

# MEMORIALS AS SPACES OF ENGAGEMENT

DESIGN, USE AND MEANING

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Taylor & Francis Group  
NEW YORK AND LONDON

## CHAPTER 6

# OCCUPYING

**CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC MEMORIALS** are the settings for a very broad and rather surprising range of activities beyond commemoration. At the Diana Memorial Fountain, for example (Figure 1.1), on a warm day, there are people of all ages sitting and lying on the edges of the fountain and the adjacent lawn. Many are sitting and lying on the edges of the fountain and the adjacent lawn. Many are barefoot and sit with their feet in the cool running water. Some are in swimwear, others simply have their shirts off and are sunbathing. There are nannies minding children, picnics, and even birthday parties. Here and at other memorials, people use the sculptural forms as chairs and tables or for climbing. They explore these settings' potentials to support a tremendous variety of body postures and movements: bending, stepping, grasping, running, sliding. Visitors also spend much of their time at these sites looking at other people, rather than at the memorials. Such ways of occupying memorials are surprising when we consider that memorials are typically conceived by their sponsors as solemn, separate places for people to come to remember and honor the people and events being commemorated. Memorial visitors are generally expected to be reverential: to walk slowly, study the memorials' symbolism, lay floral tributes and engage in other commemorative performances. They might reach out and touch an engraved name. By contrast, the many unanticipated ways of occupying memorials are often unconnected with the people, places and events being commemorated, and may seem distinctly disrespectful to memory.

Little previous scholarship on memorials has sought to evaluate the ways people actually occupy them. Scholars of history, memory and art are mostly interested in the intentions guiding commemorative design, and existing studies of visitors' actions generally emphasize how their bodily experiences affirm the affects intended by the memorials' designers, demonstrating how these experiences resonate with the events being commemorated. Blair and Michels' (1999) study of the US Astronauts Memorial is a rare exception, noting that visitors are often oblivious to a memorial's intended cues, and are distracted from reflection on historic events by experiences within and surrounding the memorial site. Szpunar's (2010) analysis of young men urinating on Canada's main war memorial is rather unique in documenting visitor actions in a commemorative space that are grave (if inadvertent) infractions against its sacred purposes.

The wide variety of behaviors that can be observed at two key recent memorials—the Diana Memorial Fountain, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (MMJE)—provide a basis for a wider examination of the wide range of ways that people occupy memorial sites: how and where people move within them, how people engage with them through their various senses, and how they interact with other visitors. These actions illustrate the multifarious

affordances that contemporary memorials, both abstract and figurative, offer for human action. In aesthetic terms, both these examples are simple concrete forms, but in terms of opportunities for occupation, they are complex and richly engaging.

The following discussion pursues two different approaches to explore how people occupy memorials. The first proceeds from observation of a range of typical actions observed at contemporary memorial sites—walking, resting, climbing around and social encounters with other visitors—to identify how those settings support these particular kinds of bodily engagements with spaces, objects and other people. The second approach reflects upon three general aspects of people's engagement with memorials that help us to understand why people occupy these settings for such a range of active, non-commemorative uses. We identify how the uses of memorials are stimulated by the distinctive richness of their sensory experiences and functional affordances. These stimuli often engender playful responses.

### OBSERVED USES

#### Circulating

One key set of patterns within visitors' uses of memorial settings is the sequential choreography of how people arrive at them, enter them, move around within them, and stop at particular points. This choreography can contribute significantly to the drama and meaning of a site, through various physical cues and clues to particular expected patterns of moving, pausing and perceiving. In most existing analyses of memorials, the reason that people come to a commemorative site is taken as self-evident: the visitors are mourners. Their modes of circulating are often ritualized and tightly framed. But many of the people who are present at contemporary memorials clearly arrive there for a range of very different reasons. They thus perform a range of movements, views and uses that the memorials' designers may not have anticipated. Even at very traditional, formal memorial settings like the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin's Treptower Park, which is surrounded by trees and a high fence and filled with large-scale didactic depictions of dignity, honor and suffering, some visitors come to ride skateboards, cuddle their partners, rest and eat, or shoot fashion advertisements. This memorial is a quiet, open, well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing space, and the park it sits within is a popular leisure destination. People come to Budapest's Liberation Monument high on Gellert Hill as much for the view over the city across the Danube as to see the memorial itself or pay their respects to the Soviet soldiers it originally commemorated. The more recent Diana Memorial Fountain in London is also part of a large urban park, and is thus scene of many leisure activities including picnics, ball games, sunbathing and jogging. Its location next door to a public children's swimming pool makes it a particularly popular destination for water-based play. The Canada Memorial nearby in Green Park is also mostly frequented by tourists visiting the park and by parents with children looking to play.

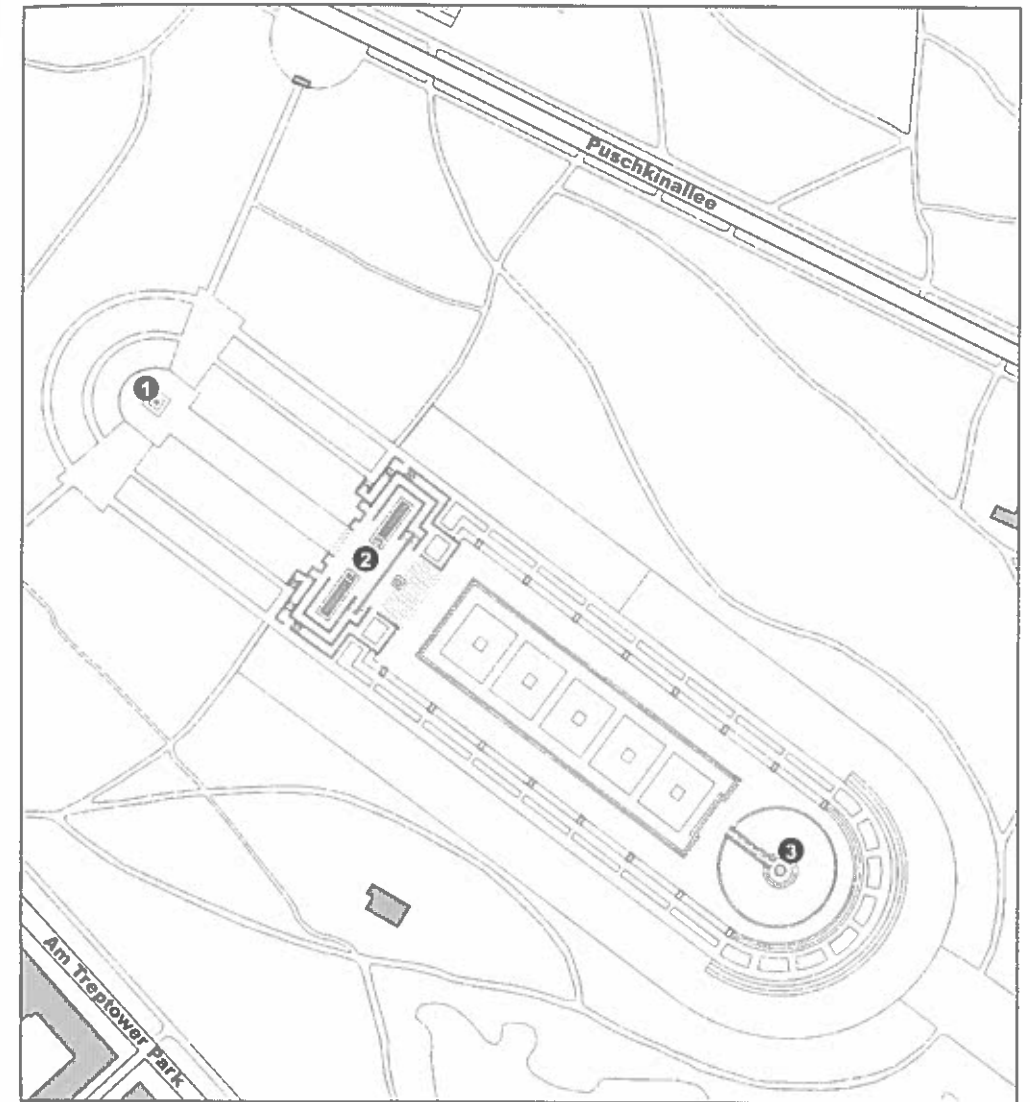
Even memorials that are not set in beautiful landscapes are visited by many non-mourners. The vast majority of people who encounter London's Bali Memorial are tourists visiting the adjacent Cabinet War Rooms, or simply passing by between Parliament Square and St James's Park. London's *Kindertransport* memorial is hard to avoid, standing right outside one entry of the city's third-busiest railway station. Many memorials are placed in heavily-trafficked locations, whether

to commemorate the history of these specific locations or simply because the memorials' sponsors wanted high exposure for their subjects. And thus memorials are not always and only conscious destinations for commemorative activities. Many people who engage with public memorials are actually on their way somewhere else. They pass by, through, or over memorials, but their minds and bodies are focused on something other than remembrance.

