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a Memorial to the Ghosts of Paris

Creating a memorial always had to be connected on a personal basis, to me.

Introduction: the first stages

When introduced to the project's subject, my class was asked to think about a memorial we would do for refugees and its crisis, one of the major issues of our modern world. Before starting the process, examples of memorials were shown to us, their intention going from raising awareness to remembrance. Right after, as I listened to what my classmates were debating on making, I started to think about why some memorials that we have now, don't have the effect they were designed to have on the public; the question of whether they make people take action and if they make people feel a certain way about what happened.

I remembered going to Ground Zero, the memorial for 9/11 in New York, and trying to link the water fall to the loss of thousands of people during a terrorist attack that became the turning point for the United States' politics. As Adam Gopnik says, the memorial "seemed to suggest less the promise of eternal memory and more a cycle of endless loss and waste. "[1] I understood that the reason why I couldn't connect the memorial and what happened was because I couldn't link it to myself, which is why I decided that I wanted to, somehow, attach my memorial to myself, as well as giving an homage to something bigger than me.

The main concept for my memorial was being able to see the past and the present at the same moment. I was inspired by a website I encountered during my research called *Dear Photograph*, on which people posted a picture of a photo of theirs in front of a place.

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[1] Adam Gopnik. "Stones And Bones." *The New Yorker*. (September 10, 2017). Accessed November 1, 2017. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/07/07/stones-and-bones.

The idea of being able to merge two eras into one by using photography interested me to continue my project on how the eye can capture the past and the present at the same time and make us link the two eras on a new level.

I knew I wanted to work with the city I live in, Paris, and its history, which is why I chose to focus on its ghosts.

My memorial is dedicated to four infrastructures that have disappeared, leaving, for some, traces behind, and for others, nothing but ghosts.

Throughout this paper, I will first explain how I researched my topic and the artists that inspired me in my work, followed by the history of the four infrastructures and how I connected with them, an analytical view of my memorial and finally the relevance of it facing our era.

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[2] Stephanie. "Dear Photograph." *Dear Photograph.* Accessed November 16, 2017.
http://dearphotograph.com/

The main inspiration

"*The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing... but an awareness of its having-been-there. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then.*" [3]

Photography has always been the best means to take part in the remembrance of an event, someone or something. The reason why it connects us so much to the past is because we take part of the creation of it. The operator holds the camera, clicks on the button and the picture exists forever, until one decides to destroy it.

When researching for the concept of merging photography and memorials, I came across a Hong Kong based artist called Tang Kwok Hin, who made collages out of layers of transparent paper on glass.

Compound Eyes, 2012

Being able to see what is behind all the layers as well as seeing what the whole picture is was the idea I was trying to portray in my memorial, which led me to work with transparency.

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[3] Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," reproduced in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 44.

The four infrastructures

Memorials are usually dedicated to a person or an event of big importance, since they are the subjects to which people can relate to.

Dedicating my memorial to buildings that don't exist anymore came from my curiosity towards understanding what lays behind, what happened before and why we don't see it anymore.

The infrastructures I have chosen to begin with, in this path to uncovering the past, are ones that I found interesting in the beginning, but for which I understood I had a connection with as I researched deeper into their history.

1. The Trocadero Palace

The *Palais du Trocadero* was built on one of the hills of Paris on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition of 1878. It was the third event of its kind organized in Paris in the 19th century and whose purpose was mainly of an economic nature. This time, France was in great rivalry with England, cradle of the Industrial Revolution. The construction of the Trocadero was entrusted to the architect Gabriel Davioud (1824-1881) and the engineer Jules Bourdais (1835-1915).

The name of this Palace of Moorish inspiration reminded of shipping and the victory of the Duke of Angoulême in Andalusia in 1827. The Trocadero was the only building that survived at the World Fair. Very spectacular, with its tall towers, columns and many glass stained windows, it housed the largest Hall ever built at that time. At the end of the international event, one of the wings of the Trocadero was reserved for the reception of the Museum of French monuments, created by the architect Viollet-le-Duc on the example of the first Museum of Alexandre Lenoir.[4]

Still in place at the time of 1889 and 1900 World expos, the Trocadero was partially destroyed to allow the building of the Palace of Chaillot.

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[4] "Le Palais du Trocadéro, un bâtiment disparu." *L'Histoire par l'image*. March 08, 2016. Accessed November 19, 2017. https://www.histoire-image.org/etudes/palais-trocadero-batiment-disparu.

---- The Palais du Trocadero was the first ghost building I found and repeatedly came back to. I didn't know why I felt that it was so inspiring until I found myself looking out of the window and trying to examine the Trocadero every time I took the bus. I then realized my connection to it, it was the fact that I was there almost every day, and didn't even acknowledge that a palace stood where my bus has its route.

It was a usual thing for me to see the Eiffel Tower and the Palace of Chaillot, but since I knew that a building ghosted that area, my area, made me focus on it more than I expected.

2. *The Viaduct of Auteuil*

The Viaduct of Auteuil (or also called *Daybreak*) was a bridge to the west of Paris, which was built in two stages between 1863 and 1865. Pedestrians and cars could move at its base, while the second level allowed trains to travel from the inner ring railway between the two shores of the scene.

