

Terrifying Pleasures: In Quest of an Affirmative Approach to “Dark” Installation Art¹

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“Something in the world forces us to think. This something is not an object of recognition, but a fundamental *encounter*.”

(Deleuze 2011, 176)

Introduction and Context

Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s work on art and aesthetics, and situated within a new materialist framework, this essay offers a philosophical inquiry of “dark attractions”, which aims at divorcing them, at least to a certain extent, from their typically negative valance. It focuses, however, on a very specific kind of “dark” artefacts, and this specificity has to be fully acknowledged here. My intention is to look at examples of installation art located in public museums referring to the Shoah. As such, these artefacts have to be considered both as belonging to the category of “dark attractions” and as referring to “difficult heritage”. I will specifically look at three installations: *Shalekhet* (by Menashe Kadishman 2001), *The Garden of Exile* (by Daniel Libeskind 2001) and the *Children’s Memorial* (by Moshe Safdie 1987), focusing on how their memorial character emerges out of the aesthetic encounter rather than remaining fixed or encoded in the artistic object. My approach draws on concepts and theories developed within different disciplines; obviously, it is not possible to do justice to all of them within such a limited space. Scholarly literature on “dark tourism”, “representation”, “affect” and “new materialism” is vast and diverse, and cannot be fully referenced here (whence the rather digressive format of this essay). My objectives are more limited and modest. I want to point out that if we focus on *encounter* rather than approaching “dark attractions” within the exclusively representational

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framework, we can open the concept of “dark tourism” to its more affirmative renditions.

In this context I should offer a brief comment on what affirmative critique actually is. Massumi describes these methods as techniques by which an author adds or invents, rather than as means for critiquing others. As he writes, “[i]t is simply that when you are busy critiquing you are less busy augmenting” (2002, 13). And he adds, “There are times when debunking is necessary ... Foster or debunk ... it is basically a question of timing and proportion. Nothing to do with morals or moralizing. Just pragmatic” (2002, 13). So, although the traditional role of critique continues to be important, it is nonetheless necessary to acknowledge new approaches that bypass critique, and to explore the fruitfulness of engaging the indeterminacies that come with making connections in research. Affirmation entails creativity, but it is also about the sharpening of the critique as well as staying attentive to details. Such is my strategy here. Importantly, I do not claim that the argumentation offered within this essay will necessarily be applicable, or even relevant, for all “dark sites”, yet, I believe, it might shed a different light on how some of them operate, or absorb and transform us at bodily-intellectual level. This approach focuses on the “material-semiotic” (Haraway 1988) character of the *encounter* with “dark memorials” and draws attention to the vibrant processes of production, or emergence, connected to the aesthetic/affective intensity, which is born out of this assemblage. Consequently, I think about “dark” installation art in terms of *becoming* rather than *being*, which is a logic grounded in a new materialist philosophy.

In what follows, after offering a short overview of approaches to “dark tourism” as well as briefly discussing an inventory of “dark tourists” motivations, I will advance a perspective that conceives of “dark memorials” in primarily aesthetic terms. For this, I will look into the non-representational understanding of art (inspired by works of Deleuze and Guattari), while situating these arguments within the new materialist framework. I will then proceed by claiming that whilst referring to terror/atrocity and stimulating rather disturbing emotions, some of the “dark installations” also offer positive aesthetic feelings. This might foster a novel approach to the experiences and motivations of “dark tourism” and, consequently, position the phenomenon within a different (that is, positive) conceptual framework. Brief case studies focusing on the operation of the three installations will serve as illustrations of this perspective.

Approaching “Dark Tourism”

Although my investigations centre on a very specific form of “dark attraction”, I need to locate my argumentation within a broader context of what counts as “dark tourism”. The term has been originally coined by Lennon and Foley (1996, 1999, 2000) and refers to the act of travel to “sites associated with death, disaster, and depravity and sites of death, disaster, and depravity” (Miles 2002, 1175). “Dark tourism” is often classified as not only

relatively recent, but also as one of the most important types of contemporary tourist activity (Timothy and Boyd 2006, 2). As such, it has become an important theme of academic inquiries encompassing perspectives originating from such disciplines as anthropology, history, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, and marketing or tourist studies. There have been numerous attempts made to draw a precise taxonomy of “dark tourism” phenomenon. It seems that these efforts are guided by an implicit hope for a more thorough understanding of motivations for erecting such sites, grasping patterns of travelling to these places, as well as comprehending experiences of the sightseers. Importantly, the term “dark tourism” is used to embrace a whole diversity of tourist destinations, ranging from entertainment theme parks through sites of catastrophes and natural disasters, sites of famous people’s deaths, cemeteries and memorials, “dark” exhibitions and “dark” installations, to camps of extermination and mass death.

