



MARION  
HOHLFELDT

FROM ICONIC  
VACANCY  
TO SOCIAL  
IMAGINATION

*Toward Jochen Gerz's  
The Square of the European  
Promise in Bochum<sup>1</sup>*



“If it were possible to start Europe all over again”, Jochen Gerz opens his speech on *The Square of the European promise* in reference to one of the ‘Founding Fathers’ Jean Monnet, “then I would start with culture”. Although Monnet actually never pronounced these words, the symbolic impact that the image of a cultural Europe carries is sufficiently strong to continue promoting this idea, as culture, we can read Gerz, “promises more than just protection by customs duties and borders. It promises a new day, turning us into people with our lives in front of us. In spite of all the things we have done and what has been done in our name, culture makes us curious about ourselves again. It makes us curious about our contribution to this world [...]”<sup>2</sup>. The European idea is not very popular these days while borders are crossed and ‘culture’ is taken for identity rather than curiosity and opening. The major crises that European political and ideological construction had to face over the last 70 years, however, and namely since *perestroika* and the fall of Berlin wall, clearly show that this “identity” cannot resist if it does not take in the changing forces a globalized world imposes. “[...] Europe as the figure of a logos within which alterity circulates from its inception”, Rodolphe Gasché wrote, “[...] rather than turning the self into the other (and hence the other into the self) implies a radical reinscription or reconception of what is European, given that from the start Europe has been dislocated from itself to such a degree that it is open and hospital to what it does not, an cannot, determine”<sup>3</sup>. In his

relecture of Derrida's philosophy of *differance*, Gasché underlines the important role that Europe plays as potential for critical and enlightened resistance toward the only focus of global market economics<sup>4</sup>. Derrida already stressed the importance of destabilizing existing structures in order "not to confine in one's own identity", but "to try to *invent another gesture*" that allows the other to come (*à-venir*)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, this "advent" needs the implication of those who are called to invent this other gesture, as to Derrida, being European "means taking responsibility for the heritage of thought that reflects upon what Europe is": its openness or rather the openness of its ever concept "that takes its name from outside" and, therefore, is characterized within by conceptual instability, a moving ground that eventually becomes, as it has always been, a heading<sup>6</sup> or, at least, a – linguistic and cultural – "translator". Culture, in spite of what has been done it its name during the past, means to Jochen Gerz, "the broad new reality of democracy", that comes into play as soon as people get involved, entering into a sharing process of intelligence that may open to new forms of representation and decision making<sup>8</sup>. Since the very beginning of his work, and more so throughout his public *œuvre*, Gerz links the term authorship, as derived from literature, to performative art. *The Square of the European Promise* is the latest example of *public authorship* in which the work only occurs through its multiple contributions. "Where is Europe? Is there a place in our imagination that bears this name? Is there a hidden place in our hearts?" It is with these questions that Jochen Gerz invites the citizen of Europe to make a promise. A promise to Europe. Their names will be written on the public square, the names of the living, readable to all; their promises, however, belong to themselves and can only be imagined by the future visitor. What would we wish Europe to become? Would we take the responsibility for this wish, will we honour our promise?

Invited to participate with a contribution to the European capital of Culture RUHR 2010 in the Ruhr area, Jochen Gerz prospected several cities as partners for his tremendous project 2–3 *Streets* that eventually took place in three cities over the year 2010<sup>9</sup>. During these encounters with possible associates from the civil society, he met a priest from the “Church of Cultures” located in Bochum, Thomas Wessel, who showed him a chapel, unknown to the public, that was inaugurated in 1931 to commemorate the fallen soldiers during World War I. The chapel is decorated in mosaic technique and opens onto a blue-eyed Christ Pantocrator who welcomes the dead in his kingdom with open arms. On the two sides, two facing lists with the names of the dead flank this central figure and echo with two other lists, composed by the names of the 28 “enemy states of Germany” during the war, written on the two entrance arches. Besides the frequent Christian iconology that stands here for the mourning on million of fallen soldiers during the first World War, it makes us shiver today to read these lists as they seem to prepare precisely the ground on which World War II raged only eight years after the inauguration of this *Helden-Gedenkhalle* (Heroes Commemoration Chapel). After 1945, this heritage weighted too heavily as to give public access to the place that was only visible after the construction works of the Church’s new entrance, in 1998. The actual idea for the square, however, was born due to a commission by the city of Bochum that wished, in 2004, to participate in the regional competition on the design for public places: “Stadt macht Platz – NRW macht Plätze” (City makes room – North-Rhine-Westphalia makes places). Jochen Gerz proposed to transform the awkward urban situation in front of the Church into a shared public space while returning the list of the dead into a list of the living. He already proceeded to such a transformation when he was invited, in 1995, to renew the old monument to the fallen in the little Dordogne village Biron (*The Living Monument*).