Many people arrive at Berlin's MMJE without actively seeking it out. Sitting, as it does, in a very busy urban location between many tourist and leisure destinations, its 'visitors' include businessmen walking to work; tourists en route to other destinations; people walking their dogs; and adults taking children outside to play. When people arrive here, they are riding bicycles and scooters, talking on mobile phones, laughing, kissing and cuddling their partners, or eating sausages, ice creams and sweets. Children are sometimes carrying balloons, and adults may be wearing unusual costumes. When Germany hosted the 2006 Football World Cup, many teenagers brought footballs into the site and played with them between the stelae. When Berlin's massive techno music festival The Love Parade took place nearby, people climbed on top of stelae and danced to its amplified music. One man pretended to be a DJ using a low stela as a turntable. Another Love Parade partygoer surreptitiously urinated between the memorial's stelae. On another occasion, doctors marching in protest to the nearby parliament passed through the site wearing costumes and carrying banners. An art student came to use two stelae as a work surface.

The MMJE is occupied in all these ways not only because it is central, but also because it is a very permeable and approachable object. In contrast to fenced memorial sculptures on pedestals that people can only walk past, this is a large space and a set of forms that people can easily enter into, engage with, and move through. People often arrive at this memorial and occupy it without even knowing they are doing so. Many passers-by walk unconsciously over part of this memorial without even noticing it, because the stelae around the site perimeter are flat, level with the pavement, and extend into the sidewalk; the memorial thus overlaps with the surrounding everyday streetscape. Few visitors notice the perimeter signs that demarcate this site's special meaning and use. The memorial's abstract form does not help to convey its commemorative intent. When a temporary perimeter fence was installed in 2006 to separate this memorial site from the adjacent tourist flows of the World Cup and The Love Parade, people appeared much more conscious of its specific purpose (Stevens 2012). But generally, many mundane urban activities incidentally spill over into the MMJE site from its immediate surroundings.

Large spatial memorials often have defined formal processional routes through them that choreograph particular movements, stopping points and views. At Berlin's Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park (Figure 6.1), visitors walk slowly up a long approach ramp toward a terminating axial statue, until they reach a wide elevated terrace between two giant stone Soviet flags, and generally stop there and survey the expansive main courtyard beyond. They typically then descend and walk along this courtyard, sometimes looking at the rows of figurative bas-relief sculptures along the sides, which convey the historical course of the war. They ascend the steep stairs at the base of the massive focal soldier statue and peer into the small ceremonial chamber directly beneath it, and look back along the courtyard to the flags framing a statue of a grieving mother near the entry. This prescribed sequence focuses visitors' attention, bodies and minds.



1. Grieving Mother Homeland 2. Portal 3. Soviet soldier holding a German child

Figure 6.1 Soviet War Memorial, Treptower Park, Berlin, Yakov Belopolsky with sculptor Yevgeny Vuchetich, 1948  
Source: Plan by Te-Sheng Huang

Washington's FDR Memorial is similarly articulated as a sequence of enclosed 'rooms' where visitors experience in turn the different moods of FDR's four presidential terms. Some less traditional memorials also frame choreographed sequences of perceptions and actions. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, most visitors walk slowly down one path 'into' the memorial and up the opposite ramp back 'out' of it.

Some memorials have been sited and designed so that people who are incidentally walking somewhere will be drawn through them, and might engage with their subject in passing. One example is the September 11 Memorial in Westfield, New Jersey, a suburb of greater New York City, entitled "A Walk for Dads." This memorial features 12 small stone obelisks spaced out along a path that commuters take to and from the local train station. Each bears the name of a local resident who perished in the World Trade Center attack. All were men; all fathers; all commuters who might themselves have walked along this route. The processional form of this memorial seeks to catch the attention of hurried commuters.

Rather than defining a single, narrative sequence, the MMJE, the Diana Memorial Fountain and the Pentagon Memorial are very extensive open landscapes that provide a multiplicity of possible pathways for moving through them. People move around freely within these settings, discovering and exploring a wide variety of routes and modes of movement through them. At the MMJE, visitors in wheelchairs follow particular aisles marked for their use because of their relatively flat topography. Parents pushing baby carriages and cyclists also choose these aisles, sometimes by trial and error after they have had difficulty on other more sloping routes. Young people run back and forth, exploring various aisles; they often prefer those with undulating ground. They frequently accelerate along aisles that slope gradually downward toward the center of the site. The stelae also generally become taller toward the center, so visitors' bodies gradually become more immersed within the mass of the object. Moving through becomes moving into. Many people, especially the elderly, deliberately choose to walk along the outer aisles of the memorial field which do not have constrained views and which generally offer flatter terrain. Other people seem to like exploring the dark, confined interior of the field, turning frequently to change direction or change aisles, or to avoid oncoming strangers, though some visitors specifically enjoy the tension of squeezing past other people in the narrow 900mm gaps. Those who move through the site in groups either form single file to walk through the aisles, or use adjoining aisles. Many seem disconcerted by losing sight and contact with their companions, though others create games of peek-a-boo as they walk. As the stelae increase incrementally in height from ground level at the site perimeter, people often step up onto their flat upper surfaces and walk across the top of the stelae field, striding over their 900mm spacings (Figure 6.2). They explore this upper topography, jumping diagonally between stelae and across different vertical increments. In contrast to the Treptower memorial, within the MMJE, movement through the site has no end point, no focus. People circulate continuously until they feel they have experienced enough. Many pedestrians and cyclists simply go in one side of the memorial and out the other, continuing on their way through the city. Their occupation of the memorial is incidental to their journey.

Visitors entering the Diana Memorial Fountain are presented with several distinct options for circulating around the site. People walk circuits up and around the loop to the top of the memorial, where they have the best overview, and back

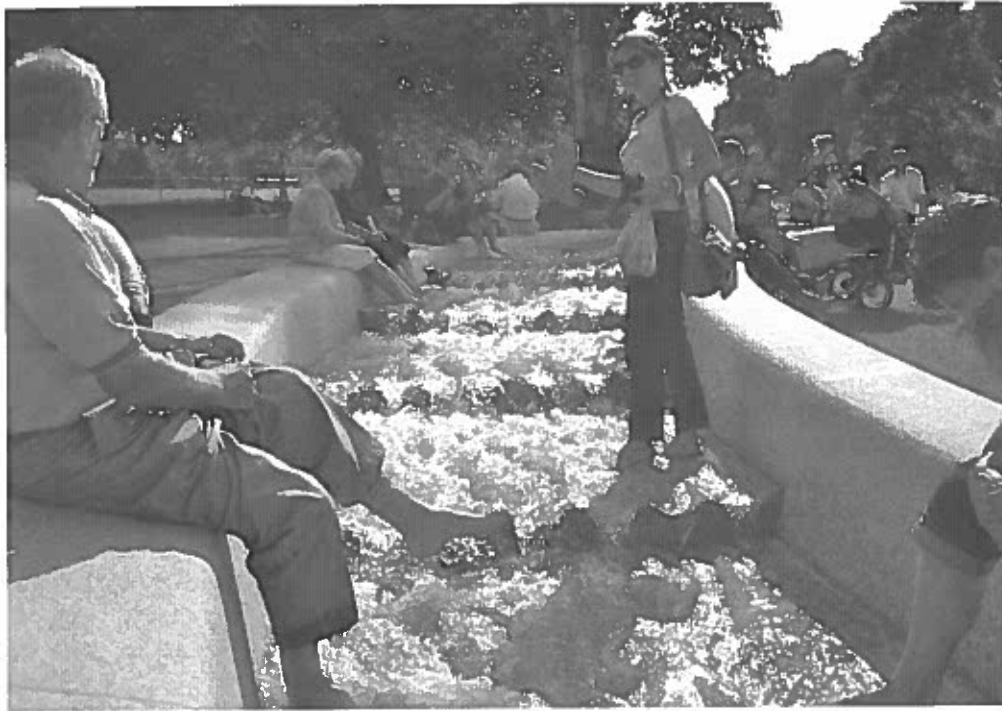


**Figure 6.2** Visitor walking up and across the top of the field of stelae, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin

