idea that while the two are connected, the latter world, the world of the ghettos, is radically different from anything either the visitor, or the Jew confined to the ghetto, has ever known. Cohn concludes her discussion of this section of the PE by suggesting that

perhaps the best way to illustrate [this difference] is first to illustrate the relationship between the ghetto and the everyday life of the world before, or even the everyday life of the world we know today. Then, when the information is unexpected, the visitor is *exposed* to parts of the ghetto that reflect how different it really was from the "world before." (4-5; emphasis added)

By introducing the *visitors'* everyday lifeworlds—their own expectations, their sense of what they know (which, in an American context, would be significantly different from that of the context of a survivor)—Cohn makes plain the problem that is, at this point, seemingly insurmountable in the designers' proposals: how should the visitors' expectations be rhetorically engaged—through images and through the arrangement of space—so that their understanding of what happens to *them*, as members of a community whose rhythms and practices are relatively well known, registers as both like and radically unlike that which they encounter in the moment they come upon it in the space of the museum.

The problem, according to Cohn in this meeting, is that "subliminal recall" only works so well. Much of the discussion in the planning meetings of April 6 and 7, 1984, had to do with one aspect of the final portion of the PE, on the Displaced Persons camps. Among

the Displaced Persons were tens of thousands of Jews and others from the concentration and death camps who spent months, and sometimes years, attempting to recuperate before moving on to lives outside of Europe or trying to remake a life in or near their homes. Part of the problem was that, by concluding the PE with life in the DP camps, there was a sense in which such a conclusion provided “moral uplift” for the Holocaust, something many, including Wiesel, thought was inappropriate. On April 7, council member Eli Pfefferkorn asked,

Have you ever seen the portrayal in films of persons with severe schizophrenia? One of the devices that commonly is used is the recall of emotions in haunting, whispered, “secret” voices. That is the sensibility I have about the balance of survivors as they attempted to reconstruct their lives in the DP camps. More and more they functioned. More and more they took part in active life systems. But always in the background—indeed too often in the foreground—were the haunting voices of memory. (Museum planning session, 7 April 1984, 10)

At this point in the meeting, Cohn returns to the issue of “subliminal recall”: while it’s true that visitors might be able to digest a great deal of conflicting material in a relatively small museum space, Cohn worries that in a larger space—and over the many, very different spaces of the PE—subliminal recall dissipates substantially. “By the time visitors reach even the gallery space on the ghettos,” which is about two-thirds through the PE, “they will, to be sure, have no frame of reference for the materials they have seen before. With the present approach, there is so much information pushed into only the first gallery,” in which the “reverse chronology” introduces visitors to the camps as they were found by Allied liberating forces, to material on anti-Semitism and the Final Solution, to a space that reflects the vibrancy of Jewish life in Europe before 1933. There is so much information, in fact, “that the emotional and physical and intellectual energies of the visitor will be used up completely as soon as they have seen ‘the world before’” (Museum planning session, 6 April 1984, 8–10). For Cohn, the design of the PE will overwhelm visitors so much that they will either become emotionally exhausted just past the halfway mark of the museum’s exhibit, or they will fail to make the memorial