

## Fascism and its Afterlife in Architecture: Towards a Revaluation of Affect

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### Abstract

The recent opening to the public of large-scale National Socialist installations in Germany – like the Denkort Bunker “Valentin” in Bremen-Farge – has prompted questions on how to address the legacy of Nazi advances in science and technology in musealized spaces, and, more generally, how to curate inconvenient military history. To tackle these questions, the issue of affect is crucial. Curation must be able to confront articulations of right-wing extremist “reactionary” affect in and beyond the museum setting. This has been a challenge for Dresden’s newly redesigned Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr, whose anti-militaristic message is being drowned out by right-wing xenophobic demonstrations in Dresden’s streets. This paper seeks to counter current curatorial strategies that displace and suppress affect. By considering affect’s productive potential without ignoring the record of Nazi manipulations of affect, it proposes the concept of an ‘upstander’ museum and delineates a new methodology for rethinking affect in curatorial settings.

**Key words:** affect, German military history, National Socialism, memorial installations, curation

The recent opening up of National Socialist large-scale installations in Germany to the public and the subsequent marketing of some of these sites as a tourist destination, raises the question of how to curate the fascist legacy at these sites in ways that both entice visitors, but also lead them to explore issues of inconvenient history.<sup>1</sup> Curatorial strategies vary widely between the two poles of a marketing-driven approach that seeks to promote the site as a memorable event (*Erlebnis*) - as in the Peenemünde Nazi space laboratory - and a historical-pedagogical approach that has coined the concept of *Denkort*—a place that invites thinking but also remembering—for the site of a former submarine assembly facility (Bunker Valentin in Bremen-Farge).<sup>23</sup> While both strategies explicitly endorse a rationalistic approach to these ‘affect-laden’ installations, they differ drastically in their willingness to tap into the mythic gravitational pull of former NS large-scale installations, that were often, until the last few years, not only off limits physically, but also ideologically and symbolically. The continuing lure of fascism is mobilized especially in Peenemünde’s marketing of the former ‘high tech’ Nazi space laboratory that pays homage to the military technology and engineering ingenuity that produced the ‘miracle weapons’ (*Wunderwaffen*), including the V2 reprisal weapon. In contrast, the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin invites visitors to reflect critically on the human cost of the Nazi war effort, documenting how the Bunker was built on the backs of concentration camp inmates, POWs, and slave laborers, thus providing a curatorial narrative that takes the victims of the Bunker construction as the primary lens through which to tell the story of Nazi military power at this site. There is a visceral, raw quality to the ways in which visitors are invited to explore and deconstruct myths of the submarine ‘miracle weapon’ that was to be assembled at the site of the Nazi Bunker Valentin. The on-site walking exploration of the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin is markedly different from the curated narratives of German military history, as, for instance, provided in the *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* in Dresden which reopened in 2011.

What remains strangely unarticulated in the curatorial visions is the relation of the exhibited history of fascism to visitors' affective experience at these sites. There seems to be quite a bit of curatorial anxiety about even raising the question of affect at the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin, for fear that visitor's affective experience of the space of the Bunker might reproduce the toxic nexus between between Nazi architecture and its powerful emotional appeal. And yet, these sites at which fascist history is revisited (including museums of military history) negotiate a delicate balancing act of both invoking and deconstructing the phenomenon of 'fascinating fascism,' as Susan Sontag termed it.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the very issue of affect and emotion, historically and in the visitors' experience of these sites, continues to be relevant, even though curators may postulate to have contained it through 'rationalizing' narratives. Such curatorial hesitancy raises some questions: How then do we effectively curate these sites by addressing head-on the difficult legacy of fascism while simultaneously accounting for the continuing affective pull of these sites? How can we acknowledge and render productive the affective dimension of these sites for today's visitors without falling into the alleged trap of fascism by unproblematically (re)asserting the historical nexus between Nazi architecture and emotion?