Broadly, two lines of categorizing “dark tourism” can be identified: where one fosters a supply-oriented approach,² another focuses on the demand for “dark experiences”. Obviously, the latter seems more relevant in the context of the issues this essay tackles. In terms of demand, “dark tourism” is primarily considered a behavioural phenomenon. Accordingly, Seaton (1996) identifies a “continuum of intensity” of travellers’ motivations: from the “darkest” to the “lightest”. Dann (1994) perceives visitors’ urges to travel as entangled with the specific characteristics of “dark attractions” and, as such, premeditated or artificially stimulated. Rojek lists a sense of “survival in the face of violent disruptions of collective life routines” (1997, 61) as an important motivation for dark travellers. Seaton and Lennon (2004) point to *Schadenfreude* as a possible reason for touring “dark sites”. Education, interest in history, and a fascination with abnormal are considered by Preece and Price (2005) the three principal motives for dark travellers. Some psychological approaches assume that the search for a moral framework, which could (positively) impact people’s everyday life is what drags travellers to “dark attractions” (Stone 2009). Other scholars point to the need to realize and understand mortality (Uzzell 1998) or confront and tame the inevitability of death (Stone and Sharpley 2008). The list of possible incentives might also include compassion or narcissism (West 2004) as well as therapeutic reasons (Davies 1996). This catalogue, however, does not exhaust the heterogeneity of tourist motivations to visit and experience “dark sites”.

Since there is still a sort of confusion about what counts as “dark attraction”, some critics point to the need of approaching the visitors’ possible urges in the context of heritage tourism, especially taking into consideration the fact that the conceptual location of sites connected to “difficult heritage” (Macdonald 2006)³ within the broader definition of “dark tourism” seems to

² For exemplary classifications of the supply of “dark attractions”, see for instance Dann (1994), Miles (2002), Stone (2006), Sharpley (2005, 2009) or Lennon and Foley (2010).

³ The concept of “difficult heritage tourism”, understood in terms of “a heritage that the majority of the population would prefer not to have” (Macdonald 2006, 9), refers

be deeply problematic (Biran et al. 2011, 825). Logically, in reference to genocide tourism, a distinction is often introduced between those visitors who have some kind of connection with the commemorated events (that is, survivors and their families, relatives of the victims, or those who share the heritage of those exterminated) and those without any specific connection. Whereas the first type of travellers engage in a sort of pilgrimage, the second type of tourists visit these sites for educational reasons, out of curiosity, or because they define such travels in terms of social or moral obligation (Beech 2000; see also Poria et al. 2003, Poria et al. 2006). Pollock, in reference to Holocaust tourism, suggests that for pilgrims the place is a memorial, a site to mourn and to deal with the past. Conversely for tourists, the same place is *merely* a “sight” or an attraction, “a packaged, planned, itinerized experience, preshaped by the new cannons of the museum educators and heritage industry” (2003, 177). In sum, researchers tend to differentiate between those who travel because they feel a specific moral obligation to do so and those who travel for widely understood leisure. In terms of visitors’ experiences of these places, while the former’s are seen as deep and revealing, the latter’s are considered superficial and inauthentic. Interestingly, all types of visits to “dark attractions” are defined in terms of tourist activities (that is, performed in leisure time), regardless of their diverse motivations.