Instead of commemoration the dead, Jochen Gerz proposed to make a monument to the living, by asking the inhabitants of the village to reply to an unpublished question. Their answers were exposed on red brass plaques, attached to the monument's newly erected obelisk. Some years later, he reiterated in the city of Coventry where he proposed a *Future Monument*. Coventry, England's first bombed city by the German *Blitz*, plays a central role in the dialectic transformation of ruin and reconstruction, of mourning and reconciliation<sup>10</sup>. It could be seen as a sign of appeasement that a German artist was commissioned to refurbish a French war memorial, and as a sign of opening to admit the critical glance on the past in England. As Jonathan Vickery put it: "*Future Monument* takes the social compulsion for the absolutes that feature in the usual meaning of monuments – a certain vision of history and a distinct national identity – as an ever present desire [...]. *Future Monument* on a symbolic level makes this desire the ground on which the social possibilities of the future have to be negotiated<sup>11</sup>". As we can read on the monument: "The *Future Monument* is an answer from Coventry's inhabitants to the city's long and often dramatic past. It deals with former enemies becoming friends. Over 5.000 citizens contributed to the artwork. This is a public as well as a personal statement and the city council wishes to thank the many Coventrians from other countries who have participated, joining their own memory to the city's history in an endeavour for peace and reconciliation [...]." On the ground, at the foot of the light obelisk made out of fractured glass, we see the scattered plaques on which one can read: "To our German friends. To our Spanish friends. To our Russian friends. To our American friends. To our British friends. To our French friends. To our Turkish friends". The monument, through a reminiscence to European and colonial history, points towards a future society in which social relations are understood by and through difference not despite of it<sup>12</sup>. By integrating

“To our British friends” the list of former enemies reflects, indeed, the demographic situation of postcolonial Britain, although it seems obvious that we could write such lists in any country in Europe. In his speech on *The Square of the European Promise*, Gerz reminded us: “A well known question of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Josef Goebbels: ‘Do you want total war?’ We know the answer, it was not nuanced, it was not secret; it was not kept private. The answer given in the Berlin Sportpalast of 1943 was also a European promise. [...] We know the effects on Europe. Let us be wary of questions we can answer too quickly. Questions that have only one answer are an affront to human dignity<sup>13</sup>”.

More than all other public works of Jochen Gerz, this square is committed to the future, as the promises are. For the first time, the artist himself thought about the promise he would like to contribute to this monument of a different kind: “My first answer was: I promise peace. Against the backdrop of our long European history, in particular the history of the 20th century, and not a least my own generation’s biography, Europe can only mean peace – today and tomorrow<sup>14</sup>”. Jochen Gerz, born in Berlin in 1940, is a child of the rubble. His work testifies the inherent mistrust to any form of authoritarian doctrine and cultural alienation that lay the ground to obedience and the lack of creative openness. In answer to Roland Barthes’ notion of the “death of the author”, Jochen Gerz refers to Lautréamont’s “Poetry must be made by all”. His concept of “public authorship” stresses on the need of society not only for imaginative power and intellectual authenticity but also for forms that are able to open up and situate cultural dialogue as he explained: “...by making art the site of social dialogue, and redefining art as development and process rather than the production of super-valuable objects, public authorship consciously invests itself in the socially symbolic function of public art, and therefore maintains a general appeal to the kind of *cultural*