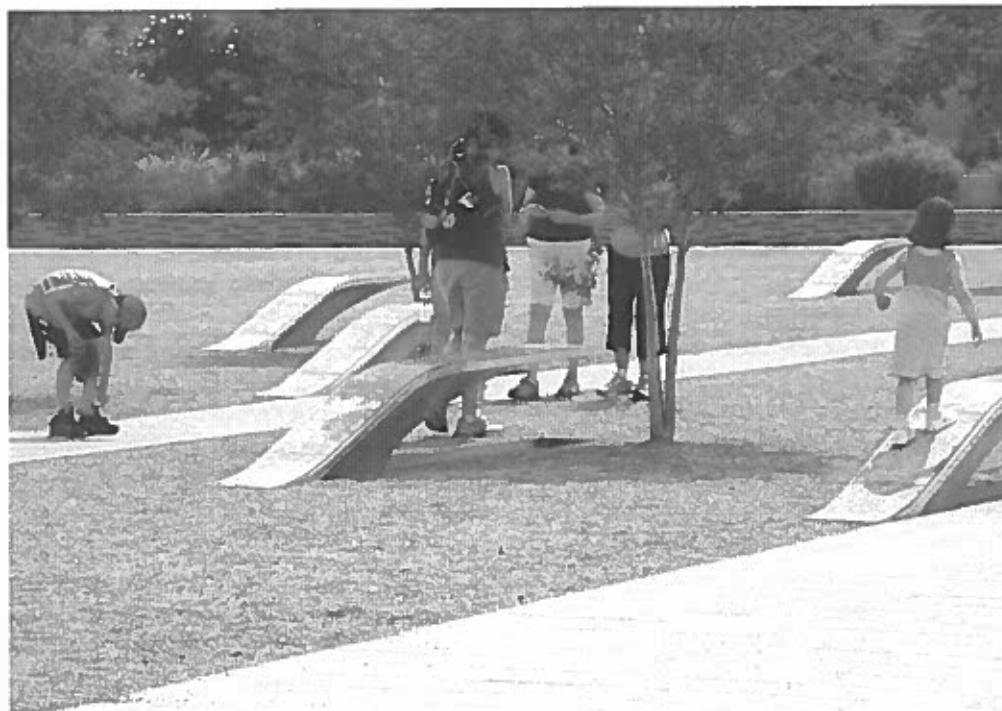
Source: Photomontage Quentin Stevens, 2006. Reprinted with permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com), from Q. Stevens, "Visitor Responses at Berlin's Holocaust Memorial: Contrary to Conventions, Expectations and Rules," *Public Art Dialogue* 2(1), 2012.

down again. Visitors circulate in two directions, walking parallel or in file. They walk inside or outside the fountain ring, on the paved path or on grass. The termination of the inner pavement does not deter most visitors from continuing walking a circuit on the grass. Contrary to posted rules, people also walk along the fountain's concrete edge, extending their arms for balance or holding hands with a companion. Some visitors walk astride the channel. Others walk in the water, either with or against the current, with their shoes off, or in some cases with them on (Figure 6.3).

From the entry of the Pentagon Memorial (see Figure 4.2), a paved pathway runs around the perimeter of the gravel field containing 184 benches. There are also six paved cross-aisles within the field. But most visitors initially walk forward across the relatively-open gravel, and stop to look at the first few widely-spaced benches they encounter. As the named benches are laid out in sequence of the victims' ages, most visitors thus first encounter and engage with the bench 'representing' the youngest victim (3 years old), then that for her older sister (8) and three other children (11), all aeroplane passengers, separated by a large space from the mostly adult casualties. As all the benches look the same, each of these more distant adult memorials attracts relatively few visits by strangers. Although elderly visitors and those with wheelchairs, baby carriages or luggage tend to stick to the pathways, the open gravel permits meandering itineraries through the site, and visiting children often weave between the cantilevered ends of the benches, sometimes springing off their inclined faces as if they are runners' starting blocks. Children also sometimes step or jump across the benches as if the field were a steeplechase, or walk up and over the sloping ends of the benches and run or slide down them (Figure 6.4).



**Figure 6.3** People walk along in the water channel, Diana Memorial Fountain, London  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2006.



**Figure 6.4** Children playing on sloping benches, National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, Arlington, Virginia  
Source: Photomontage Quentin Stevens, 2011.

Although the arrangement of the benches at the Pentagon Memorial is calibrated to give visitors a particularly sympathetic encounter with its commemorative subject, these three memorial cases illustrate that visitors' movements through large, abstract public memorials are often largely unchoreographed, and that people's ways of moving around such sites often have no clear links to the sites' meanings. These site designs do not just open up memory and symbolism to multiple narrative experiences and interpretations; they also open up memorial settings to exploratory circulation which has no links to remembrance.

The choreography of visitors' movements through any given memorial site is punctuated by different places and reasons that they stop. When visitors arrive at large, open memorial landscapes such as the MMJE and the Diana and Pentagon Memorials, they generally pause at the perimeter of the site, to get an overview of the terrain, to plan their route through it, and to take photographs of the memorial and of themselves standing in front of it. At the Diana Memorial Fountain (Figure 6.5), visitors often walk in on the path and stop at the flat bridge over the fountain channel, to have an overview of the whole site, which slopes upward in their field of view, and to decide where to go next. People also often stop at the uphill end of the ring, to enjoy the view back down, and sometimes in the center of the ring, to view the fountain all around them. They pause on the three bridges, to watch the water flow underneath, and adjacent to other variations in the fountain channel, to watch and listen to the water's flow and the ways other visitors engage with it. Where else they stop depends on whether they are willing to walk off the paved paths and onto the grass or onto the edge of the fountain channel, and what kinds of close engagement with the water they are seeking.

At the MMJE, many visitors walk some way into low, open perimeter of the memorial field before they stop to perform a panoramic reconnaissance of the site. As they walk further in, visitors also often stop again at a point just before the stelae rise above their eye level. Some visitors pause at this point simply because it is their last opportunity to have a wide view and take photographs across the site. But many visitors are clearly unwilling to move deeper within the field than their eye level. They turn at 90 degrees to their descending path, to walk a skirting route of the memorial field that doesn't take them any deeper into it. People often pose for photographs between or behind stelae at their neck height, 'swallowed up' by the memorial (Figure 6.6). These photographs engage consciously and playfully with visitors' awareness of incrementally moving 'inside' the three-dimensional mass of the stelae field. Some visitors appear to have a bodily or even existential fear of getting 'out of their depth', 'drowning' among the dark waves of stelae. Visitors' hesitations at this threshold of the MMJE field signal a multi-sensory feeling of enclosure which is stimulated by the surrounding concrete masses. The long, tight rows of stelae restrict views out, robbing visitors of orientation to the surrounding cityscape. Many visitors do not seem to like losing sight of their companions walking in adjacent aisles. The mass of the stelae attenuates sounds from outside. The surrounding concrete masses also stimulate an unconscious haptic sense of enclosure, from the temperature variation caused by shelter from the weather and from air molecules bouncing off the nearby surfaces, which cause a slight increase in air pressure against a visitor's skin. Many people avoid having too close an engagement with the concrete mass of this landscape.