Certainly, there are numerous controversies around the adjective “dark” in “dark tourism”. Some scholars point to the negative valence of the term, as connoting experiences of a disturbing, weird or perverse nature (e.g. Bowman and Pezzullo 2010). This, in combination with the focus on the inauthentic, or fabricated, character of both some of these sites and visitors’ experiences, contributes to “dark tourism” being approached through a negative framework. This is connected to the representational logic which relies on the intellectual recognition of the already known (here, of suffering or pain, etc.). Accordingly, “dark attractions” are conceived in terms of a *mere* representation, or imitation of the original to which they refer, hence they offer *solely* manufactured (rather than authentic) experiences. As Bolt clarifies, representation is a concept and practice that always signals an absence or a gap—something represented is not here and not now (2004, 171); representation denotes *non*-presence. Logically, if we approach “dark tourism” through an exclusively representational framework, it will remain inevitably locked within the logic of negativism.

to commemoration sites that appeared in the aftermath of slavery, Nazism, totalitarian regimes, genocide, terrorism, extreme poverty, etc. This obviously includes what is usually called “genocide tourism”, constituting a meaningful niche of “dark tourism”, of which Holocaust tourism is seen as an important subcategory.

Digression 1: Representation

The reliance of the prevailing philosophical systems on the sense of vision has been successfully grasped in Sloterdijk's statement: "The eyes are the organic prototype of philosophy. Their enigma is that they not only can see, but also are able to see themselves seeing. This gives them a prominence among the body's cognitive organs. A good part of philosophical thinking is actually only eye reflex, eye dialectic, seeing-oneself-see" (quoted in Jay 1994, 21). An eye has become the centre of perception, a metaphor for the self and knowledge (symbolically standing for logos, god, wisdom, as well as different correlations thereof). This has contributed to the separation and hierarchization of the senses, with vision and hearing as the two most respected and reliable ones, and smell, taste and touch as the least privileged. The more "bodily" the sense, the lower position it occupies in the hierarchy. This is also due to the more general philosophical and religious fundamentals of Western culture, resting on the dualistic system of thinking, and giving special status to the mind, or the soul, at the expense of the *mere* body, or flesh. This hierarchical ordering of the senses has logically translated into the bias in cognition. The latter relies on vision, preferably one, which is intersubjective, decontextualized and executed from the omniscient distanced position. As a result, "Western culture has been dominated by an ocularcentric paradigm, a vision-generated, vision-centred interpretation of knowledge, truth, and reality" (Levin 1993, 2), which produced specific ontological, epistemological and ethical positions.

Consequently, visual and scientific cultures remain inextricably intertwined with representation, which is believed to effectively bridge the ontological gap between the object and its appearance (or copy), and in so doing produce and adequately communicate meaning. Implicit in this is the presumption that it is the underlying subject's consciousness that effectuates images from or of things, that human perception is a natural capacity and as such immaculate. The subject works as mediation for any experience whatsoever and in perceiving the world it represents it to herself/himself. Everyday visual experience boils down to an operation of the conjunction of the passage of divergent images into recognizable sequences. Vision, nevertheless, is not innocent. It is rather a structure of power where the active subject (of seeing/knowledge) is juxtaposed against the passive object of contemplation; the latter is "objectified" (that is, turned into an inert field of control, a "mere matter" deprived of any agency) by the former and the distance between the two is seen as a *sine qua non* for the production of "objective" knowledge. This unrestricted quest for visual control (through representation) has translated, especially in academic contexts, into such ordering patterns as categorization, classification and hierarchization. These strategies allow for exercising intellectual jurisdiction over the object(s) of knowledge (that is, *the matter*), to organize the field(s) and, eventually, to put the findings of academic inquiry into practice.

In the context of “dark tourism” the purely representational approach translates into the demand for recognition of “the original” traumas (and meanings connected therewith) through the process of decoding of their more figurative representations. On the epistemological level this approach assumes that the interaction with a “dark attraction” is a solely intellectual activity. Such a perspective is totally locked within the dualistic logic grounded in the above-described hierarchical oppositions. Consequently, it does not allow for more positive rendition of the “dark” tourist events.