*significance* cultivated in the art world<sup>15</sup>. In collecting over 14.000 invisible promises to this square, this place needs to be constantly reactivated in performative action in order to become, eventually, a common place of European signification, as a performative remembering that works as a constant feeder of the symbolic connotation and connection with the square. As Gerz pursues his thought on his own promise: "I realised that Europe's strange groundlessness is the actual reason for the *Square of the European Promise*; that Europe's absence and suppression are the topic. I understood that it is about Europe's lack of ability to be the object of public debate and democracy. Almost instantly my own answer was there: I promise Europe<sup>16</sup>". The performative remembering of Europe, yet, takes place through a constant activation of the square, on the initiative of the president of the German Parliament, Norber Lammert. He committed himself to make a program throughout the years with invitation of the representatives of the different European countries to start with the Polish ambassador. As Gerz stated: "I am interested in taking the private into the public<sup>17</sup>". As for most people "public" is Brussels rather than undefined "public space", while "private" is the shared familiar: to stay amongst the British "us", to stay amongst the Hungarian "us", to stay amongst the Danish "us". The undergoing question therefore goes to ask: how do we get people public? How can we link the list of the dead – former reasons to multiple wars – to the list of the living, i.e. new imaginaries of an European idea?

When people become authors themselves, making the artistic work their own cause, they create what Arjun Appadurai calls "social imagination", which mediates between individual subjects and the surrounding world: "The world we live in today is characterized by a new role for the imagination in social life. To grasp this new role, we need to bring together the old idea of images, especially mechanically produced images (in the Frankfurt School sense); the idea of

the imagined community (in Anderson's sense); and the French idea of the imaginary (*imaginaire*) as a constructed landscape of collective aspirations, which is no more and no less real than the collective representations... The image, the imagined, the imaginary—these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: *the imagination as a social practice*<sup>18</sup>. *The Square of the European Promise* creates such *imaginaries* that resist imposed, authoritarian images, not only because they are produced throughout heterogeneous and constantly renewed contributions, but more so because these images stay unseen, invisible, keeping the active production of imaginaries in a constant vivid state of question. This iconic vacancy is a constant concern in Gerz' work since he started to masque photographs and expose white sheets of paper. In 1973/75 he realized the installation *Pictures of an Exhibition* that, instead of showing images, demonstrate the act of viewing in recalling the biblical interdiction to picture. Despite the sophisticated arrangement, the spectator's lust to see is deceived; no images are shown, but ten commandments, all that forbid to image: "Do not look at me. Do not depict me..." In Gerz's work the refusal to depict is often twined with the proposal of written text, which, in a witty ambivalence, produces an almost dialectic relationship of reading and seeing: "Go, dear image, & leave far behind you the chains of visibility" can be read on *The French Wall #63* underneath a blinded photograph. As long as the picture is only seen in its eidolon character, or even understood as a mere capture of the real that simply reflects an outer world, it has to be blinded, covered or replaced in order to make clear that media estrange from the real experience of life. The fixed image can only be an unsatisfying Ersatz of the vivid moment "here and now", a replica that only reproduces in an aftermath the initial event, an idol, even, which demands veneration, but hardly invites the spectator to become aware of himself.



Yet, in his critique of (Western) culture, Jochen Gerz, by occulting the purely visible, proposes the active imaginable that belongs to everyone who accepts this relation. Thus he shows nothing. This specific relationship has to be taken seriously: he does not simply not show anything, but he literally shows nothing. This “nothingness” has to be understood as an effective Leitmotiv of his oeuvre: how can I see if there is nothing to see, as the expectation towards art implies an objet, an image, a trace to be contemplated. Yet, this expectation turns out to be, in Gerz’s reading, an expectation of one’s own absence, the spectator vanishes behind what is represented; he is literally represented by the cultural product, but in a representation without mandate, without negotiation, simply imposed. “Representation”, Edward Said wrote, “or, more particularly, the *act* of representing (and hence reducing) others almost always involves violence of some sort to the *subject* of the representation as well as a contrast between the violence of the act of representing and the calm exterior of the representation itself, the *image* – verbal, visual, or otherwise – of the subject<sup>19</sup>”. It is the blindness of the image that, eventually, free the subject of this fixation as an object of representation, as it holds, through its absence, a mirror that reflects the only presence to be seen: the one of the beholder himself. In his works that cross image and writing, photography and texts, Jochen Gerz started literally to cover the pictures with dark red, water-soluble ferrous oxide that was otherwise used for retouching. This is, besides, the only colour Jochen Gerz admits in his work. Since the cycle *The French Wall*, it has also become a metaphor for the time that has passed in creating a work, and more generally the factor time involved in memory. In this sense, the work put into question the gap that separates representation from the real: a *no man’s land* between the both, in which the artist starts his work. Instead of showing images, these pictures of an exhibition, in their recourse to biblical interdiction, rather produce reflections

on the material and ideological conditions of the production of images<sup>20</sup>, and try to free the imaged as well as individual imagination from cultural domination.