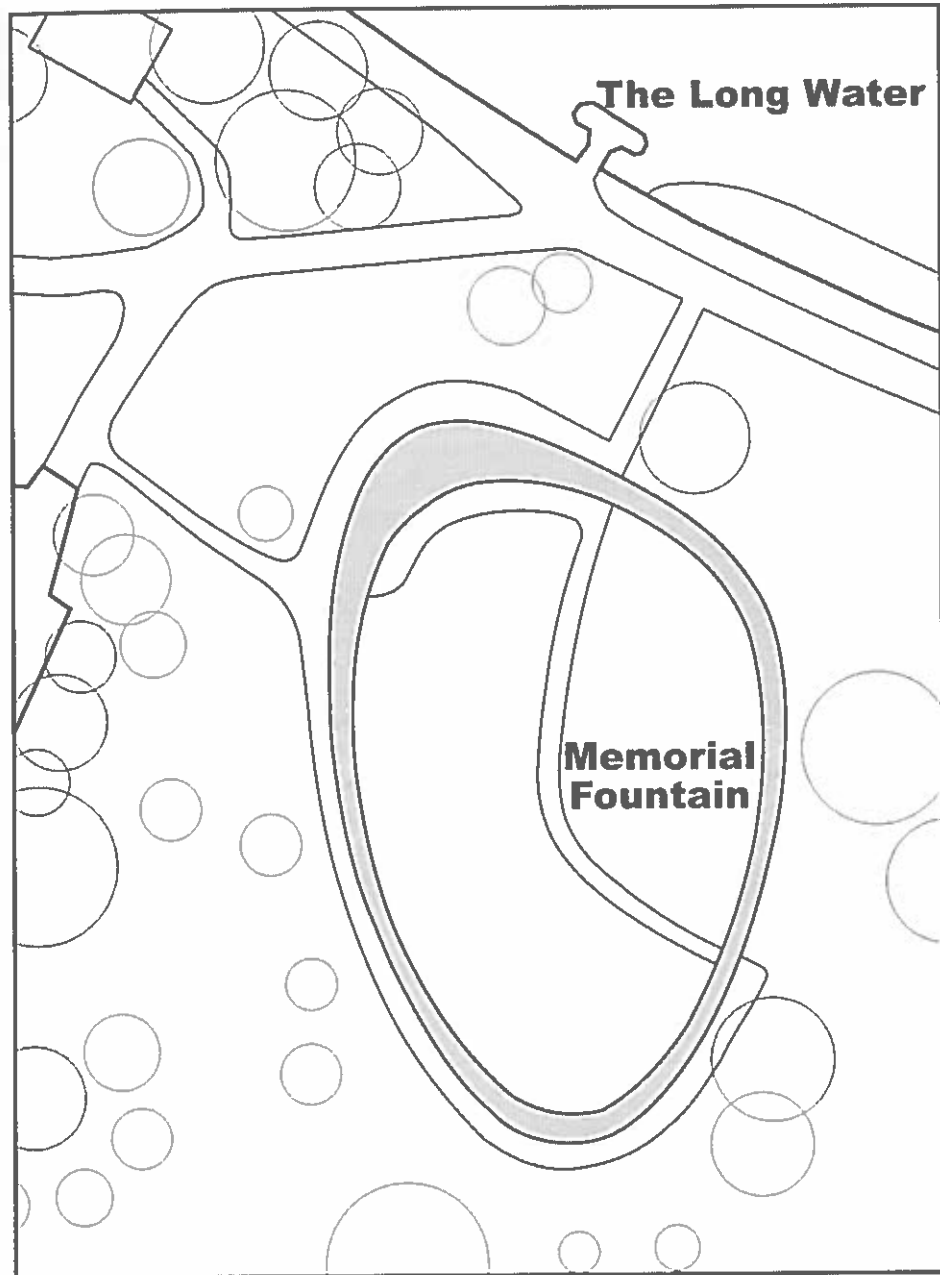


Figure 6.5 Diana Memorial Fountain, London, Kathryn Gustafson and Neil Porter, 2004  
Source: Plan by Te-Sheng Huang.

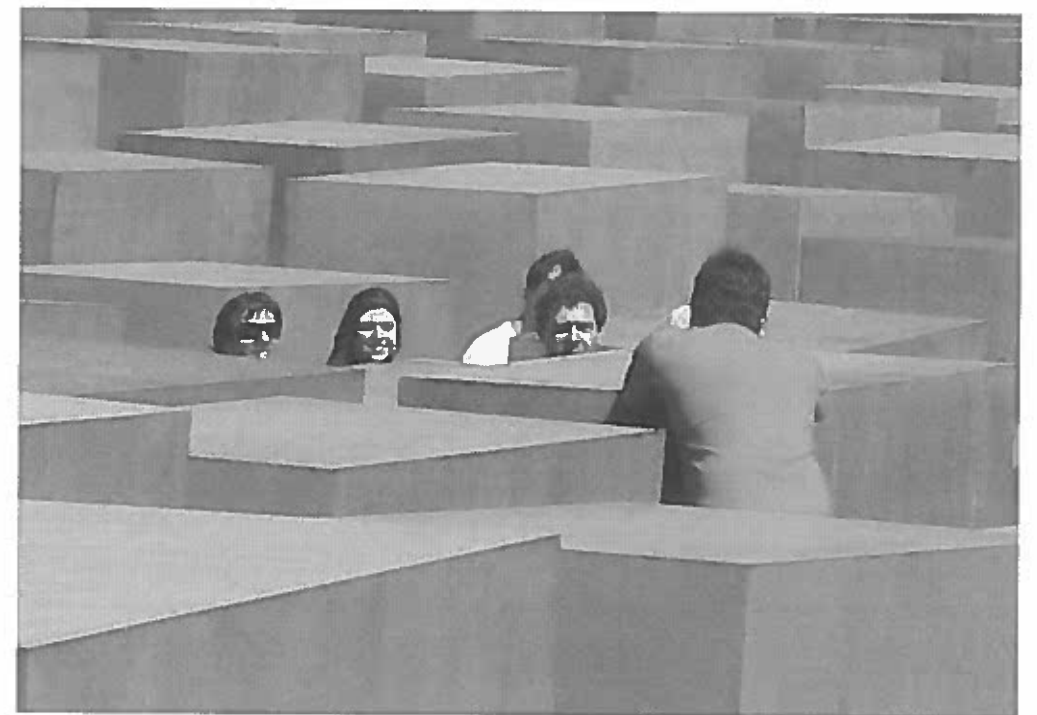


Figure 6.6 Visitors photographing friends "up to their necks," Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2006.

People stop at a range of other places to appreciate the memorial, including numerous vantage points of raised ground among lower stelae, the deepest, most enclosed points, and turning points when new views open up between stelae along cross axes. As Lynch (1960) found, people moving through unfamiliar environments pause at points where they have to make decisions, such as these memorial thresholds, path forks and bridges. Because the Diana Memorial Fountain and the MMJE offer a variety of routes that visitors can explore, navigation is an ongoing process which begins with getting an overview, and then requires further pauses where people weigh up the various new physical affordances for action and experience that they detect in the environment (Stevens 2006). They do not just stop to think about the commemorated subject. Visitors pause where a memorial's layout blocks their desired passage, where the material landscape supports postures of repose, and where the layout frames encounters with strangers or interesting views. Visitors to these abstract memorials also stop to engage with very localized sensations of sound and touch, such as listening to the reverberation of voices and feeling the flow of water. These ostensibly commemorative landscapes are just as likely to encourage people to run or to be distracted by idle sensory pleasures as they are to make them stop and think.

People touch memorials that are positioned at ground level with many different parts of their bodies and in a variety of relaxed postures: leaning, squatting, kneeling, sitting, and lying down. People standing next to the low perimeter elements of the Diana Memorial Fountain and the MMJE often place one foot up on them, to steady themselves when taking photographs or to stretch their leg. Many people step up onto the low, flat, firm edge surfaces of the MMJE and Diana Memorial Fountain to better view or photograph the memorials. These visitors generally appear unaware that they are standing on the same commemorative object that they are photographing. Photographers squat, lie, and cantilever their bodies on, against and between the memorial forms in a multitude of unselfconscious postures to frame particular views onto these memorial landscapes. People use these memorials as tables, putting down their clothes and children on them, and opening their bags to rummage through them. One university student spent an entire hour at the MMJE using two stelae as a work surface. She spread paper and adhesive tape right across the top of one stele. People sit on or lean against stelae near the periphery while they eat something, smoke, drink beer (Figure 6.7), read the newspaper or study a map, or talk on their mobile telephones.

People also often sit on these memorials to rest. They sometimes sit crossed-legged on top of the memorials with their eyes closed, meditating. Some look at other visitors, read books, or check their telephones. Many visitors to the Diana Memorial Fountain sit on the fountain edge with their legs facing outwards or stretched along the edge, or cross-legged on top of it, to be close to the water without getting wet, while also staying in reach of their shoes, bags and baby strollers. They sit across the channel with their legs bridging over the water. While seated, they lower their hands or feet into the flow. In summer, many visitors sit reading with their legs in the water. People sit on this memorial in every orientation, facing in or out of the ring, and facing in or out of the channel, or sitting astride the edge with one foot in the water and one out. More people tend to sit on the channel's outside edge than the inside one, because the paved path around the outside facilitates access to it. Some of the fountain's edge sections have an abrupt drop into knee-deep water; others have a low, raked incline where people lean back



**Figure 6.7** People sit and eat, smoke, drink beer, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2006. Reprinted with permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com), from Q. Stevens, "Visitor Responses at Berlin's Holocaust Memorial: Contrary to Conventions, Expectations and Rules," *Public Art Dialogue* 2(1), 2012.

and gradually slide their feet in. Some people sit on the edge of the memorial's three flat bridges, where they spread their legs to watch the water run between, dangle their feet in the water, or bend forward to place both hands in it. The MMJE stelae are too far apart for people to sit bridging between them, but some visitors sit suspended with their bodies wedged between the opposing faces of two stelae (Figure 6.8). Visitors also sometimes sit on the ground between the stelae with their knees drawn up, using them as a backrest, especially when the weather is hot.

Visitors often lie down on top of both the Diana Memorial Fountain and the MMJE, in many different orientations. Unlike sitting, this posture is never a means to see and learn more about the memorial. People lie on these memorials to rest and to sun themselves, and this depends on comfort. People only lie when the stone and concrete are warm and the weather is sunny but mild. Visitors recline on their side, on one elbow, with a knee raised; or flat on their backs, with clothes, bags, or the laps of seated friends cushioning their heads. The MMJE stelae are long and wide enough that two people often lie adjacent on top. At the Diana Memorial Fountain, people lie on their backs or prone, sometimes with their arms or feet trailing in the stream. The memorial's lowness and breadth let people easily lower themselves onto its edge and maneuver close to the water.



**Figure 6.8** People climb wedged between stelae, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
 Source: Quentin Stevens, 2006. Reprinted with permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com, from Q. Stevens, "Nothing More Than Feelings: Abstract Memorials," *Architectural Theory Review* 14(2), 2009.