What I want to point to in this essay is that a more experience-oriented perspective, focusing on the body and how it interacts with the space (that is, how it affects the space and is affected by it, or how the space and the body emerge in the encounter) might facilitate approaching “dark attractions” in a more affirmative manner. In this context, we need to remember that visitors encounter sites and events also at an immediately bodily level (Edensor 2001, Bærenholdt et al. 2004, Crouch 2005), which means that this encounter actually happens on the material plane—a material (or a body) encounters other material (or another body) with which it forms a creative and aesthetic assemblage. The adjective “aesthetic” is, nevertheless, employed here in its original meaning denoting “perceptible to the senses” or “sentient”. Certainly, in such an account, the sensory apparatus of the body has to be conceived as an active agent in this assemblage—generating and being generated in the relation. This is especially the case in relation to “dark” installation art whose logic of functioning is often one of encounter. In order to advance this argument, however, I first need to offer an introduction to the non-representational theory of art.

Material-Semiotic Relationalities: Installation Art as *Encounter*

For Deleuze and Guattari, art should be understood as a creation of impersonal affects and percepts rather than as purely representational activity. It is therefore about an assemblage which introduces a singular state (that is, affect) independent of the participating bodies. Art is about immediacy, or an aesthetic encounter, “a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons ... endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an *affect* ... Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of cocreation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 173). Colebrook explains this approach with the following words: “[A]rt is not about knowledge, conveying ‘meanings’ or providing information. Art is not just an ornament or style used to make data more palatable or consumable” (2007, 24). As she continues, “Art may well have meanings or messages but what makes it *art* is not its content but its *affect*, a sensible force or style through which it produces content” (2007, 24). So under-

stood, the function of art is not to reflect, represent or (re)produce the world, but it rather works to evoke *affect* (not as opposed to thought, but as a set of means by which understanding is generated). Accordingly, art operates through sensations emerging in the encounter of bodies. For Deleuze, “[w]hat is encountered ... may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition” (2011, 176). Importantly, as Deleuze clarifies, “[a] body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind, or idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity” (1988, 127). All bodies have some materialities as well as capabilities to enter into relations with others. Out of these relations something new and with entirely new qualities emerges. This “newness”, however, is not the final product; again, it evinces potentials for new transformations, or the constant *becoming-other*.

Digression 2: Affect

In recent years the concept of “affect” has acquired currency across cultural studies and social sciences. Nevertheless, there is no agreement within these broad fields on what affect actually is, how it should be theorized, or how it can be applied, or operationalized, as an analytical category in empirical investigations. There exist major differences between prevailing paradigms of thinking affect. The formulation on which I draw here (inspired by the works of Deleuze and Guattari, and further elaborated by Massumi)—defining affect simply as an ability of the body to affect and be affected—should not be confused with affect’s psychological renditions, where it stands for subjectively experienced feeling or observable emotion, that is, its biological portion (see Tomkins 1962, 1963).⁴ As Leys explains, what is called the Basic Emotions paradigm assumes that “affective processes occur independently of intention and meaning” (2011, 437). Basic emotions (that is, affects according to this approach) are “rapid, phylogenetically old, automatic responses of the organism that have evolved for survival purposes and lack the cognitive characteristics of the higher-order mental processes” (Leys 2011, 437). Although affects combine with the cognitive processing of the brain, they are essentially separate; they are non-intentional, bodily reactions, and—crucially—there is a gap between the causes of affect and human interpretation of these causes (Leys 2011, 437). Differently, Massumi (2002), and other scholars subscribing to the same approach, emphasizes the *analytical* distinction between affect and emotion, defining the former as, in Leys’ words, “a non-signifying, nonconscious ‘intensity’ disconnected from the subjective, signifying, functional-meaning axis to which the more familiar categories of emotion belong” (2011, 441). As Leys notices, what binds the

⁴ Excellent critical reviews of contemporary affect theories and their usefulness for social sciences have recently been offered by Leys (2011) and Wetherell (2012).