The deployment of metro brought prejudice to the operation of this line, abandoned in 1934. As its uselessness was brought up to attention, The Viaduct of Auteuil was demolished in 1959 to be replaced in 1963 by the "Pont du Garigliano", better adapted to the changing needs of traffic.[5]

---- The Viaduct of Auteuil was not the reason I chose to work on this structure. It was what replaced it, the Garigliano Brigde. I remembered the name from the time I went to visit my grandmother in the hospital, two Christmases ago. We took the PC1 every morning to see her, even spent Christmas eve in the bus trying to get to her. " Pont du Gargliano" was the name of the stop.

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[5] "Le pont du Garigliano". *Paris 1900, l'art nouveau.* Accessed November 20, 2017. http://paris1900.lartnouveau.com/ponts/pont_du_garigliano.htm.

3. The Elephant of the Bastille

The elephant of the Bastille was a Napoleonic Paris fountain intended to adorn the place of the Bastille. Powered by water from the Ourcq forwarded by the canal Saint-Martin, this monumental fountain had to be overcome of the colossal statue of an elephant with a howdah Tower. Commissioned by Napoleon to Alavoine in 1812, its realization was questioned by the fall of the emperor before being abandoned after the Revolution of 1830, for the benefit of the July column. Only infrastructure, the basin and the base of the fountain were made between 1810 and 1830. Still visible today, they serve as basic to the column.[6]

The statue of the elephant was never executed in bronze, but a model in plaster was raised in 1814 near the construction site, then destroyed in 1846. It an object of curiosity which elicited comments from several writers for 30 years before being immortalized by Victor Hugo in a scene from *Les Misérables* featuring the young Gavroche.

''In this desert and discovered angle of the place, the broad front of the Colossus, its trunk, its defences, its Tower, its huge rump, did his four feet to columns, night on the starry sky, a surprising and terrible shape. We didn't know what it meant. It was a sort of symbol of the popular force. It was dark, enigmatic and huge." [7]

---- I remember reading *Les Misérables* over and over again in high school, writing papers on it and analysing it to its core for my baccalaureate exams. The fact that I didn't remember it talking out this elephant surprized me. It was an infrastructure of meaning, hidden in the text I read so many times but I still couldn't remember it. I wanted it to have some sort of legacy, a memorial placed where it should've been but never was.

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[6] "Projet de la fontaine de l'éléphant de la Bastille." *Napoleon.org*. (February 2010). Accessed November 19, 2017. https://www.napoleon.org/histoire-des-2-empires/iconographie/projet-de-la-fontaine-de-lelephant-de-la-bastille/.

[7] Victor Hugo. *Les Misérables* (France: Albert Lacroix, 1862), 694.

4. _The Innocents' Cemetery_

The cemetery of the Innocents or the Holy Innocents cemetery, was a cemetery located in the neighbourhood of the Halles of Paris, the location of the current place Joachim du Bellay at the centre of which stands the fountain of the Innocents.

It takes its name from the Church of the Holy Innocents who was at the northeast corner of the square and which has now disappeared. It was dedicated to the Holy Innocents, Judea children massacred on the order of King Hérode.[8]

After its destruction in 1784, it was replaced by the market of the innocent.

Today, there are more that the fountain of the innocents, high in the 16th century on the edge of the cemetery and which was refitted since deeply.

---- The placement of the cemetery was the main reason why I incorporated it in my memorial. The Halles in Paris is the one area I always get lost, no matter how many times I can check my phone for directions and try to follow the route. The fact that it was a cemetery and now transformed into a square where people eat and sit reminded me of my previous project, with the Arenes de Lutece, another ghost of Paris that still has some parts of it remaining in Paris.

[8] Collectif, Sarka-SPIP,. "Cimetière des INNOCENTS (disparu)." _Cimetières de France et d'ailleurs._ Accessed November 20, 2017. https://www.landrucimetieres.fr/spip/spip.php?article275

My Memorial

The memorial I created is consisted of two parts: one *in-situ* and one in the shape of a guidebook.

In-Situ

In front of the emplacement of each ghost monument, stands a transparent sheet, on which is embedded the structure of what was there before. Each sheet is attached to the location by a string and on the floor, are two footsteps, showing where the visitor should stand and hold the transparent sheet.

A QR code is placed next to it, linked to a PDF file explaining what the monument was both in English and French.

The Instagram handle @ghostsofparis underneath the QR code is to relate the visitors to the memorial via a social platform, on which the same pictures and explanations are posted. The idea of creating the Instagram account was to take the memorial to another step, and be able to upload more content about ghosts of Paris, as there are so many more that can be discovered.

The Guidebook

The Guidebook part of the memorial is created for the ones that are invested in the idea of the ghosts of Paris, as I also address the reasons why I chose these spots and the infrastructures. The idea behind it is that it might serve one day as a memorial for some ideas and my stories, connecting myself and the structures once again.

Conclusion: the memorial's modern relevance

"Technology... the knack of so arranging the world that we don't have to experience it." [9]

Our modern era is one that is dominated by technology. The first phases of my memorial were to link photography and time, therefore technology and time. As I tried to understand why most people couldn't relate to things anymore, I realized that it was because we didn't know how to connect with them.

By using QR codes and Instagram, my memorial can be seen on our phones, at the same place of the infrastructure or as a digital memorial, free to be accessed anywhere via an international social platform like Instagram at any given time.

However, a material memorial still exists with the guidebook, something that will remain and not get lost in the billions of digits of the web, something that has been in use when the ghosts were structures.

Finally, the Memorial for the Ghosts of Paris is as of now connecting the past with the present, and linking people to what was there before in a modern way.

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[9] Max Frisch. *Homo Faber* (France: Gallimard, 1957)

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