

The d/i/light Memorial featuring The Sonic Memorial

@ 6th International Holocaust Conference – Riga/Latvia – 21-22 May 2019

The d/i/light Memorial

Artists commemorate the victims of the Holocaust
Artists against Intolerance, Racism & Anti-Semitism

<http://dilight.a-virtual-memorial.org>

featuring

The Sonic Memorial

collective trauma, identity & sonic art

<http://sonix.a-virtual-memorial.org>

created, developed and curated by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne.

As a media artist and curator from Cologne/Germany, I would like to thank the conference organisation for giving me the opportunity to present - „**The d/i/light Memorial**“ - in the framework of this conference on behalf of The New Museum of Networked Art.

It is certainly good to know, that nearly on the very day, today on 22 May, 10 years ago the process of **The d/i/light Memorial** started. My presentation which can be considered also as a kind of 10th anniversary celebration, is consisting of two complementing components, the spoken words as a kind of information channel and the projection of a video trailer trying to give at least a vague idea about the artistic visual contents.

As a media art context, **The d/i/light Memorial** incorporating a wide range of conceptual aspects, is the creation of one single artist, who is simultaneously also the curator, programmer and initiator of the collective of involved artists, making out if it an unique example of networked art in a collective responsibility. At the same time, it is fulfilling the conditions of a conventional Memorial and museum via collecting, documenting and preserving, and its educational and pedagogical aims. It is standing for a powerful artistic, cultural and political message.

The d/i/light Memorial is a space for commemorating, it is representing an artistic cultural structure in an exchange between virtual and physical space, whereby the Memorial has its permanent location online in the Internet, and additionally temporary locations during its manifestations in physical space.

The title **d/i/light** - abbreviating the phrase „**Darkness into Light**“ – is referring to a very serious and challenging matter: the process of keeping actively vivid the memory of the Holocaust turning not only the memory from the darkness, but also the „darkness to be identified with the Holocaust“ into light.

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The d/i/light Memorial can be considered as a platform for significant initiatives addressed to an open-minded audience. One of the primary initiatives is encouraging young artists generations to deal with the Holocaust and its human dimension as topics in art by using the new audio-visual media looking for new ways for commemorating in a media language people nowadays understand. The basis of the Memorial transporting contents, aims and the results of this encouragement is forming the „**The Shoah Film Collection**“, initiated in 2009 and launched on 27 January 2010 on occasion of the international Holocaust Memorial Day. This unique collection is incorporating currently about 110 audio-visual creations by 100 artists from 35 countries – documentaries, art videos, experimental films and multi-media.

By becoming part of the Memorial, the involved artists take initiative by **showing** personally **face against Intolerance, Racism and Anti-Semitism** - sending a very clear message to the world to follow the spirit of the Memorial.

In order to make the film collection available to a wider audience, as an option, a special event structure, entitled “**A Virtual Memorial Commemorative Interventions**”, is placing the film collection into the context of complementary interventions like a symposium, exhibitions or artists meetings, in order to activate the audience and personalize the experiences, also through additional artistic formats like performance or installation. The first “A Virtual Memorial” manifestation taking place in Riga 2012, was followed afterwards in Vilnius, Warsaw, Milan, Timisoara and Jaffa, standing all under the Patronage of the European Parliament, film selections were presented in the framework of festivals and museums.

In this way, the Memorial project became a relevant contribution to the late discussion how can the memory of the Holocaust be transferred to future generations after the last Holocaust survivor died, and this is already very soon!

In 2018, **The d/i/light Memorial** became corporate part of a new commemorative concept, entitled “The 7 Memorials for Humanity”, placing **The d/i/light Memorial** in the context of seven differently aimed artistic memorial sites created between 2009 and 2018.

In this presentation, **The d/i/light Memorial** is accompanied by a 2nd commemorative project, entitled “**The Sonic Memorial**” - dedicated to collective trauma and identity, complementing the mainly visual experience of **The d/i/light Memorial** - focussed as its counterpart on the non-visual media via sonic art, using sound as a tool for artistic creations offering another essential sensual approach to memory and commemorating through associating.

What is driving an artist and/or curator to make the Holocaust the topic of an artistic reflection? Of course, I can speak only for myself, but not entirely, because I can speak also for some of the participating artist colleagues who joint another essential extension

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of the Memorial, eg. SFCIP – the **Shoah Film Collection Interview Project** to be studied by any user online – offering to the interested audience background information about the motivations and the workout of the incorporated artistic creations.

As for myself, my motivations are rooted on the experiences of my highly traumatic course of life as a living witness of the Post-war (World War II) generation, which I am describing currently in an autobiographical novel. **The d/i/light Memorial** and its commemorative art context can be considered as my personal credo as a cultural activist since more than 40 years and a human being since nearly 70 years.