Deleuze-inspired affect theorists with those representing the Basic Emotions paradigm is “their *shared anti-intentionalism*” as well as a “belief that affect is independent of signification and meaning” (2011, 443). This for Leys means that, differences notwithstanding, there is in fact a deep coherence between the views of the two groups as they both assume that “affect is a matter of autonomic responses that are held to occur below the threshold of consciousness and cognition and to be rooted in the body” (2011, 443). As Leys further explains, although differently from Basic Emotions paradigm scholars but to the same end, Massumi is committed to the idea that “there is a disjunction or gap between the subject’s affective processes and his or her cognition or knowledge of the objects that caused them” (2011, 450). As she concludes, “The result is that the body not only ‘senses’ and performs a kind of ‘thinking’ below the threshold of conscious recognition and meaning but ... because of the *speed* with which the autonomic, affective processes are said to occur, it does all this before mind has time to intervene” (2011, 450). Like Wetherell (2013), Leys thus points to the fact that according to these theories, affect and cognition separate chronologically, with affect first. Although respectful towards both Leys’ (2011) and Wetherell’s (2013) brilliant overviews, I disagree with their elaboration of Massumi’s claims.⁵

Affect, for Massumi (2002), is always *in excess* of conscious states of perception. It rather points to a non-conscious immediate visceral perception that constitutes the necessary condition of possibility for conscious perception. Consequently, it constitutes the field of emergence for intentional processing. Intensity, in that sense, eludes theories of signification. As Massumi writes, “visceral sensibility immediately registers excitations gathered by the five ‘exteroceptive’ senses even before they are fully processed by the brain” (2002, 60). Thus, representational processing (that is, “recognition” of affects in terms of emotions) needs to be seen as an ontologically (yet not chronologically!) secondary procedure, where thought is animated by bodily perceptions. Any perceptual event is, for Massumi, an assemblage of both, the affective and the emotional in their different (sometimes illogical) potential configurations. As he writes, “[S]ensation is never simple. It is always doubled by the feeling of having a feeling. It is self-referential. This is not necessarily the same as ‘self-reflexive.’ The doubling of sensation does not assume a subjective splitting and does not of itself constitute a distancing. It is an immediate self-complication. It is best to think of it as a resonance, or interference pattern” (2002, 13). In other words, affects and emotions coexist and co-form each other within an assemblage; they are distributed in constant movement into and through each other, in “reciprocal becomings; together they ally in process. They are tinged with event” (Massumi 2002, 11).

⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Golańska (2015).

If we conceive of art in terms of sensations, that is, if we understand art as an *object of fundamental encounter*, we will necessarily have to acknowledge its active role, or agency, as well as its constant “material-semiotic” becoming. No longer does art connote the object of recognition (that is, of representation), which offers the already known meanings and semiotic structures. Rather, it invites “the new” while encouraging a thorough reevaluation of our perceptual habits (O’Sullivan 2006, 1). Accordingly, affects (as conceptualized by Massumi) are produced *in the encounter*, and are not expressive or communicative; they cannot be reduced to their recognizable origins or simply instrumentalized. Sensation, or intensity, cannot be crudely submitted to any recognizable form or meaning. As Grosz clarifies, “sensation requires no mediation or translation. It is not representation, sign, symbol, but force, energy, rhythm, resonance” (2008, 73). Affect is not about the identifiable content; it is rather about the virtual, or the unpredictable potential, a non-referential intensity, a generative production that emerges *out of the encounter*.

What counts in such a theorization of art is not its recognizable meaning but its *affect*. Yet, the encounter with art is of a compound nature, as art affects us simultaneously at symbolic and material level. Such an understanding would be in line with a new materialist conceptualization of art. This approach focuses on matter, understood in processual terms, as active material always “entangled” (Barad 2007, 185) with meaning with which it dynamically co-exists and which it co-forms, while being at the same time co-formed by it. In her virtuoso attempt to figure out “how matter comes to matter”, Barad (2003, 2007) argues that matter and meaning are equally active and explains that “[d]iscursive practices and material phenomenon do not stand in a relationship of externality to each other; rather the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity” (2007, 152). The new materialist approach to art conceives of art in terms of an aesthetic, affective encounter which might trigger a profound inquiry and which never leaves the participating bodies unchanged. Accordingly, the materiality of art creates and gives form to the discursive and vice versa—the discursive makes sense of matter, that is, it makes it *matter*. Hence new materialism should be viewed as a post-ocularcentric and post-representational philosophical tendency. Art is therefore about a complex assemblage, which involves immediate processual material-semiotic reconfigurations, or a never-ending production. As a result, no longer is art considered a set of determined objects but rather it is defined in terms of a constant material unfolding. Let me provide brief illustrations of how “dark” installation art can be approached from such a perspective.