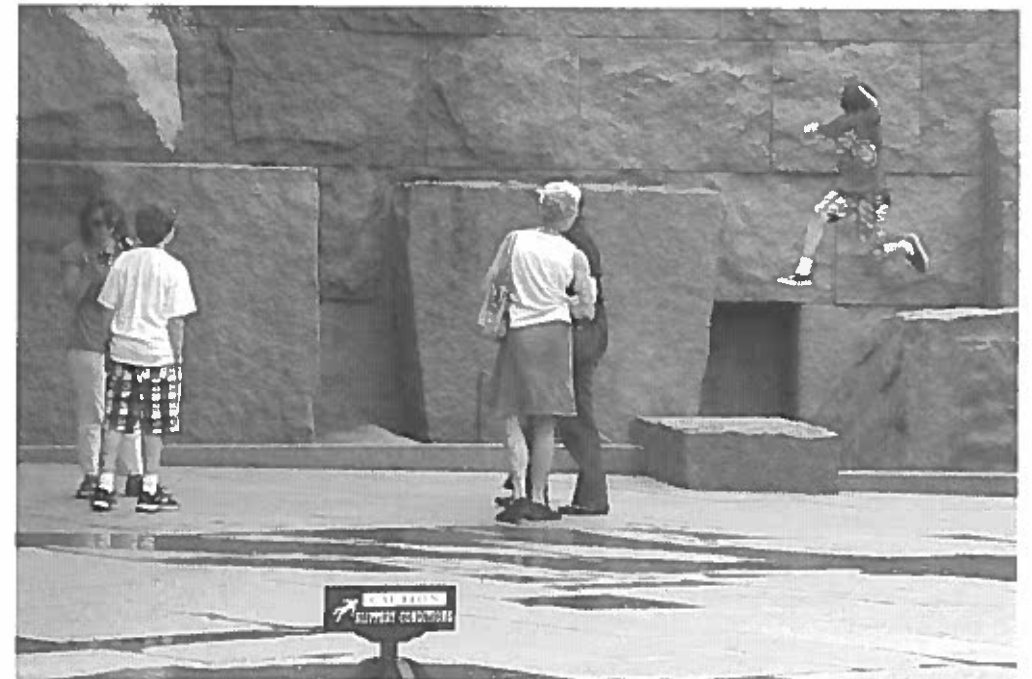
### Acting

Memorial objects also provide physical support to a wide range of more energetic visitor actions. People pretend to push over the MMJE's concrete stelae, and use them as DJ turntables. Two young boys with cowboy hats and toy pistols use the edge of the Diana Memorial Fountain as a hideout from their parents. Visitors interact with the poses of commemorative statues. People explore the material properties of water, try to hold back its flow, splashing friends with it, and taking water out with containers and pouring it onto the ground. Climbing on abstract memorials is quite common. People can easily step up onto the low perimeter edges of the Diana Memorial Fountain and MMJE. Many people then proceed to step across the fountain or over the gaps between the stelae, or stand astride them. Visitors often use the MMJE's stelae as a set of graduated steps, walking across their top surfaces from flush with the ground at the perimeter to a height of over 4 metres in the memorial's center, where they can be photographed or enjoy a wide view or the vertiginous thrill of jumping across the precipitous gaps. Even small children often walk or jump between the stelae. Some visitors engage with greater challenges such as sudden shifts in height, tilted stelae, or traversing longer diagonal gaps. Visitors to the MMJE also try to climb onto its taller stelae by running and leaping up, pulling themselves up with their hands, being pushed or pulled up by a friend, or by wedging their body between the masses of two stelae with their back and feet and then inching their way upwards. Many visitors also test their

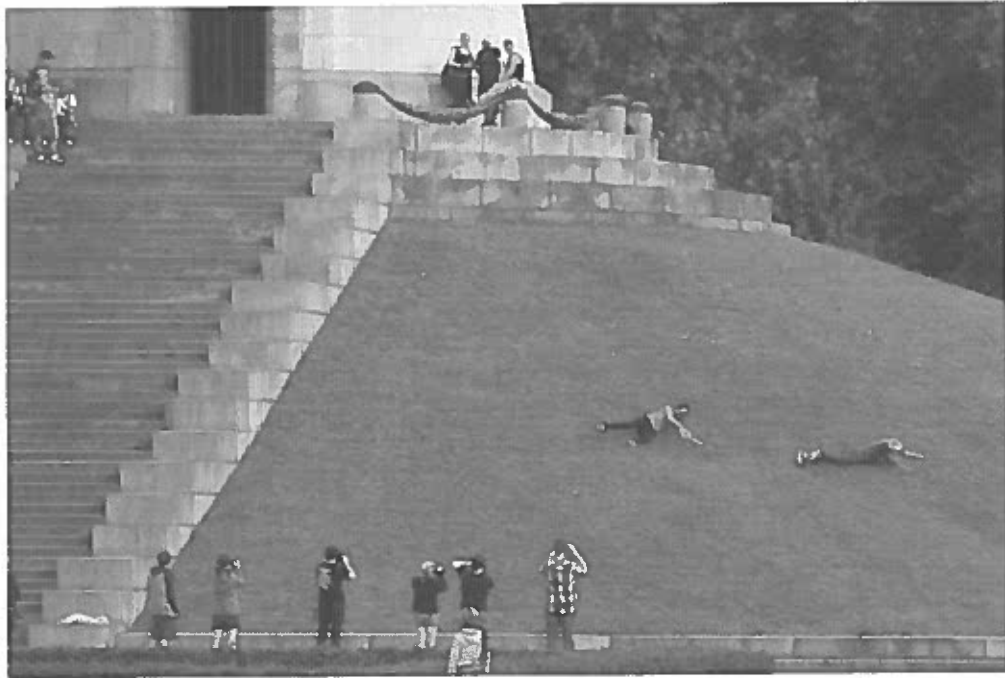
jumping abilities against the varying profile of the stone channel of London's Diana Memorial Fountain, and the watercourse within it, for example, by leaping back and forth in zig-zags up and down the memorial's length, or balancing on the channel's narrow edge, which is in parts only wide enough for one foot.

In one section of Washington's FDR Memorial, teenagers step, jump and climb up onto the staggered stone blocks of artificial 'cliffs' surrounding a large fountain pool (Figure 6.9). For small children, the incline of Canberra's Sandakan Memorial and the low benches at Washington's Pentagon Memorial are also challenging objects for climbing and jumping.

People sometimes slide, roll or run down the inclined surfaces of memorials. Many young visitors to the MMJE accelerate into a run as they move into the memorial along its downward-sloping ground surface, after which they twist and turn through the memorial's tight corners in games of tag. Young children enjoy running down the short, steep, grassy embankment inside the Diana Memorial Fountain. Some visitors to the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin's Treptower Park lie down and roll to the bottom of the very tall, steep, grassy tumulus at the base of its massive central statue (Figure 6.10). Others do the same at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance (Carlisle 2013). Children often slide on their bottoms down the steep, polished stone surface of London's Canada Memorial, when its flowing film of water had been turned off for maintenance (see Figure 8.2). Children even test out sliding down the rough-stone-finished sloping end of the benches at the Pentagon Memorial and the Sandakan Memorial in Canberra, and sliding their bottoms sideways down the roughened edge of the channel of the Diana Memorial Fountain. Visitors also engage with the inclined surfaces of memorials with the aid of wheels. People cycle along the smooth but undulating ground between the



**Figure 6.9** Boys climbing "cliffs" and jumping, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington. Note warning sign  
 Source: Quentin Stevens, 2011.



**Figure 6.10** People lie and roll down the steep, grassy tumulus, Soviet War Memorial, Treptower Park, Berlin  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2012.

MMJE's rows of stelae. They roll on inline skates and scooters down the smooth, curved slopes of the Diana Memorial Fountain's paved paths. Skateboarders and cyclists at Berlin's Soviet War Memorial wind their way back and forth down the long, wide, inclined approach path, which offers many meters of slow momentum for practicing balancing and executing tricks. Cyclists and skateboarders also test the usability of Melbourne's Suffrage Artwork, 'The Great Petition', which has curving folds of concrete that resemble skating 'half-pipes.' Variations in the hardness, friction and width of all these slopes afford differences in comfort, speed and risk. The Bali Memorial in Melbourne is not sloped, but its numerous steel edges and raised ledges have made it extremely popular with large groups of skaters for grinding, jumping and flipping their skateboards (Figure 6.11). The popularity of these very active ways of occupying memorials suggests that the remainder of the pedestrian realm lacks adequate settings where people can enjoy such experiences in safety and tranquility.

People visiting memorials also play with objects on their surfaces. At the Pentagon Memorial, one group of visiting children rolled a baseball up and down the angled end of a commemorative bench. At the MMJE, visitors who brought soccer balls into the site during a World Cup promotion threw or kicked them against the vertical faces of the stelae as they passed along the aisles. At the Diana Memorial Fountain, people place shoes, leaves and even paper boats into the flowing water and follow them in the current, sometimes having races. Small children play with toy vehicles on the channel edges, driving them into the water, scooping up water with tractors, buckets and spades, and pouring it out onto the ground. People also put their hands or feet into the water to 'interact with' it, testing its force, and playing different games with its flow, including trying to hold it back.