As I will show through two case studies—the *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* in Dresden, and the newly opened *Denkort* Bunker Valentin in Bremen-Farge—the forces of affect remain a powerful factor to be reckoned with in visitors' experience of museum and memorial spaces, as they can take on the mode of what I would call 'reactionary' versus 'productive' affect.<sup>5</sup> I suggest reactionary affect implies a psychic state of acting out uncensored emotions or even rage, often in the context of radical right-wing anti-immigrant movements, whereas productive affect enhances visitor's critical engagement with original sites of NS installations or objects and spaces in military history museums. Historically, Nazi large-scale installations have epitomized the Nazi strategy of imbuing architecture with affect and emotion, thus combining the ideology of representation with political psychology, a nexus that has become the defining characteristic of Nazi architecture. Dispelling the spell of fascism in post-war Germany has involved the postulation of a rationalizing approach, a working-through (Adorno), as well as a deep-seated suspicion towards any political ideology and/or aesthetics instrumentalizing affect and emotion. In distinction to American approaches to Holocaust memory culture that often explicitly draw on the productive role of affect, German memory culture, especially vis-à-vis Nazi architecture and artifacts, has since the 1960s effectively rendered visitors' feelings and affect taboo for fear of rekindling Nazi-nostalgic sentiments.

However, I contend that storing away Nazi art and artifacts and declaring most large-scale Nazi installations as de facto no-go zones in the post-war years has contributed to an ongoing gravitational pull exerted by the physical legacy of the Nazi era as embodied in its industrial sites and all manner of buildings. The thrill that continues to attract visitors to large-scale NS tourist destinations—official and unofficial—which Arendes refers to as 'Kitzel' (a ticklish tease, a typically sexualized pleasure), I suspect has much to do with visitors' 'trespassing' on sites declared off limits—not only physically, but also ideologically and symbolically.<sup>6</sup> In a way, such trespassers are perceived to violate the explicit or unspoken code warning decent cultural subjects to stay away from taboo objects. However, as more and more of these sites have been reclaimed from the taboo zone and opened up to the public in recent years, a new approach to the vexed question of affect and Nazi architecture is needed—one that accounts for the historical perspective which explores how the intertwining of affect and architecture was to serve to aims of Nazi ideology, and a more contemporary one, which is acutely aware of this historical perspective while simultaneously acknowledging and exploring (rather than foreclosing) the various affective claims that sites of fascism continue to exert on visitors today. The distinction I am making here is a crucial one. It involves asking the question of how contemporary visitors actually affectively relate to the NS large-scale installations they visit. To get frank answers to this question requires that we unlink the notion of affect elicited by objects and sites from their historically verified instrumentalization, that is, in this case, from their inscription into, and by, Nazi ideology, because this automatic correlation of Nazi architecture and fascist-friendly affect has, into the present, prevented curators from calling into question a purely 'rationalist' (affect-free) approach to German memory culture.

### Exhibiting military history in troubling times: Dresden's Museum for Military History and 'reactionary' affect in the streets

When Dresden's redesigned Military History Museum (*Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr*, or MHM) opened in October 2011, hopes were high that this radically different way of presenting German military history, especially its militaristic history from 1914-1945, would engage visitors' preconceived ideas about war and violence.<sup>7</sup> Libeskind's wedge-shaped design, which cuts into the existing structure of the museum that in 1897 was first used to house an arsenal collection and later served as an army museum under the Nazis and the GDR, sought to visibly disrupt and displace the historical arsenal to create a new experience of museum space. Libeskind was hoping that 'the architecture will engage the public in the deepest issue of how organized violence and how military history and the fate of the city are intertwined' and the MHM received international acclaim for its design and its anti-war message. Five years on, as Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) demonstrations on the streets of Dresden rage on (most recently on the day commemorating German unification on October 3, 2016), it may be worth examining the striking disconnect between the Museum's intent to deconstruct militarism and these radical right-wing demonstrations that, ever since the founding of Pegida in 2014, have wreaked violence on Dresden's historic streets.<sup>8</sup> The question of the relationship between the MHM and the community surrounding it becomes all the more urgent as the unleashing of radical populist violence seems to have seeped into the fabric of the city and as images of continuing attacks on immigrants, refugees and asylum homes flicker across TV screens. The toxic reactionary affect in the streets clearly runs counter to the MHM's intent to ground a critical rethinking of the history of militarism in the very notion of the human element in the course of exploring the origins—and destructive effects—of war and violence. And yet, this message has fallen onto deaf ears with much of the local community, specifically with supporters of right-wing movements and parties such as Pegida and the NPD. What exactly is the civic mission and responsibility of public museums in these turbulent times, especially if they are devoted to promoting anti-militaristic, non-violent cultures of social and political interaction? And how might certain elements of the exhibition narratives need to be rethought to preempt an implicit, even though unintentional, endorsement of radical right-wing politics?