How can we understand this religious interdiction of iconic representation – this imperative of the invisible? The image can, first of all, be refused in its *mimetic* quality, as it perpetuates *the absence* of what it pictures; in a platonic tradition, it keeps us in a distance of what *is*, in reality. The image, here, is simply understood as a copy, as a copy of a copy even, turning its back twice on the real, on the world of ideas. The image can, secondly, be refused in a biblical reading, as an *incarnation* through which the image fixes the *presence* of whom man should keep in distance, as he cannot face God. When to Gerz' work, it suggests a third understanding that allows us, in a recall of Lewis Carroll's heroine Alice, to pass *through* the mirror. An image, in these terms, is addressed; as it lives in and through the viewer, it appears in Gerz's terms as a "sleeping prince", pointing out to its other nature: once it was living, moving, now it is lost. "Therefore", he says, "the most beautiful galleries, the most beautiful museums are we ourselves. We are the walls on which hang unpainted pictures. We are the viewers, too, who look at these pictures that are not longer ours. As we have lost them, we have to see them: look and loose<sup>21</sup>". As a visual representation, an image represents culture; however, images impede personal and collective memory, for as *frozen* memory can only be memory *ex negativo*<sup>22</sup>. Yet, this negative memory cannot awaken the sleeping prince, but only note the absence: it can only be preserved as a memorial, "an utterance sentenced to endure<sup>23</sup>". No contemporary artist has worked more consistently with the notion of absence than Jochen Gerz. It appears clearly that absence, more than the loss of home and mother tongue for the errant between countries, languages and cultures, is, most of all, the absence of the Jewish people. The refusal of images points toward the impossible

witness of the unbearable: no picture can help to resurrect the people who was murdered. This refusal takes into account a very early experience of the most intrusive images when Gerz' saw, at the age of 16, the Alain Resnais film *Night and Fog* [Nuit et Brouillard], that he remembers in a contribution on Germany twenty-three years later<sup>24</sup>.

“Representing ‘Auschwitz’ in images and words”, Lyotard stated later, “is a way of making us forget the ‘unrepresentable’ in every representation [...]”<sup>25</sup>. Alain Resnais’s film, composed by found footages that are confronted to the present of Polish countryside and the state of the site, anticipates to a certain extent Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah*; in both the ‘unrepresentable’ lies in an actualisation that refuses to consider the mass murder of the Jewish people as something in the past. *Shoah*, Lanzmann’s film, seeks to demonstrate that ‘the Holocaust’ must “be confronted in the inconceivable present from which [it] draws [its] being. The only way to achieve this is precisely by resuscitating the past and making it present [...]”<sup>26</sup>. No picture can – or in Lanzmann’s understanding *should* – represent the reality of the camps. No monument can – or should – stand for the people. This precisely is the message of the *Monument against fascism* in which Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz invited the people of Hamburg-Harburg and the visitors to add their names on the column that eventually disappeared in the ground. “In doing so”, can we read on the desk that constitutes the still visible part of the vanished column, [in signing], “we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. [As] In the long run, it is only we ourselves who can stand up against injustice.” The disappearance of the artefact creates a vacuum that was provoked by the signatories themselves: the emptiness is the timeline of remembrance, as it draws the viewer into the very midst of things. As Gerz put in an interview on the monument: “There is nothing to marvel at, there isn’t this depository. There’s no consolation”. No image to figure, no (artistic) authority to delegate, no representative to stand up

at our place, in our name: a monument as any kind of mourning, as any form of remembrance is turned towards the future.