Case Study 1: Sound-Space

The construction of the installation *Shalekhet (Fallen Leaves, 2001)* by an Israeli artist Menashe Kadishman seems to be very simple. In the Memory Void, one of the empty spaces of the building of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, over 10.000 faces coarsely cut from iron plates and randomly scattered

over the whole space densely cover the floor. The visitors are invited to walk onto the iron objects and explore the room. This, initially, triggers resistance and discomfort. The culturally shaped embarrassment experienced by the visitors is obviously connected to the symbolic meaning generated by the form of iron plates. Even an imaginary possibility of walking on what represents human faces seems to be discouragingly disturbing. Obviously, there is a moment of hesitation. Many withdraw. Yet, if the visitors eventually step on the installation, their walking begins to cause a constant, disconcerting clinking clanking sound. Consequently, the installation functions through movement and through sound and actually needs the moving body of the visitor and the surrounding space to be activated, or to unleash its flow. The screaming reverberations of the sounds made by visitors' steps encountering the iron objects and echoed by the sombre and repellent walls of the memorial void produce the gloomy feeling of isolation and alienation that re-enters visitors' bodies in the form of sonic waves, evoking shame, uneasiness and uncomfortable disorientation. The meaning emerges from material interaction, yet the character of the material encounter is itself co-formed by the semiotic structures already available to the visitors even before they enter the memorial space. What emerges through these sonic relationalities is the overwhelming feeling of dramatic solitude and misery, which is haptically sensed and bodily experienced, yet it is also bodily produced, since the sound is born in the creative and machine-like "intra-action" (Barad 2003, 2007) of a visitor's body-movement and the space-movement. All entities involved in the event affect and are affected. This synaesthetic relational process is jointly generated in a creative affective encounter and relies on the activation of a number of material-semiotic dimensions of the experience. Importantly, as a physical vibration, sound exceeds the body (or bodies) — whether organic or technological — that acts as its source. Yet, it cannot solely be considered as a medium establishing relations between the already existing primary individual entities that it relates. In a new materialist spirit, these relations are perceived as generative and regenerative of the relating entities' very individuality. The bodies are therefore only provisional; in fact, they constantly emerge and reemerge out of the relations in which they participate. The sonic relations are therefore productive of the constitution of the relating entities. The sound is a processual factor initiated in and initiating relationalities, wherein the involved bodies undergo incessant material-semiotic transformations, that is, wherein they *become-other*.

Case Study 2: Movement-Space

The Garden of Exile (designed by Daniel Libeskind, 2001; also a part of the Jewish Museum in Berlin) consists of a series of pillars, planted on a regular grid. The columns, filled with soil, support olive trees physically unreachable for the visitors. As seen from a distance, the whole space looks wildly crooked and strikingly disturbing, yet it might seem that the olive trees' branches would offer a snug garden-like shadow to sightseers and create an ambiance

of intimacy and cosiness. This, however, is not the case; they rather evoke the sensation of being so far removed from the visitors' bodies, that in fact they work further to stimulate the feeling of isolation and doubt. Once in the garden, the visitors realize that the columns are not diagonal but are rather placed at a 90-degree angle to the ground. Yet the ground itself is tilted in two angles, which produces a weird effect of contortion, so physically discomforting. The ground of the garden is paved with pebbles of varying sizes and shapes, which makes navigating through the memorial space uncomfortably demanding. Steps are taken unsteadily; the march becomes uncertain; the perspective nauseates. If humid, the ground becomes slippery and the moving through the memorial turns even more arduous. Every time the foot clashes against the irregular surface of the ground, walkers become less certain of their physical steadiness. Such a material organization of the space obviously prevents any sustained degree of comfort and stability for the visitors. Logically, the semiotic qualities of the memorial emerge out of the physical contact of the visitor's body and the architectural space. The fact that it is difficult to hold balance in *the Garden of Exile* forces the feeling of fragility, exhaustion and helplessness. Hence, the material-semiotic character of the site is generated through the corporeal experience, the en fleshed sensation of its materiality and how it acts on the visitors' bodies. It is sensed with the skeleton and muscles. Importantly, however, the materiality of this space is also constituted culturally, through meaning-making structures and symbolic connotations that it produces and that are obviously known to the visitors. This is further complicated in the actual encounter with the installation. The unexpected, physical effects of the place translate into visitors' uncertainty, disrupting any sense of their well-being as well as depriving them of the feeling of secure predictability and comfort that gardens usually offer. The meandering through this terrain is fraught with alienation and insecurity. The memorial character of the site emerges out of a number of material-semiotic transactions, and it is itself a relation consisting of a multiplicity of micro-perceptions involved in the event of encounter.

