**Remembering Imagination**

The place of architecture in memory is at once static and fluid. We live with the physical expression of historical, and therefore random choices that have produced the aspirations or needs of a particular time. The buildings around us exist in our daily memory as an ineluctable, unchallenged, existential fact. My work aims to challenge the parameters of history and memory, to recall the processes of imagination in seeking to contrast present realities with the possibility of others that exist "in posse".

When I first visited Gavle I was struck by how recent the architecture seemed for a city that is very old. I later learned that, although the city has never been bombed, a fire devastated its centre in 1869. On my second visit, while investigating the civic archives, I discovered drawings of the buildings destroyed by fire at that time. I decided to search for other buildings that do not exist today but had been imagined on drawings and were never built or buildings that existed and had been destroyed for different reasons. These drawings represent a lost architecture as well as the possibility of an alternative architectural reality. Within the archives there lives another city, the presence of which can shed light on the city's present and future, providing a reflection of that which is as well as another perspective, another reality, another imaginary civic and architectural vision.
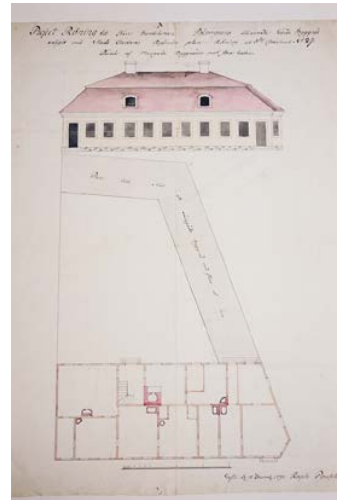
Taking up various forms of official histories, my work discloses the normalised expectations of written remembrances, of historiography. Using representations of the past, including documentary texts and images, which aid remembering, my work investigates memory and its construction. It intentionally uses representations of the past without citations, without any hint of source or origin, as if that which is represented could exist synchronically, at the same time, and ahistorically, outside of time, as in a hypersystem with interchangeable links, all and always in the present, just as history is all and always absent in the present.
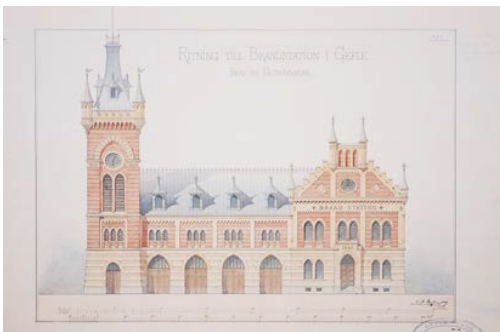
What is the portrait of a city? Is it the city today or is it both what it is today and what it could have been. Seeking to shed the lens of history in order to closely examine particular historical moments defined by a compulsive longing for categorical purity, my work tends to flatten and compress time as it examines the past in the context of the present and the future. My goal is the production of new language, new names for categories and disciplines within social histories. In this instance I propose an eclosion of the architectural memory of Gavle in apposition with its architectural history.

I am drawn to Sweden because it is a country untouched by war. The imperatives of war that normally affect architecture and war's inevitable aftermath of destroyed cityscapes, both are absent here. Instead of armed conflict, civic decision-making in response to other kinds of events has determined the current face of Gavle. A spectrum of interests and experiences, and chance and accident as well, all unavoidably inflected civic planning processes. A populace's understanding of reality governs its will to construct or destroy its built environment. Drawing from the Gavle archives, locating and re-presenting documentation of buildings that were proposed but never built or, alternately, that were built but later destroyed, *Remembering Imagination* will reveal a parallel realm of possibility -- a possible city, an imaginary architectural vision comprised of actual and imagined buildings.

This project for Gavle, like previous works in Dublin, Stockholm and Buchenwald, once again invokes fugitive stories that exist fleetingly between the actual and the fictional, between the imagined and the experienced. It responds to the dynamics of history. It reflects the relationships between places and peoples, between conscious decisions and the semblance of chance. It attempts to work in two modes and in two directions at once. In one mode it questions certain types of historiography, and in the other it pushes the boundaries of both virtuality and reality, reaching for new possibilities. I intend to create a model of the city including buildings that were proposed for construction and never built, or that were destroyed by human decision, natural disaster or accident. The proposed project will juxtapose the unaccountability of history and the limitlessness of possibility. Extracted from history -- the sum of chance, accident and aesthetic, moral and civic decision-making -- taken directly from the materials of an imagined reality preserved within the city's archives, a complementary reality is brought forth. The virtual becomes real and the real assumes other dimensions enhanced by imagined memories.