**Figure 6.11** Skateboarders grinding, jumping and flipping, Bali Memorial, Melbourne, Melbourne City Council, 2005  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2013.

All these actions demonstrate that touching a memorial can involve doing, and is not limited to passively receiving sensations (Stevens 2006; Paterson 2011). Touch is a highly involved form of interaction with objects, an interaction which accordingly has great impact upon the visitor and upon the setting itself (Rodaway 1994; Latham 1999). People's different ways of touching the water in the Diana Memorial Fountain, for example, reshape its currents and sounds.

Berlin's planned Memorial to Freedom and Unity (see Figure 7.8), commemorating the peaceful civil protests that led to national reunification, is a rather unique case of a memorial whose design is centered around the idea that visitors will be physically active. Indeed, this memorial is designed so that visitors can move it. It has the form of a 50-meter-wide concave semicircular shell. Visitors can enter at the low central point and walk up onto the face of the shell. Designed by a choreographer and a scenographer, the memorial is a giant see-saw that will tilt when a sufficiently large number of people move in a coordinated group from one side of the memorial's surface to the other. The project's title is a German word play, perhaps best translated as "citizens' movement." The prizewinners' statement emphasizes that this memorial "is open to variety of uses: spontaneous, informal, playful or even official;" it is "'occupyable' in the truest sense of the word" (Deutsche Gesellschaft e.V. 2012).

### Visitors Interacting

Contemporary public memorials are spaces of engagement not only because of the varied close encounters visitors have with the commemorative objects, but also because of the encounters that frequently occur between visitors. Being photographed by someone is one such form of interaction. In addition to being photographed standing in front of contemporary memorials, people now often sit on part of a memorial in the foreground, or step up and stand on it. They jump from one part of a memorial to another or pose in other stances on top of them (Figure 6.12). They pose emerging from behind objects, and imitating or adding to figurative scenes depicted in the memorials. Through such actions, visitors demonstrate a range of particular relations of seeing and being seen that are framed by contemporary memorial designs: their fronts and backs, their stages, their entrances and exits, their focal points. Memorials have become theatrical sets for both staged and unexpected social encounters. People also often casually photograph strangers at memorials, meaning that visiting a memorial may not be the private, introspective experience some might be seeking. At major contemporary sites of remembrance, visitors often spend time watching and being watched by hundreds of other people. They also often overhear other visitors and brush up against them. The sights, sounds, smells, and physical closeness of the many other people present in these settings, and their unanticipated actions, offer a range of multi-sensory stimulations.

People appear to find large memorials to be comfortable places to sit and spend time with other people. A large group of young Goths chose the grassy center of the Diana Memorial Fountain as the venue for a birthday party (Plate 6.1), reflecting its physical comfort, pleasant acoustics, pedestrian safety, high quality of design and maintenance, stimulating public atmosphere, and its lack of scheduled events. These qualities are sometimes lacking in contemporary public space generally. People explore a wide variety of social arrangements that are possible on the Diana Memorial Fountain's concrete channel. Friends often sit adjacent, with



**Figure 6.12** Visitors posing for photographs, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2007. Reprinted with permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com), from Q. Stevens, "Visitor Responses at Berlin's Holocaust Memorial: Contrary to Conventions, Expectations and Rules," *Public Art Dialogue* 2(1), 2012.

one extending their legs into the water and the other turned with their legs stretched along the edge of the channel, or turned away from the water and toward other friends who stand on the adjacent path. Friends often sit on opposite sides of the channel with their feet meeting in the water. Visitors often stand on one edge of the channel and photograph companions on the other. At the MMJE, people sit next to each other on low stelae, even sometimes sharing a stela to play a board game. They also often sit and talk face-to-face or at 90 degrees on adjacent stelae (Figure 6.13). The abstract forms of the Diana Memorial Fountain and the MMJE both provide a large number of 'secondary seating' options at a variety of heights and orientations at comfortable distances for conversation (Sommer 1969; Whyte 1980). The Pentagon Memorial has 'benches' but they are mostly too widely spaced for this use; some visitors sit and their companions have to stand. Several large memorials in Washington, including the FDR, Navy, and National Law Enforcement memorials, have extensive seating consciously integrated into their designs, and thus people do sit and pass time in these settings, whether or not they have come to mourn and remember. By contrast, some other major popular memorials, including Washington's VVM and World War II Memorials, provide almost no seating, and so visits and social interactions within these sites are constrained by the time that visitors—often elderly veterans—are willing to stand.

The Diana Memorial Fountain is usually very crowded in warm weather. People often sit in very close proximity to strangers, both next to them and across the low channel; particularly considering they are often in their swimwear. These 'near' social distances (Hall 1966) are rendered less confrontational by the intervening watercourse, and also by the options of sitting facing in opposite



**Figure 6.13** Varied seating orientations, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2006.

directions on the same channel edge. Strangers also appear comfortable sitting back-to-back on the same stela at the MMJE. But the narrow aisles between the stelae (900mm) cause rather intense, multi-sensory encounters between those who sit on stelae and anyone who walks past them, and those who encounter others coming the opposite way along an aisle, who have to squeeze past. Visitors often have very sudden, unexpected close encounters with other people around the corners of stelae, when their trajectories along perpendicular aisles intersect. In one instance, two children playing tag met literally head-on. Social congestion also happens where the Diana Memorial Fountain's entry path crosses a bridge over its fountain. People circumambulate this looped memorial in both directions, on adjoining paths or in the watercourse itself. When doing so, they parade past others sitting on the edge and encounter many others coming the opposite way. Visitors often avoid such encounters by stepping aside or changing direction. Such avoidance is also a form of bodily engagement; it is a major element of how people occupy public memorials.

Two forms of social encounter at the MMJE reflect that some social groups want to gather in public places while also remaining hidden from the wider population. Within the darkened, unpoliced, secluded areas between the memorial's tallest stelae, teenagers hide from their guardians, often slouched against opposing stelae. At night, it is a refuge for young couples and cruising homosexuals. Young people find here a vertiginous escape from the everyday, where they can run, scream, smoke, drink and kiss as they please. Many visitors to busy public memorials like the MMJE and the Diana Memorial Fountain see the other people there as a positive stimulus. They copy the actions of other visitors, or compete against them (Figure 6.14). They chase each other, play hide and seek, or 'follow-the-leader,' leaping across the tops of stelae and jumping zig-zag across the Diana Memorial Fountain's channel. Sometimes people pretend to push friends into the water. People sometimes mirror other visitors' postures, for example, each raising one foot up onto the fountain channel or a stela, or turning when seated to dip a hand into the Diana Memorial Fountain's watercourse.



**Figure 6.14** Copy-cat parallel jumping across stelae, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2006. Reprinted with permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com), from Q. Stevens, "Visitor Responses at Berlin's Holocaust Memorial: Contrary to Conventions, Expectations and Rules," *Public Art Dialogue* 2(1), 2012.

These uses all show visitors focusing their attention and shaping their actions around other visitors, rather than directly on the substance and rhetoric of the memorial itself. Each visitor's experiences of these public memorials—the sights, sounds and tactile perceptions—are in large part defined by the ways other people are behaving around them. These intense, various, continuous social engagements compromise the possibility of the passive, solemn, introspective contemplation often associated with memorials.

## UNDERSTANDING USES

The remainder of this chapter reflects on the preceding observations to explore what it means to 'occupy' a memorial. It looks at how and why memorial settings engage the attention and the bodies of visitors, and what stimulates visitors to the rich diversity of actions described above. Part of the answer is that contemporary memorials in public settings offer an extremely wide range of physical and social stimuli to action. Another part of the answer lies in the especially broad physical and social openness that many memorials present. 'Occupying' is a two-way engagement between a visitor and a space. Visitors give their attention to memorials and act in relation to them, and their actions vary depending on what knowledge, capacities and moods they bring with them. But memorials also engage the various senses and the bodies of visitors, and prompt certain forms of action, even in ways that visitors do not consciously plan, choose or recognize.

### Sensing

People's ways of occupying contemporary memorial settings reveal their engagement with the rich varieties of sensory stimuli that these settings present. Memorials have always had strong multi-sensory impacts on their visitors. This is most obvious with the chilling sense of awe generated by the massive, sublime scale of many traditional monuments (Dovey 1999). But minimalist sculptures, because they lack figural detail, make it easier to notice the numerous other non-representational ways that memorial landscapes capture visitors' attention. It is only in representational terms that these memorial designs are minimal. While the terms 'abstract' and 'minimal' might be thought to imply a diminution of visitors' engagement, the visually simpler forms of some memorials heighten other sensations that also encourage visitors' exploration (Fried 1967). In contrast to memorials that present a composed visual message that can be observed by a detached body at rest, and analyzed until it is understood, contemporary memorial designs often engender continuous, varying, multi-sensory engagements. The following observations on the interactions between sensory stimuli and visitors' actions at memorial sites draw on a combination of visitor observation and direct personal experience.