Case Study 3: Duration-Space

Built underground, into the hill, the *Children's Memorial* (by Moshe Safdie 1987) functions as part of the Yad Vashem complex in Jerusalem. The cold, white, granite pillars, with which the dark vestibule of the memorial violently contrasts, sever its entrance. The visitors enter a dark space without knowing what to expect—for one moment there is panic and dread, as steering through the irresistible darkness seems completely unpredictable, if not impossible. Inside the memorial room the visitors are surrounded by the dim lights of thousands of *yahrtzeit* candles that subtly illuminate the interior. The stunning scenery with countless glittering lights has been created by an illusion—in fact only four candles, encased in special glass and surrounded by mirrors that do not reflect the visitors, create the wondrous sensation. Actually, the subtly moving small lights are the only discernible elements of the

memorial room; the visitors are neither able to visually locate its walls nor distinguish its shape. The candles delicately light up the darkness above, below and on all sides of the visitors, which produces the bodily impression of being suspended in this overwhelming space, without any navigational hints. There is something cosmic about this chamber, which produces a sensation of spatial infinitude and eternal duration, of being somewhere and nowhere at the same time. There is also the feeling of tension between presumed presence and perceived non-presence, as nothing can be visually fixed—neither the organization of the memorial nor the bodies of other visitors. People move slowly, if at all, since their bodies seem to perceive the space as a no-space, a void, or duration of unfathomable nothingness, with no points of reference on which they could rely. Every step becomes hesitant, as there are no spatial clues that indicate how and where to proceed. This triggers the feeling of fragility and uncertainty, while encouraging realization of the vulnerability of life and becoming. The body is lost, or at least disoriented. The visitors are also constantly bombarded with the dreary sound of the murdered children's names being slowly read in an *ad infinitum* manner. It takes three years to get to the end of the list, and then the reading starts again. This monotonous, persistent listing of names intensifies the feeling of an ungraspable duration that would never come to an end. Although initially, upon entrance, the memorial freezes the visitors' bodies with its obscurity and dimness, its material organization also forces them to unlearn their routine perceptual habits and invites a more proprioceptive or visceral response to its visually imperceptible spatial organization. It operates through the indiscernible which introduces the body in the state of suspension, causing vacillation in every movement. In an intensive corporeal material-semiotic encounter, the memorial character of the space actualizes.

As demonstrated by the case studies, approaching “dark” installation art through the new materialist framework offers an opportunity for focusing on their generative becoming as well as on the encounter-bound ontology of their memorial character. This strategy disavows the necessarily negativist framework of thinking grounded in the mechanism of representation and centres instead on the processes of material-semiotic production. Philosophically speaking, affect is always positive; it is about constant (sometimes even violent!) transformation and movement, that is, always a surplus. As Deleuze and Guattari notice, pure intensities “are all positive in relationship to the zero intensity”; affect, “even if it tortures or kills, ... manifests something new and different, a solar force ... a pleasure that can rightly be called autoerotic, or rather automatic” (1983, 18). In that sense, *the encounter* is about experiencing an aesthetic/affective thrill/flow, which is always a new quality, a movement of becoming. In such an instance, to perceive “visually” no longer implicates just immediate recognition (of terror, oppression, ferocity, etc.). This would be based in purely representational thinking. Rather, these are the active bodies (organic and inorganic) that simultaneously produce, radiate, and receive sensory impulses, thus immanently and sensuously *become* with the world. Such an approach draws on a concept of a non-