Born in 1950, just a few years after the end of World War II, my genetic conditions transport prenatal traumatisations related to the families of my parents and their early Jewish ancestors, and above all my father's experiences during the last days of Hitler's 1000 years performance, being kidnapped by the GESTAPO while my mother was pregnant expecting her 3rd child. Only US forces bombing the city of Dessau in May 1944 saved my father's life traumatized by incredible tortures.

In this way, already as a child I experienced my world from a sensitized point of view - the totalitarianism of the East German Communist dictatorship, when I spent my summer holidays with my grandparents in Eastern Germany, the traumatic circumstances of the erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 and the dangers of World War III, later the 1968 revolution when I was 18 years old. While studying in Munich, now 22 years old, I was sitting 1972 during the Olympic games in the Olympic stadium shaken by the incredible emotional shockwaves after the Palestinian terror attack on the Israeli Olympic team, later when I was studying in Holland, even the Vietnam war was reaching Amsterdam when close to my flat behind the Concertgebouw the hospital nearby was overwhelmed with injured Vietnamese victims and US military, the air was filled by the sirens of the emergency ambulance day and night. When the Berlin Wall was falling in 1989 after a peaceful revolution, 39 years old, during the following years I got actively involved in the German reunification process. While visiting in Eastern Europe the "achievements" of Hitler's 12 years lasting 1000 years empire, the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Majdanek, Stutthof and others - and even if my naive brain refused to accept the unimaginable dimension of inhumanity - facing the preserved artefacts only was so tremendously shocking, that I was ashamed to belong to that mankind which did not prevent Hitler's masterplan to exterminate at first the Jews, and afterwards the rest of mankind. It was this shock accompanied by the up-rising Neo-Fascism at that time which was motivating me to realise my first artistic project devoted to the Holocaust at 43 places in Poland, Germany, Czech Republic and Belgium. During the years 1993-1998, I learned how it feels to become persecuted, persecuted by Neo-Nazi in a free and democratic country, terrorized by anonymous phone calls, threatening letters and as its consequence the Nazi attack, an act of incredible vandalism which destroyed the main part of the artistic Memorial project in autumn 1998 leaving me behind in agony.

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Now, a late victim of the Holocaust myself, in my despair and helplessness I said farewell to the world at the end of 1998 and fell into a many months lasting coma. In the end, it was only the never-ending love of the two most beloved persons praying day and night during so many months, which made me decide to continue and return to life. Now, nearly 50 years old, I started again from point zero like a baby. The complete loss of my memory, however, was the chance for me to start on 1. January 2000 a new artistic life as Agricola de Cologne dedicated exclusively to the use of new media. Only years later, when my memory slowly recovered, I realized how contemporary political developments were repeating, right wing political parties and their insane ideologies started to up-rise again, The Nazi crimes were marginalized and Populists were falsifying historical facts, offering also the Anti-Semitism new chances. I was thinking I was in a wrong film.

Why was it so relevant, at all, to keep vivid the memory of the Holocaust?

In fact, the Jews did not need to be invited expressively to do so, because the Holocaust had become part of their own identity, they would never forget, but as I see it whole mankind had to take responsibility for its own failures, and one of the fundamental failures was to have let the Holocaust happen.

As a part of a society which obviously is generating continuously the need for totalitarian ideas, each individual, thus whole mankind, needs to be reminded permanently.

Therefore, the answer is as simple as complex: **to prevent another Holocaust and Resist the Beginnings. The same must not happen again - anywhere on the globe!**

While the historical memorial sites preserve archaeological artefacts and the statistics remain anonymous and inhuman, by its art related commemorating **The d/i/light Memorial** would like to save and defend Humanity as the biggest value of mankind, after it had been nearly completely lost 70 years ago, and the ways it is endangered these days to get lost again.

As the most human of all human expressions, art as a special manifestation of memory - to be experienced by anybody with all the senses - has the potential to transfer memory to future generations, touch people today and tomorrow at the bottom of their heart und change awareness by sensitizing.

The Memorial site online is offering free access to most art films and links to the documentations of previous manifestations.

As the basis of **The d/i/light Memorial**, The Shoah Film Collection, will be celebrating its 10th anniversary in the frame work of **The Jubilee Year 2020**, celebrating additionally 15 years artvideoKOELN operating the Memorial , 20 years “A Virtual Memorial Foundation”, the home of the Memorial, 20 years The New Museum of Networked Art hosting the

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Memorial, 20 years Agricola de Cologne as the creator of the Memorial, 40 years Agricola as an artist, 70 years Agricola as a human individual, 75 years of the end of World War II and 75 years of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Thanks for the attention.