The ongoing and increasing anti-immigrant violence on the streets of Dresden and the claiming of public space for radical right-wing populist grievances aimed at democratic policies—German or European—fly in the face of Libeskind's postulated hope that the very architecture of the MHM ought to prompt visitors to ask questions such as: 'Why do people participate in organized violence? Why do people follow fanatical leaders?'<sup>9</sup> Libeskind had clearly conceived his architectural intervention of the wedge, which literally cuts into and through the old structures of militarism as symbolized by MHM's history, as one that would provide, in the reflective space of the viewing platform where the wedge emerges from the old building, a counter-narrative to militaristic domination by pointing to and commemorating the destruction of Dresden by the Allied Forces. The triangular structure of the wedge signifies, for Libeskind, the three points from which Dresden was destroyed by Allied bombers on February 13/14, 1945. While visitors on the viewing platform thus look out over the rebuilt city of Dresden as risen 'from the ashes,' they—so Libeskind insists—should also become aware of the destruction of European cities once originating in and directed from Dresden. While the aspect of Dresden-based Nazi aggression towards European cities is present in the fourth floor exhibits, it recedes into the background, giving way, as visitors step out onto the viewing platform and look out over the city, to a narrative arc defined by the city's destruction and rebirth, and—most important—to a redefinition of its status as a perpetrator of Nazi destruction to a victim of Allied revenge.

This hegemonic narrative of Dresden's victimization at the hands of the Allies, which fueled deep-seated anti-Americanism and anti-British sentiment in GDR citizens critical of the continued influence of imperialist forces during the Cold War, has now morphed in disconcerting ways into radical right-wing populist grievances against 'foreigners' responsible, in their eyes, for the ostensible dissolution of homogenous, tight-knit, local (white) communities put under pressure by new arrivals of refugees from Syria. Given the long tradition of proponents

of various right-wing causes—such as Holocaust denier David Irving—appropriating and instrumentalizing the bombardment of Dresden for their own purposes, it would seem relevant to share the long history of such ideological use and abuse of this very history with visitors in terms of historical fact at the very site where it all happened – that is, in the city of Dresden. To not do so would seem to play into the hands of those who perpetuate these myths of one-sided victimization of the Germans by the Allied forces. In its curatorial approach the MHM has tended to suspend judgment and critical commentary on the very history it exhibits, whether it relates to the GDR's ideological appropriation of Dresden or to the city's fascist legacy, and instead focused on the human capacity and cost of war. At times, the historical specificity of German military aggression is subsumed under the generalized theme of the 'anthropological constant of aggression present throughout history'— that is, it is inscribed into a larger anthropological context and thus treated as though its occurrence were governed by a law of nature. There is little room for raising the question of accountability once the issue of perpetration has been replaced by the platitude that human aggression has led to wars throughout history—and even less for a critical working-through of the visitors' potential familial implications in the histories that are being represented.