Visitors spend significant amounts of time looking at memorials and photographing them. This is even true of minimal memorials such as the VVM, the MMJE and the Diana Memorial Fountain, despite their lack of visual representations to 'read.' These designs present complex and perceptually stimulating visual phenomena. People seem particularly fascinated by the repetition and variation in the MMJE's rows of stelae, their sharp contrasts of light and dark and their shifting shadow patterns. Many visitors are attracted by the darkness of the spaces at the center of this memorial. Another strong visual stimulus is the many changes in the course of the flowing water within the Diana Memorial Fountain. At Lisbon's Monument to the Overseas Combatants, many visitors experiment with photographing themselves in the angled overhanging mirrors of the setting's sculptural centerpiece, and have relatively little interest in the surrounding walls that list the dead. One visitor to the MMJE became similarly fascinated with photographing their own shadow, cast in sharp contrast against the flat grey surface. People also spend a lot of time taking photographs of strangers within the MMJE stela field, simply to capture the colors, shapes and contrasts that people form against the gray, flat, repetitive backdrop. The photographs that visitors take here of other people do not often show commemorative acts with any link to the memorial's historical subject. These visual experiences are purely and abstractly aesthetic, separate from any chains of reference to particular people, places, things or ideas.

Visitors to public memorials also listen to them and respond to the distinctive auditory experiences that are framed within these spaces. The sense of interiority at the MMJE is in large part an acoustic impression. Deep within this memorial, external sounds of the city are blocked by the surrounding concrete mass. This quiet zone is filled by the sounds of young people calling out loudly to their unseen friends, yelling or slapping the stelae to test the reverberation of the space, or simply expressing their delight while running around. They explore the soundscape by testing the possibilities of locating or deceiving other people with their calls. At the Diana Memorial Fountain, people listen to the wide range of stimulating sounds created by

variations in the water's flow: bubbling, cascading, splashing and rippling. Their attention also seems drawn to the contrast of its quieter, more tranquil sections. People pay attention to one segment of the stone channel that has been specially crafted with rows of small holes that produce loud popping sounds as water runs over them. At this memorial, too, people actively contribute to the soundscape through the ways they move their hands and feet in the water.

Visitors engage with memorials in varied ways through the sense of touch. At the VVM and the National September 11 Memorial, people run their fingers over the incised lettering of the victims' names and the smoothness of the surfaces in between. At the VVM, this touching is ritualized and recorded through the taking of rubbings on paper with charcoal or crayon. At the MMJE, people walking between the close rows of stelae put their hands out to test their hardness, smoothness and weight (Figure 6.15). Visitors run their hands across the stelae as they pass, tap them rhythmically, feel the sharpness of their edges, and push against them. When the stelae are wet, people skim their hands across the shallow pools on their tops. Visitors to the Diana Memorial Fountain scoop its water in their cupped hands, flick it, and skim their hands across its surface. One person was observed to squat and wash his hands and face in the fountain, and rinse his mouth and spit, as one might on the edge of any rural stream. Visitors put their hands in the fountain's flow to feel its current, as the water varies in shape, speed, pressure and turbulence according to the changes in the depth, width, slope, and surface texture of the channel (Figure 6.16). Water is an abstract medium that cannot easily be made to look like something, but it can engage visitors through their other senses. The FDR Memorial in Washington is deliberately tactile, and richly and didactically so.



**Figure 6.15** A visitor puts her hands out to test the stelae's hardness, smoothness and weight, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
Source: Photomontage Quentin Stevens, 2006.



Figure 6.16 Visitors touching water, Diana Memorial Fountain, London  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2007.

Responding to FDR's own disability, the design includes several walls and poles covered with relief sculptures that depict people, events and activities connected with FDR's presidency, as well as Braille versions of the various captions and quotations. Many of these are rubbed smooth and shiny by frequent contact.

Visitors do not only feel memorials through their hands. They also sense through their bodies when sitting or lying on these abstract memorial forms. They lean their shoulders and backs against the MMJE's stelae. People lie sunbathing on the flat, warm upper surfaces of the MMJE and London's Diana and Canada Memorials. Such close bodily engagements are relatively unlikely with figurative sculptures on pedestals. People's actions are shaped by the memorials' distinctive microclimates. They position themselves in response to variations these memorials offer in terms of temperature and exposure to the sun, breezes and moisture, relative to the ambient conditions. On very hot days, people sit in the deep cool shadows between the MMJE's stelae, and at the Pentagon Memorial, visitors sit on the commemorative benches that are shaded by trees in preference to the very exposed seating at the site's periphery. On summer days, people flock to the Diana Memorial Fountain, bringing swimsuits, towels, and cool drinks, and they sit or lie down in its flowing water (Plate 6.2). Even when the weather is cooler, people often inquisitively dip their hands into the raised fountain. Visitors' touching of memorials is thus often a search for bodily comfort and rest or for sensual stimulation. Touching a memorial is not always an attempt to better understand its meanings.

Visitors also feel memorials constantly through their feet. At the Diana Memorial Fountain, many people remove their shoes and dip their toes in the

water. Even women who wear traditional headscarves often expose their feet here. Many people stand in the shallow water, to feel it flow over their feet, or walk within the water channel, even in winter with their shoes on. Many visitors also walk barefoot along the narrow stone edge of the channel. Grooves have been added here to enhance safety. People also sit on the raised edge of London's Canada Memorial to put their feet in its cool, thin film of water, or stand within it. People engage with memorial sites' topographies through their feet as they walk around them. At the relatively traditional Soviet War Memorial in Berlin's Treptower Park, visitors walk slowly up a very long approach ramp to the wide elevated terrace overlooking the massive main memorial courtyard, and then step slowly down into it. At the VVM, people walk slowly down the inclined entry pathway and back up it. The frequent twists and turns of the pathways in Washington's FDR Memorial and Ottawa's Peacekeeping Monument slow people's movements through the sites and direct their attention to various elements ahead. At Berlin's MMJE, visitors constantly adjust the length, speed and trajectory of their stride as they negotiate the undulating ground surface. These effects are amplified for visitors who walk up onto and across the tops of the stelae field, where there are wide voids to step across and large height variations between stelae. At all these sites, the ground engages visitors' bodies directly, rather than being a neutral backdrop to acts of viewing. By varying the risk, speed and effort of walking, these surface conditions heighten kinaesthesia, the sense of the body's own movement through space. They affect the visitor's sense of balance. Those who walk along on the narrow, inclined edge of the fountain channel of the Diana Memorial Fountain often wobble and have to extend their arms, or hold onto a companion walking on more stable ground. Most of their attention is thus on what their feet have to do, rather than on remembering.

The sense of touch offers a much richer and more intimate range of engagements with memorials than does vision (Latham 1999). Whereas memorial designs focused on imagery and text encourage people to stand back to view them from a distance, touching is physically immediate. Touching also includes a very wide variety of stimuli. People feel the temperature, pressure, closeness, hardness and surface texture of a memorial setting constantly through the skin and muscles of many parts of their bodies. Memorials set low to the ground and close to pedestrian pathways engender an especially wide range of bodily contacts. People explore different ways of occupying these settings according to the new sensations offered by touching parts that have different shapes, materials and textures, and in response to frequent changes in temperature, pressure and sound caused by the sun, water and wind. How a memorial feels changes according to one's own bodily actions. Experiences of touching memorials prompt constant exploration, reconsideration and reaction. People also touch memorials unintentionally, often even unconsciously, and whereas visitors normally think about and interpret what they see and hear, sensations of touch stimulate visitors' bodies and emotions directly, and often affect them subconsciously. These forms of memorial engagement contrast with the idea of memorial as spectacle: something distant, visual, frontal, flat, and unresponsive; only capable of reproducing familiar, conventional meanings, and asking for nothing more than concentrated attention (Debord 1994). Memorials that stimulate touch encourage active rather than passive reception.

### Using

Active touching is one key means by which visitors explore memorials' potentials to stimulate sensory experiences and to facilitate bodily postures and actions. Gibson's (1979) theory of affordances provides a useful framework for understanding how various people perceive such opportunities, and the resultant diversity of ways that they occupy memorial settings. By affordances, Gibson (*ibid.*: 127) means all the physical properties of a setting, understood in terms of what possibilities for action they offer to an animal, "either for good or ill," in relation to that animal's specific needs and capacities. The MMJE and the Diana Memorial Fountain are particularly rich environments in terms of their varying physical proportions and the opportunities these offer for resting the human body (Figure 6.17). The relative scale of these landscapes against the heights of visitors' knees, waists and heads are important because people can come into close contact with these memorial objects and adjust their body position around them. Incremental variations in the heights of such elements within the sites ensure a goodness of fit for various actions of different people. When people sit, lie, or rest cups and bottles on top of the MMJE and the Diana Memorial Fountain, it shows that these abstract forms have a very good, unintended secondary functionality, confirming Gibson's (1979: 127–8) observation that:

The human species in some cultures has the habit of sitting ... if a surface of support with the four properties (nearly horizontal ... nearly flat ... sufficiently extended (relative to the size of the animal) and if its substance is rigid ... [and it] is also knee-high above the ground, it affords sitting on ... It may have various shapes, as long as its functional layout is that of a seat.