representational, synaesthetic seeing (which might be called “peripheral”), which is about the dispersed yet conjunctive work of all senses, recruiting from the actual and the virtual alike. This formulation owes much to the distinction between the “focused vision” (which “confronts us with the world”, “pushes us out of space, making us mere spectators”) and “unfocused peripheral vision” (which “envelops us in the flesh of the world”, “integrates us with space”) introduced by Pallasmaa (2005, 10). “The very essence of the lived experience is moulded by hapticity and peripheral unfocused vision”, he argues (2005, 10). “Perhaps, freed of the implicit desire of the eye for control and power, it is precisely the unfocused vision (that) ... is again capable of opening up new realms of vision and thought. The loss of focus ... may emancipate the eye from its patriarchal domination and give rise to a participatory and empathetic gaze”, Pallasmaa further elaborates (2005, 35). In such a context, the logic of operation of many “dark” installation artworks is one of a series of *material-semiotic encounters*, relying on multisensory interactions and “peripheral”, tactile “seeing”.

Consequently, these “dark installations” cannot be simply seen as objects coded with predetermined memorial meanings. Rather, their memorial nature is a matter of material-semiotic event. Their operations can serve as illustrative instances of how matter and meaning are entangled and how they co-produce each other. As Barad writes, “Meaning is not an ideality; meaning is material. And matter isn’t what exists separately from meaning. Mattering is a matter of what comes to matter and what doesn’t” (2014, 175). Henceforth, the intensity of the synaesthetic material-semiotic experience is produced in the set of vibrant relations and transformative becomings, which could not be fully acknowledged when approached from purely representational perspective. The installations work through different sorts of tactile energies unleashed in the intense, affective and multidirectional *encounter* (or intra-action) of bodies which together form a dynamic ecosystem, full of sensual movements. It functions through dynamic (sometimes imperceptible) relationalities and—in assemblage-like fashion—animates corporeal and intellectual flow of forces.

Certainly, the compound sensorial apparatus of the visitor is an inseparable element of the whole complex process of interaction with the memorial space. This realization encourages awareness about how these are not only the signifying but also the sensorial aspects of art that are mediated by previous perceptions, and how the virtuality of sense perception means that the perceived object is, as Massumi writes, “the way a whole set of active, embodied, potentials appear in present experience” (2008, 4). To clarify, the zone of virtuality stands here for the involvement of both past events and the wavering future in any perception that particular bodies have in any given here and now. Consequently, the past enriches the attributes of what bodies encounter. This occurs in the form of associations to the archives of the perceivers’ previous experiences as well as through the ways the past perceptions condition and shape the bodies’ capacities to experience. The future, on the other hand, involves the undetermined variations these experiential pro-

cesses might potentially undergo, as relations to what is sensed constantly transform and new encounters incessantly occur. In the material-semiotic assemblage the virtual arises into actuality.

Concluding Remarks

As my analysis reveals, certain “dark installations”, including those mentioned in this essay, can be considered, in Rauterberg’s words (2005), “performance landscapes”, as they partly disavow purely representational logic, working instead to evoke and sustain sensations. They perform, and they do so in always new and always different ways, as each encounter is different, if only on the micro or imperceptible level. The entangled composition of the material-semiotic elements is always vibrantly moving and undergoing constant metamorphoses as bodies are diverse and they incessantly experience new encounters. The process of generating the memorial character of these spaces is therefore a matter of both consensus (that is, of feeling along with others) and a matter of singularity (that is, of constant variation); a procedure which is both social/collective and singular/always different. Yet, if we want to focus on the productive (that is, affirmative!) aspect of the operation of such artefacts, we necessarily have to *analytically* distinguish the effects of their intensity (that is, affects) from their explicit contents (that is, meanings). Consequently, no longer should we approach art exclusively in terms of what it expresses or what it represents. Rather, we ought to focus on what kind of production it facilitates in the creative encounter, even though it might count as “dark”, “disturbing” or “terrifying” in terms of what it refers to. It can still, however, generate positive experiences, a certain surplus connected to the pleasurable involvement in creative generation of affects and sensations, that is, in the relational aesthetic process of emergence of its artistic material-semiotic nature. Representational reading, in such an account, is simply not enough, primarily because, as O’Sullivan aptly notices, “in reading we miss... what art does best: the aesthetic” (2006, 40).

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