The architecture of a place can determine our response to it. My aim here is to introduce potential alternatives and parallel realities in contrast to the actuality of the present. Taking the proposed or actual locations of historical buildings documented in the archives, and representing them in model form, in the context of the city at the time of their conception or in their original locations before their destruction, the proposed model will superimpose the city's imagined and previously actualised past on its existing features. The missing buildings from the real city are the memory of the local people's desire, creativity and imagination. This is when desire becomes memory. There are no portraits made of cities at times of change, like family pictures, so there is no inclusion of them as valuable memories. As in former works, I am exploiting architecture's emotional impact and its ability to shape and colour our understanding of reality. My objectives are to locate, identify and reveal the possibilities for social and architectural complementarities.

Like my project Daedalus for Dublin's Northern Inner City, for example, the proposed representation of Gavle will (re)constitute an urban location. In the Daedalus project, photographs of local building fronts are projected onto other architectural facades within the neighbourhood. Both displacement and discovery are effected. Additionally, an overlay of images from the past and the present constructs a visual text, a palimpsest of and about place, which invites anticipatory memories that can enhance one's sense of belonging. Just as Joyce has his protagonists, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Daedalus, travel the streets of Dublin so that he himself, while living abroad, might remember his hometown and be re-familiarised with it, the Daedal(us) project in Dublin similarly invites its spectators to wander the streets of the inner city core to (re)familiarise themselves with it.
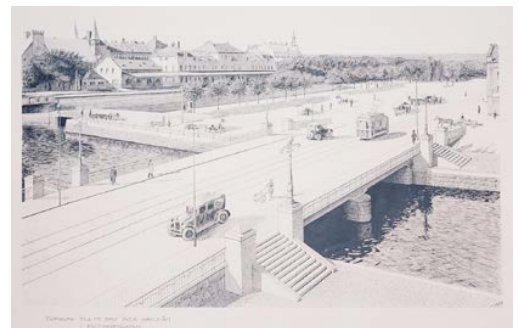
Both the meaning and the creative processes of the Daedalus project rely on the active participation of individuals within the Northern Inner City community. It depends on negotiations with the householders who will host the project's slide projectors, those who will host the projected images, and those who will be agreeable to having themselves or their homes or business premises photographed. It offers additional engaging opportunities for locals and visitors to (re)consider familiar neighbourhood sites, reclaim

them, and restore their value. The Gavle project will similarly involve engagement and collaboration with local inhabitants.

As wood is the prime material of the region, I will work with a school of design and wood-working, inviting the school's students to select buildings for inclusion, involving them in considering the gap between the world they inhabit and the possibilities previously excluded from it. In *Remembering Imagination*, the possible city of