**Figure 6.17** Variety of body postures, Diana Memorial Fountain  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2007.

Many contemporary memorials in public settings do not provide much purpose-designed seating, especially considering the advanced age of many of their visitors. But people explore the affordances of memorials to meet their needs, and when they are tired from walking, thinking and taking photographs, they sit wherever they perceive places to sit (Whyte 1980; Gehl 1987). Fortunately, the simple lines and the varying dimensions and sculpture profiles of many minimalist memorials inadvertently provide a great variety of secondary seating options. People sit on memorials even when it is difficult or prohibited, if there is insufficient public seating nearby. They often sit on the plinth of the *Kindertransport* memorial, directly outside London's Liverpool Street Station. This is one of the city's busiest railway terminals, but only two benches have been provided for the waiting public. This historical memorial depicts Jewish children rescued from Nazi Germany who wait standing with their luggage for transportation to foster families throughout Britain. Today's passengers wait sitting next to the sculptural figures. Along two sides of the plinth, raised metal plates listing the names of German cities that the children arrived from seem intended to pre-empt sitting. These make sitting much less likely and less comfortable, but they do not prevent it. At the Pentagon Memorial near Washington, the terrorist attack's victims are represented by 184 'benches', as the site's information brochures note. On a very hot summer day when many tourists and mourners visit the site, quite a few people sit down on these benches, both singly and in groups, especially the elderly. The benches are the right height and, though cantilevered, are very stable. They have flowing pools of water underneath them and small shade trees clustered around them, making them very desirable places to sit. This is even though these 'memorial units,' as the memorial's website terms them, are apparently not for sitting on. The National Park Rangers who manage the site reprimand those who do.

People who sit down on memorials are not necessarily trying to view them better, or even to engage with them more closely. Indeed, sitting on memorials very often means facing away from them, and it is difficult to look at a memorial when you are lying on top of it. Visitors also often cover the low horizontal surfaces of minimalist memorials with papers, drinks, and their bags and clothes. These bodily engagements with memorial settings often preclude viewing a memorial and thinking about what it might represent.

Minimalist memorials with their easy and varied affordances can be contrasted to representational memorials that are typically designed just for looking, where sculptural form gets in the way of secondary functions like sitting. They are also in contrast to public street furnishings, which are often designed according to 'target hardening' principles, specifically to prevent them being used for undesired activities (Clarke 1983; Flusty 1997). The forms of contemporary memorials, as complex but inherently functionless sculptural objects, can support, stimulate and provoke an extremely wide range of actions. Such possibilities reflect Wortley's (2001) criminological analysis of many ways that built environments, rather than just allowing specific undesirable actions to occur, also provide a range of "situationally-generated motivation to the hitherto unmotivated" (Cornish and Clarke 2003: 42). Observations on one minor design detail at the Diana Memorial Fountain illustrate this point. Posted rules request that people do not walk on the concrete edge of its fountain channel. At each of the memorial's three bridges, the channel is sunken below the ground and its concrete edge is flush with the circulation pathway. This appears to encourage people who might not consciously

climb up onto the fountain to turn off the path and continue their walk along the concrete edge. Sometimes the environment's precipitation of such exploratory acts operates below the level of consciousness; people are not deliberately violating behavioral rules (Wortley 2008). As noted above, this is very often the case with the sensations of touching memorials. In other cases, play is a conscious way of engaging with the strong and unusual stimuli that memorial landscapes present to visitors' senses, bodies and emotions.

### Playing

Many of the varied visitor actions that can be observed at memorials are playful, exuberant, and indulgent: running and laughing, climbing, jumping, sliding and dancing, drinking alcohol, taking shirts off to enjoy the sun, kissing and hugging, carrying balloons and playing games (Figure 6.18). Through their play, people temporarily forget their more practical needs and wider social concerns. They skirt around the seriousness and social conventions often associated with commemorative settings and the behavioural rules often posted at them. In some kinds of play, people also engage with other visitors around them (Stevens 2007). Memorials are typically intended by their sponsors and managers to be serious, highly emotional places. So why do people play at memorial sites?

Formal variety is an important factor, and in this context, abstract memorials may be more varied and stimulating to action than figurative sculptures, the forms of which are typically limited to people, horses and weapons. Abstract memorials often provide a great diversity and multiplicity of physical elements for



**Figure 6.18** Playing a card game, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin  
Source: Quentin Stevens, 2006.

engagement and use. People test their own bodily capacities by engaging with a range of physical challenges that memorial settings present: their sheer faces and wide gaps and narrow edges for balancing, their uneven, curving, sloping and slippery surfaces. People practice Parkour moves against or between blank walls and skate along stone and steel edges. Visitors enjoy the kinaesthesia of their bodies' own motion across memorials' unusual, complex topographies of stone, water and grass, either slowly as they walk, or at greater speed as they run or roll on in-line skates, scooters and bicycles.

People also play at memorials in less exuberant ways. They explore the diverse sensory excitations these settings offer—their hardness, texture and temperature, and the sound and feel of moving water—by pressing their bodies close against memorials. Visitors play in different ways in response to the varied width, depth, speed, force and sound of the water in the Diana Memorial Fountain. They move around memorials to explore their sublimely large objects, precipitous heights, disorienting pathways, unstable and slippery surfaces, and dark, cool, cramped interior spaces. Through various postures of sitting and lying on memorial forms, they explore ways of orientating and balancing their own bodies. They develop different games around the MMJE's extensive network of aisles, the varied heights of its stelae, and the varying differentials between these heights. The ways that children run, slide and jump across the benches of the Pentagon Memorial are shaped around the different spacings and orientations of those elements. These differences give people of different interests and capacities varying opportunities to test themselves. These memorials thus present even more varied opportunities for play than they do for sitting and resting. Visitors to these large public memorials do not all follow the same scripted journey, occupy the same spaces or encounter the same objects. They are dispersed throughout the sites, and are looking and moving in different directions and stopping at different points. These individual trajectories mean that people engage with the memorials in many different ways.

Playful use of contemporary memorials is also stimulated by the large, varied publics that gather at them. Opportunities for play are informed and encouraged by informal observation of other visitors' actions. Popular memorials bring a diversity of actors and audiences together. The Diana Memorial Fountain and MMJE are formally neutral backgrounds that provide excellent opportunities for seeing and being seen, which stimulates playful displays, such as striking silly poses together with the memorials, and contests of skill. These landscapes are often composed of a large number of discrete elements. This supports many people playing at the same time, which aids the development of collective forms of play and people imitating each other's engagements with the memorial setting.

In addition to the variety of forms and human action that can be encountered at contemporary memorial sites, a second overarching reason they are often popular sites for play is their great openness to public access and use. Visitors can often move freely within these settings and engage with them very closely. Berlin's MMJE has no boundary fence. The families of the victims commemorated in Melbourne's Bali Memorial intended that its site to be used regularly by local youth. Minimalist sculptural forms in particular are often positioned directly on the ground, within easy reach, and have a very human scale. Abstract memorials are also psychologically more open to exploratory engagement than representational memorials, where recognition of specific images and subject matter tends to fill the

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eyes and minds of visitors and inhibit their behavior. Because visitors to abstract memorials are not preoccupied with trying to comprehend their 'purpose' or 'meaning', they are open to considering and playfully exploring their material conditions.

A further reason these memorials are engaged with in such a wide range of playful, exploratory ways is, ironically, precisely because these public settings, unlike most open spaces and street furniture, have not generally been designed to suit specific functions. Abstract memorials are predominantly conceived in terms of visual aesthetics. They have not been designed to suit particular actions, or to prevent particular uses. Two indicative oversights are the designers Gustafson and Porter not realizing that large numbers of visitors to the Diana Memorial Fountain might put their feet in the fountain and walk on its wet, smooth, sloping surfaces (Bowman 2009), and Eisenman's (2005) admission that he did not imagine the incrementally-rising stelae of the MMJE might be used as steps. Because the designers of memorials often do not anticipate that visitors might play around them, they do not try to inhibit such uses. These settings thus tend to retain a very broad usefulness, and visitors' playful, creative behaviours explore the diversity of opportunities that these landscapes open up.

Because playful actions explore opportunities, playful uses of contemporary memorials are illustrative of the wide range of ways that people have close sensory and bodily engagement with these spaces and forms. In most cases, these stimuli and actions have little or no connection to the subjects being commemorated. Playing in these sites is convenient and interesting, but not relevant to their intended purpose, and to some who observe these actions, not appropriate. These experiences are, rather, often distractions from reflection upon the commemorative subjects. Engagement with contemporary memorial landscapes does not necessarily encourage engagement with the past.

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