In a free speech from 1981, Gerz developed his understanding of the sacred<sup>27</sup>. In introducing the term of "Hierophany", he opposes two concepts of life. At that time, he was in contact with native people from the North-West of Canada, where he lived part of the year. This exchange modified once again his understanding of culture: whereas before, culture was to be seen with doubting attention, as culture had produced the extermination camps, this approach of natives from British Columbia reinforced his sensitivity for the living, here and now, being in time and place, being society. Hierophany signifies: "to reveal what is holy" and means a manifestation of the sacred. Whereas in Western Culture, the sacred and the profane are clearly separated, they are merged in the culture of the Yoopies; as he says: "they do not have a paradise", as paradise – this wish-thinking of a better life after death – cannot be conceived. There is no conception of paradise in Paradise, no hope, no hierophany. While in Western culture, life is sensed to be incomplete, it needs the sacred: via fear and terror or via fascination, as he explained. In the first case, terrorists, so-called, – Baader-Meinhof, IRA, ETA – search to realise their paradise through bullets. Hierophany. In the second case, fascination seeks to overcome distance (towards the worshiped other) through illusion. "The fascinated man is stuck to the flypaper of its specific *spectaculum* through consumption<sup>28</sup>". The sacred is a projection of mankind that estrange from the present as soon as it is fixed. In word, in image, in space. "Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image", as it is said in the Decalogue. To quote Gerz: "The sacred claim the unattainable paradox: "I am, but do not depict me. I am, the only one of whom you shall not make any image. I am, but not visible to you, not here<sup>29</sup>". As if we could make anything else but an image from that what is not here. Which only signifies: be yourself. Everything,

outside of yourself, becomes an image". But as an image, it is absent now; it cannot return your smile, it cannot be with you in solidarity of a real exchange.

Both aspects, absence and presentness, are formed in the Saarbrücken *Monument Against Racism*. Unlike the Harburg monument, its matter is not disappearing, but it is right from the beginning the invisible aspect of the *disappeared*. In 1990, Jochen Gerz is invited professor at the academy of art in Saarbrücken, Germany, where he works with the students on the topic of absence. "The strength of absence", he recalls, "which some still learn as religious or artistic experience, are my biographical circumstances that you could call "too late"<sup>30</sup>." Between 1990 and 1993, the group completed an inventory of all Jewish cemeteries that existed in Germany before 1933. "Where there are people", he explained, "there are burial places. When there are a lot of cemeteries and no people, it's an almost mathematical metaphor for saying that something is wrong"<sup>31</sup>. One by one, the research group got into contact with the Jewish communities to convince them to agree to the project: all names were to be graved on the invisible side of the cobble stones that compose the plaza in front of the Saarbrücker Schloss, the historical castle that served as Gestapo headquarters during World War II and that now houses both the local government and the region's historical museum. Jochen Gerz, in 1990, was still shook up by the violence of some expressions of contest on the Harburg Monument, which literally deeply injured the column's "skin". The similarity in form with the inscriptions on the Gestapo prison wall, made him decide to start a new memorial that, however, this time was made without commission. Secretly, at night, one by one the cobblestones were replaced by graved ones, so that nothing changed, nothing was to be seen. It needed some attention to eventually stumble over the new stones that were slightly loose and unsteady and to understand the ongoing

process. Once again, Gerz literally showed nothing, as what is to be seen has to be understood in its palimpsest nature.

At the same time, by stressing the ground, the timeline of remembrance and contact zone with the living, who cross their way each day, he not only integrated the monument into the everyday life, but he also put once again the citizen and the passer-by in the centre of the commemoration. “Cobble stone in German “Pflaster” also means Sticking Plaster (“Wundpflaster”). Everything that tends towards immobility, towards the status quo, even accusation, is dangerous, because it strengthen our incapacity to live our culture”. In showing nothing, Jochen Gerz put the citizen in the heart of the monument, as for him, public art must be *in the public interest*. However, he tirelessly insists: we are ourselves remembrance and public memory, we are ourselves the monument. Here, in Saarbrücken, the monument is invisible but exists; it is readable, rather than visible, as the result of the research work is a list. It is obviously part of the monument and joins other lists of names that were established namely by Serge and Beate Klarsfeld: “All what rests, in the end, are lists, listings”, explained Gerz. “A simplification, a reduction. Whether they are signatures, names or inscriptions [...] It is a way to go through the material of the immaterial: the number... [...] Nothing allows us anymore to be innocent. As signifies the Wittgenstein sentence: What can be described, can happen<sup>32</sup>”. In this sense, the Square of the European Promise takes into account not only the past, not only remembrance, but more so the present in its hope for a future. At times when right wing parties all over Europe try to make it crack, these promises for a better *present* are more than welcome. As the Turkish participant Alya Schmelzer put it: “When I give my name to Europe, I become Europe. At that moment, I am Turk *and* Greek, I am French *and* German<sup>33</sup>”. As speaker of the Turkish central mosque in Bochum she knows that her community has gone towards Europe for a long

time. “Obviously, these stones carry our names. It would be beautiful to imagine that we all celebrate Ramazan Bayramu, the candy festival that ends the fast of Ramadan, here, on this Square. This way, we pave the way to Europe with all the good wishes and the square would become what it promises”.