Gavle that we will construct will include examples of buildings and proposed buildings lost in time. Among the city's former edifices, the Murenska Badhuset (swimming pool) was displaced by the current police station and parts of the city that were destroyed by fire. And, among the archived unrealised projects different proposals imagine a civic concert hall. There are three different proposals for a space that remains empty today. Skyscrapers are imagined for various locations. And there are plans for a bridge and a tunnel linking the city's two sides. My vision for where this project would ideally be set is within a building, suspended from the ceiling and requiring access by a set of mobile stairs that allow for a surprising point of view.
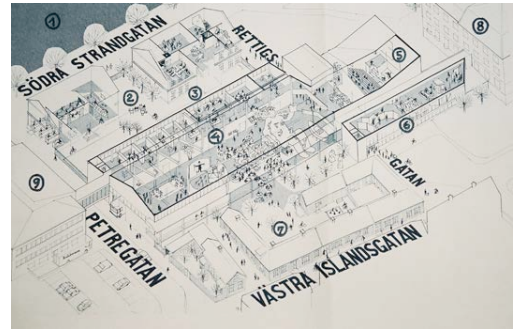
The project invites us to speculate upon what a city could have been, and might yet be, while reviewing what the architectural memory already is. The randomness of human decision-making fixes the appearance of a place with architectural authority, excluding all other possibilities. Giving a three-dimensional reality to the flat, archived drawings and thereby offering a contrast to the flat reality of the existing city helps to fill the gaps between what has been dreamed and what now exists. In exploring Gavle I felt a necessity to give a concrete form to the possible and the lost, to make it a potential being in the ineluctable face of the now.
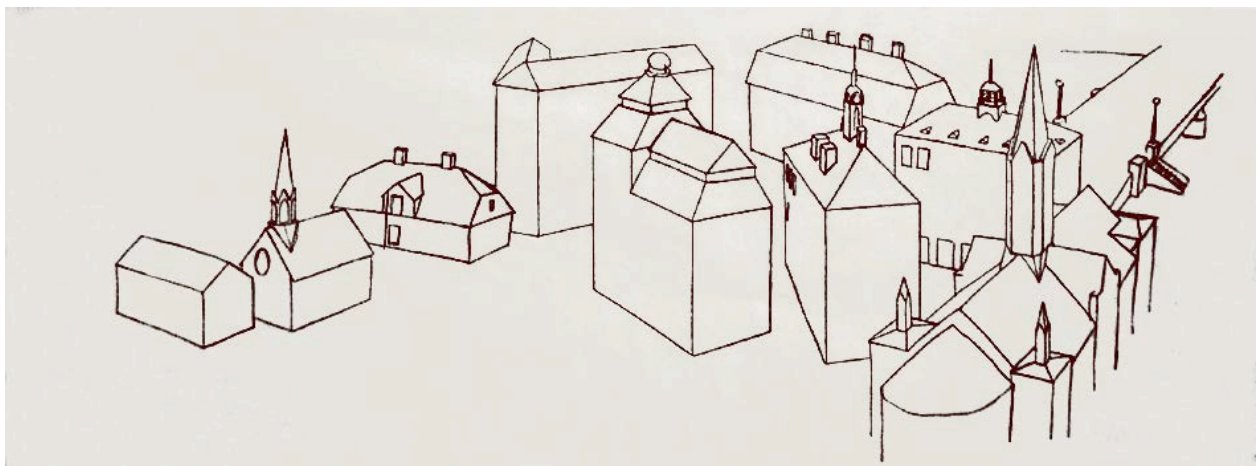
Esther Shalev-Gerz, Paris 2003

Approaching public space

For 20 years my work has focused on interventions and projects in public space, taking the form of collaboration and exchange with the audience.

In these commemorative monuments, installations, video and photographic works, questions about History are posed, and its relationship with collective memory is explored and investigated. Ours is a society that more often refuses the status quo in favour of changing conditions. State heroic and commemorative public monuments as we have known them are therefore inappropriate, as they no longer respond suitably to the hopes and aspirations of a society more often oriented towards change and process. Reflective thought on such social processes can lead to the creation of an actual space and places where our thoughts, our emotions, our approaches toward historical data can be enhanced and encouraged. Such sites can stimulate discussion of and involvement considerations of the past, using it as a tool for considering the present. Such articulation of remembering and forgetting is conducted in relation to two distinct poles: on the one hand, collective or public knowledge, i.e., everything stemming from public education, communication and information, such as the media, and, on the other hand, the personal relationship that we maintain with our past experiences and especially with our own present; however, these opposite poles combine to form a perpetual movement, a state of constant imbalance.

In my works in the public realm, a space is constructed for memories activated by participation, that is to say, the moment when the supposed spectator becomes a participant by writing his name, using his voice or sending in his photo. Thanks to the traces left during these acts, these participants keep the memory of their own participation in the work's procedure, which also bears witness to their responsibility to their own times.

For example, in 1986, Jochen Gerz and I installed a lead-covered column in a German Town Square and invited passers-by to sign their name on its surface. Next to it a panel conveyed the following text, translated in seven languages (French, English, German, Russian, Turkish, Arabic and Hebrew):

" *We invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 meter high lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty.*
In the long run, it is only we ourselves who can stand up against injustice."

With the **Hamburg/Harburg Monument against Fascism** we simultaneously evoked the past and the present, installing " forgetting " in a place meant for "remembering" and thus establishing, in the memory of each participant, through the act of public participation, a fleeting, subjective and fragmented memory.