1. Modified version of the conference “Do not Depict me. Withdrawal and Iconic Vacancy”, held at the symposium *God is Back in Town*, Rennes 2 University, December 10–11, 2015.
2. Jochen Gerz, *The Square of the European Promise*, a speech during the 49<sup>th</sup> City Talks, Bochum Museum of Art, January 17, 2007.
3. Rodolphe Gasché, “This Little Thing that is Europe”, in *The New Centennial Review*, vol. 7, n° 2, Fall 2007, p. 16. See also : Rodolphe Gasché, “Feeling the Debt: On Europe”, in *Future Crossings: Literature Between Philosophy and Cultural Studies*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2000, p. 125–146.
4. Cf. R. Gasché, *Europe, or the Infinite Task. A Study of a Philosophical Concept*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 11: “What the name Europe refers to is thus not primarily the proper name of a land but a name for a movement of separation and tearing (oneself) away in which everything proper has always already been left behind. It is thus an extension prior to all confinement within oneself, thus constituting an exposure to the foreign, the strange, the indeterminate”.
5. It is not the place to develop this complex understanding of *alterity* in which the French philosopher developed the inherent necessity to receive the other as part of one’s own future, understood as an advent (*à-venir* – that or who is to come). Future here is conceived in an affirmative opening towards the other as Derrida underlines in his speech *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe*, held in 1990 in Turin during a conference on European cultural identity; cf. its English translation, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992.
6. Cf. Engin F. Isin, “We, the Non-Europeans: Derrida with Said”, in Bora Isyar and Agnes Czajka (eds.), *Europe after Derrida*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 112–113: “Europe is that name which signifies the commitment to place itself under question regarding what it itself is not. That is why Europe is not a geography, a polity, a culture or even a civilisation, but stands for the radical openness of that space which took as its name as the name of the other. That is also why we, the non-Europeans, are a historical problem of Europeans”.
7. Cf. Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational*

- Citizenship, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004.
- 8** Cf. Jochen Gerz, « Creating a Cultural City », speech at Millennium Hall, Cork, November 1st, 2006.
- 9** See 2-3 *Straßen MAKING OF. Eine Ausstellung in Städten des Ruhrgebiets von Jochen Gerz*, ed. by Hermann Pfütze, Cologne, DuMont, 2011.
- 10** Cf. Sarah Wilson, « A Stranger with Secrets : Jochen Gerz, *Future Monument, Public Bench* », in *Phoenix. Architecture/ Art/ Regeneration*, London, Black Dog Publishing, 2004, p. 84-94.
- 11** Jonathan Vickery, « Public Art as Public Authorship : Jochen Gerz's *Future Monument* and *The Public Bench* Coventry City Centre », article originally published on [www.publicartonline.org.uk/news/research/publicauthorship.html](http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/news/research/publicauthorship.html), November 2003.
- 12** See also Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* [1989], in *Framework*, n° 36, republished on [www.rlwclarke.net/Theory/PrimarySources/HallCulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf](http://www.rlwclarke.net/Theory/PrimarySources/HallCulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf)
- 13** Jochen Gerz, *The Square of the European Promise*, a speech during the 49<sup>th</sup> City Talks, Bochum Museum of Art, January 17, 2007.
- 14** Ibid.
- 15** Jochen Gerz, « Toward Public Authorship. Interview with Stephen Wright », in *Third Text*, vol. 18, Nr. 6, 2004, p. 651.
- 16** Jochen Gerz, *The Square of the European Promise*, a speech during the 49<sup>th</sup> City Talks, Bochum Museum of Art, January 17, 2007.
- 17** Jochen Gerz in a discussion with the author, November 2015.
- 18** Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 31.
- 19** Edward Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture. Interviews with Edward W. Said*, New York, Random House, 2001, p. 40.
- 20** Günter Metken, "Jochen Gerz – ein Denkspieler", in *Jochen Gerz. Foto/ Texte, The French Wall @ Stücke*, Karlsruhe, Badischer Kunstverein, 1975, p. 62 :
- "Anstatt Bilder herzustellen, betreiben sie in Bildform Reflexionen über die materiellen und ideologischen Voraussetzungen des Bildermachens".
- 21** Jochen Gerz, in Volker Rattemayer, *Get out of my lies*, Wiesbaden, Museum, 1997, p. 10.
- 22** See Bojana Pejic, *On It Was Easy*. Dialogue written in the interlocutor's absence", in *Jochen Gerz. It was easy 1988-1992*, Centre Saidye Bronfman, Montreal/ Musée Bossuet, Meaux, 1993, p. 16.
- 23** Ibid., p. 16: "This non-existent memory can be preserved only as a memorial, an utterance sentenced to endure".
- 24** Jochen Gerz, "Aus : Deutschland, Deutschland", printed in *Jochen Gerz. Texte*, ed. by Erich Franz, Bielefeld, Kerber Verlag, 1985, p. 119: "Zweite Erinnerung (Düsseldorf 1956) : Wir kommen raus. Draußen ist heller Tag, man ist etwas geblendet und verdattert wie sonst auch, wenn man aus dem Kino kommt. Ich bin bei den ersten, die rauskommen, wir warten auf die anderen. Der Studienrat kommt ziemlich am Schluß raus. Er hat gerade etwas gesagt, was um ihn herum Lachen macht. Ich gehe zu den anderen und frage, was war. Keiner sagt was. Der Studienrat guckt mich an. Ich erinnere mich an seinen Namen. Er lädt uns zum Eisessen ein, die Klasse geht Eis essen. Der Kinobesuch ist obligatorisch. Ein Raum mit Schuhen, ein Raum mit Brillen, ein Raum mit Haaren. Gold. Auf dem Weg in die Staatsbank ? Auf dem Weg ins Museum? Zähne, Haare, Schuhe und Brille habe ich auch. ... »
- 25** Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"* (1988), translated by Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p. 26.
- 26** Claude Lanzmann, in *Steve McQuire, Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera*, Londres/ New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1998, p. 161-162.
- 27** Jochen Gerz, "Bei den Yoopies. 3



- Hierophanien", in *Jochen Gerz. Texte*, op. cit., quotes from p. 148–156.
- 28** Ibid., p. 156: "Der faszinierte Mensch hängt am Fliegenfänger des jeweiligen Spectaculum via Konsum."
- 29** Ibid., p. 150–151: "Du sollst Dir kein Bildnis machen'. Das Heilige spricht und fordert, wie gesagt, in unserer westlichen Tradition; fordert aber auch das unerfüllbare Paradox. 'Ich bin, aber mach dir kein Bild von mir. Ich bin, ich bin das einzige, von dem du dir kein Bild machen darfst. Ich bin, aber dir nicht sichtbar, also nicht hier.' Als könnten wir und von etwas, das nicht hier ist, etwas anderes machen als ein Bild. Das heißt nur: sei du selbst. Alles, was aus dir raus ist, wird zum Bild. Da must du dir ein Bild von machen."
- 30** Jochen Gerz, in *2146 Steine. Mahnmal gegen Rassismus Saarbrücken*, Stuttgart, Hatje, 1993, p. 8: "Die Kraft von Abwesenheit, die manch einer noch heute al seine religiöse, literarische oder künstlerische Erfahrung erlebt, war für miche in konkreter biographischer Umstand, den man mit 'zu spät ' umreißen kann."
- 31** Jochen Gerz, in Miriam Rosen, "The Emperor's New Monument", in *Artforum*, vol. XXX, n° 7, March 1992, p. 84.
- 32** Jochen Gerz, in *2146 Steine*, op. cit., p. 11–12: "Alles, was am Ende übrigbleibt, sind Listen, listings. Eine Vereinfachung, eine Reduktion. Wir warden eine Liste mehr publizieren. Ob es sich um Signaturen handelt oder auch [...] um Inschriften. [...] Es ist eine Art und Weise, durch die Materie des Immateriellen zu gehen: die Zahl... [...] Eben das will ich sagen, wenn ich sage, dass nichts von all dem zur Unschukd zu führen scheint. Das sagt der Satz von Wittgenstein: Was man beschreiben kann, kann auch geschehen".
- 33** Unpublished note from an interview taken during the realisation of the square, Archive, Jochen Gerz Studio, Sneem.