As the accessible part of the column was covered with signatures, it was lowered little by little into the ground, making a new space available for inscriptions. There were seven lowering in all and the column vanished from sight completely in 1993. Now, only a plaque remains on the ground. What people engraved on the metal – whether signature, tribute, insult, graffiti - was also printed in their own memory. During the public existence of the column above the surface, history also altered the situation in Germany: the fall of the Berlin Wall, reunification and the resurgence of neo-nazis, had

an effect on political awareness which transformed people's relationship and responses to the column. As a foreign object, perceived by some as an almost aggressive element, the status of the monument changed, becoming a kind of public forum.

The notoriety of the Harburg monument in the 1990s led several German towns to express their desire to erect memorials that would likewise evoke Nazism and also bear the names of their lost Jewish inhabitants. My reaction to these requests was to propose monuments that displayed the names of Nazism's victims and of the executioners too, because compassion for the victims tends to rely on the comfort provided by historical distance. Humanising and personalising only those who suffered from a 0purposeful, wilful destruction would be to exterminate them more efficiently. The day a monument bearing the names of both the executed and the executioners is erected will mark a radical change in political and moral attitudes. Only then will we have taken responsibility for the society we live in.

In each of my projects, as in the Monument against Fascism, the production actualisation process relies on disturbing the conventional relationship between the producer and spectator, on the utterance of words, and on a memory constructed and transformed through participation. My approach invites an enactment of agency, creating a memory, a remembrance (the "I was there") signifying the commitment of people to the(ir) world.

In **The Walkway of the Jews** (Judengang), a recent project begun in 1997 that took place in Prenzlauer Berg (in what was formerly East Berlin) I deal with the subject of becoming an owner of land/ property with the location's history, and the inclusion of the process of democracy in the creative act.
The walkway in question is adjacent to one of Berlin's old Jewish cemeteries, which was founded and filled to its limit in the 19th century. Today, the passage -about 400 meters long and 7 meters in width - is located between the outside wall of the cemetery, formed by the back of the tombs, and the back-yards of the residential buildings that stand along Kollwitzstrasse. The local histories tell us that in former times Jewish people were not allowed access to the cemetery through the main entrance located in Schönhauser Allee. In order to transport their dead to the cemetery, they were obliged to pass through the Judengang *(Walkway of the Jews)*. Eventually the inhabitants annexed the walkway making it part of their back yards, although it is the property of Berlin's Jewish community.

I treated this walkway as a place where history is present and where myths have been created. I met, in a span of two years, the inhabitants and, in front of a video camera, asked them to make suggestions about how to deal with the possible transformation of this site, possible activities there, and the subject of memory in this walkway today. Based on these sessions, I produced a 95 minutes video in which 53 inhabitants express their feelings about and ideas for projects concerning the *Walkway of the Jews* located in their immediate neighbourhood. From the video I digitally extracted 43 *" double portraits "* and also created a silent film showing the walkway and how it changes throughout the different seasons. During the exhibition of these project components at the local museum, from December 2000 to February 2001, the two video projections, the *"double portraits"*, and a big table with an enlarged map of the passage were

displayed. The purpose of this table and map was to allow the continuation of the project's process during the exhibition, where workshops were held to collect further proposals from the inhabitants and to

elaborate them, while simultaneously a billboard invited visitors to submit their ideas. Currently a document / model incorporating all the propositions is being compiled, which will be the basis for a proposal to renovate the walkway. In collaboration with the inhabitants of the site and the city of Berlin, this project will transform the walkway that links the participants' backyards.

WHITE-OUT: Between Telling and Listening is a project I created for the Museum of History in Stockholm. This work expresses my desire to know how two peoples, Sámi and Swedish, sharing one land can inspire each other.
A text component of the project that draws from numerous sources: from historical, archival, fictional and travel literatures, and from popular newspapers and magazines, from both Sámi and Swedish sources. It suggests the possibility of an unending discussion, a continual discourse, an infinite circle of telling and listening.

The project's portrait subject is encountered in two projected loops involving two locations, which represent a duality that she herself embodies. Asa Simma is both a Sámi and a Swede. Filmed in Asa Simma's apartment in Stockholm, one loop documents her reaction to the project's text component, which has been presented for her response. In the other loop, filmed in her place of origin in the far north of Sweden, in Lapland, she listens to what she had said earlier in Stockholm in response to the text. In the installation at the Museum of History in Stockholm, the two video loops(40 min.)are presented as facing projections, showing Asa Simma talking on one side, and listening to herself on the other. The text compilation to which she responds is presented on a nearby wall as well seven digitally altered photographs depicting the collections of the Museum itself.