Marion Hohlfeldt

FROM ICONIC VACANCY TO SOCIAL IMAGINATION. TOWARD JOCHEN GERZ'S *THE SQUARE OF THE EUROPEAN PROMISE IN BOCHUM*

From 1973 to 1975, Jochen Gerz referred to the Decalogue's prohibition against idolatry in order to produce a subtle disillusion about the role of image. This iconic vacancy is at work in many of his pieces, especially in his counter-monuments in which the public himself produces the necessary imagination to visualize what is, eventually, meant to be the future of possible remembrance. In his secret marking of the cobblestones, taken out of the pavement of the central place of Saarbrücken, with the names of Jewish cemeteries in Germany by 1933, this iconic vacancy reminds us of this very first, Judaeo-Christian iconic interdiction that also strongly marked Lanzman's film *Shoah*. The conference retraces some aspects of the construction of future remembrance in the work of Jochen Gerz.

Marion Hohlfeldt is senior lecturer in art history at the Rennes 2 University. Having been working on art and public space for the last fifteen years, she is head of the research program entitled PACT (Pratiques Artistiques, Contextes et Territoires, with Denis Briand) and of MAPS Master Art & Public Space (under construction). She was scientific director of the international conference entitled 'Faire la Cité. Création et Gouvernance des imaginaires urbain' (2016), and participated in the European program entitled 'Expeditions', 2013–2014. Several articles, communications, and books on public art, public authorship and participation, amongst them *Jochen Gerz. Res publica—The Public Works 1968–1999, 1999*, (with Andreas Hapkemeyer), *Parasite(s) – Une stratégie de création*, 2010, (with Pascale Borrel), and *Mouvement, lumière, participation. Le GRAV 1960–1968, 2013* (with Laurence Imbernon). She is currently preparing the first monographic book on Jochen Gerz œuvre. For further information: <http://perso.univ-rennes2.fr/marion.hohlfeldt>

KEYWORDS: **SOCIAL IMAGINATION, ICONIC VACANCY, ICONIC INTERDICTION, IMAGE, ART**

Marion Hohlfeldt

*OD IRONICZNEJ NIEOBECNOŚCI DO WYOBRAŹNI SPOŁECZNEJ.*

*'PLAC EUROPEJSKIEJ OBIETNICY' W BOCHUM - JOCHEN GERZ*

Od 1973 do 1975 roku Jochen Gerz odwołuje się do zakazu Dekalogu dotyczącego idolatrii w celu wytworzenia stanu subtelnej rozczarowania co do roli obrazu. Ten charakterystyczny „pustostan” pojawia się w wielu jego utworach, zwłaszcza w projektach „kontr-pomnikowych”, w których publiczność sama posługuje się wyobraźnią niezbędną do wizualizacji, które mają być zapamiętane. W jego projekcie – w którym z centralnego miejsca w Saarbrücken wyjmowano płyty brukowe, na których były nazwy cmentarzy żydowskich w Niemczech do 1933 roku – ta „ironiczna nieobecność” przypomina o pierwszym w judeochrześcijańskiej tradycji „przechwytywania obrazu”, które wspomina film Lanzmana pt. *Shoah*. Konferencja zajmuje się niektórymi aspektami odbudowy pamięci w pracach Jochena Gerza.

Marion Hohlfeldt jest starszym wykładowcą historii sztuki na Uniwersytecie Rennes 2. Zajmuje się historią sztuki i przestrzeni publicznej w ciągu ostatnich piętnastu lat. Jest szefem programu badawczego zatytułowanego PAKT (Pratiques Artistiques, Contextes et Territoires, Denis Briand) oraz MAPS (Mistrzowie Sztuki i Przestrzeni Publicznej – w trakcie tworzenia). Była dyrektorem naukowym międzynarodowej konferencji zatytułowanej *Faire la Cité. Création et Gouvernance des imaginaires Urbain* (2016), a także brała udział w programie europejskim zatytułowanym *Wyprawy*, 2013–2014. Opublikowała kilka artykułów na temat komunikacji oraz książki na temat sztuki w sferze publicznej, autorstwa i udziału społeczeństwa, także *Jochen Gerz. Res Publica – Prace publiczne 1968–1999*, 1999, (z Andreasem Hapkemeyer), *Parasite (s) – Une stratégie de creation*, 2010, (z Pascale Borrel) i *Mouvement, Lumière i Le GRAV 1960–1968*, 2013 (z Laurence Imbernon). Przygotowuje obecnie pierwszą monograficzną książkę o twórczości Jochena Gerza.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: **WYOBRAŹNIA SPOŁECZNA, BRAK OBRAZU, ZAKAZ OBRAZOWANIA, OBRAZ, SZTUKA**