Undoubtedly, the space that most emphatically conjures up emotions in visitors is the viewing platform on the fourth floor. Visitors step into Libeskind's V-shaped open-air wedge—whose tip points towards the position of the RAF bombers that destroyed the city of Dresden on February 13/14 of 1945—and emerge onto the platform to look out over the city center of Dresden. Promotional photos of the Museum show a Bundeswehr soldier in this space, presumably reflecting on the complicated history at this very site. This history is caught between the classic account of Nazis as perpetrators and the German-centric narrative of Dresden's victimization at the hands of the Allied Forces during the last days of WWII in a bombing campaign that has often been described as a crime against humanity and a war crime akin to that of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the atomic bomb. Thus, when visitors step into the walk-in space of Libeskind's wedge, they are likely to be most impressed by the ideologically freighted narrative of Dresden's victimization at the hands of the Allied forces, which can displace other potential meanings of the V-shaped space, such as the victory over the forces of Nazism by these same forces, or, on a purely visual and metaphoric level, the insertion of a radical break with Germany's militaristic past. Architecturally, the symbolic rupture with injurious German military history is performed most convincingly through Libeskind's wedge and his new architectural wing in the form of a V as seen from above. By literalizing the V and severing the structural continuity of the former armory building, Libeskind splits and reunites the neo-classical building under new terms, thus resignifying the old Nazi dream of the *Vergeltungswaffe* (V2 reprisal weapon) by invoking a new meaning for the V, such as said victory over the forces of Nazism. The very space of Libeskind's wedge, however, conjures up for visitors in powerful ways the history of Dresden's victimization and runs the risk of becoming the dominant narrative that 'forgets' that this victimization was preceded by the Nazi's assault on Europe. Thus, ironically, the walk-in space of Libeskind's wedge, which is to signify symbolically a radical rupture with German militarist history, can also lend itself to an uncritical reassertion of the (often right wing appropriated) mythology surrounding Dresden's victimization. Continuing to renegotiate the narrative of German victimization in Dresden has been politically challenging in the post-unification period of the Berlin Republic: myths of continued self-perceived victimhood have spilled over into the recent public sense of cultural 'displacement' by an alleged 'Islamic' influence in Germany brought on by the recent arrival of refugees from war-torn countries.

The question is whether the MHM's all-inclusive approach of depoliticizing military history by grounding it in a shared notion of the human capacity for destruction, may not unintentionally play into the hands of those right-wing constituents the museum seeks not to offend. As Hannah Arendt observed, the emancipatory promise of a shared notion of the human or humanity runs up against its limit since the human is inevitably inscribed in a narrative of nationhood and thus offers little protection for vulnerable populations such as refugees and displaced persons that cannot claim the protection of sovereign national states. It is understandable that the MHM mobilizes the image of the 'new humanitarian mission' to describe the current rules of engagement for the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) in order to highlight the very different

current military culture as compared to its authoritarian predecessor regimes. Exhibits on the ground floor show how past challenges revolving around unsavory military history have given way to the happy narrative of the Bundeswehr's new humanitarian mission, promoted by its integration into NATO, where it joins the current concerted effort against the War on Terror. What may be missing in this anti-militaristic narrative of the new humanitarian mission is an in-depth critical representation of the ideological processes of Othering—of enemy creation in terms of race and gender – both from a historical and contemporary perspective. In the oddly perpetrator-free zone of the museum space, where issues of perpetration and military aggression during WWI and WWII are often deflected into a more generalized retreat into abstraction (i.e., the human capacity for destruction), visitors are provided hardly any opportunity for developing an empathetic relationship to victims of Nazism—one that would complement, and complicate the narrative of victimization of the citizens of Dresden.

While the exhibits in the newly designed Libeskind wing invite visitors to critically reflect on WWII history—through playful participation in the war game of destruction as presented from the perspective of its (Blitzkrieg and other) victims of WWII technology (for example, an artistic installation draws attention to the effects of the atomic bomb on humans as its bright light, generated at random intervals, projects visitors' shadows onto the wall), visitors are hardly encouraged to empathize with—rather than just look at—victims of German military aggression. An exception may be one of the lateral hallways exhibiting 'scandalous' objects—we learn at the entrance that the objects displayed may be disturbing—which features, for example, part of a skull of a German soldier who ostensibly killed himself or disturbing photographs of almost naked Jewish women in the Lviv pogrom of 1941 being chased through the streets by Ukrainian nationalists who were Nazi sympathizers. All these objects are shocking and scandalizing on their own terms and raise the question of whether their hodgepodge presentation with lids that have to be opened (like a peeping Tom device) accomplishes anything critical beyond creating a tantalizing effect. While this walk-in cabinet of curiosities seems to be inspired by Libeskind's concept of the void, it fails to channel the affects unleashed in response to the objects in pedagogically meaningful ways. Even though the MHM seeks to draw its visitors into reenacting, or playfully engaging with, the game of war (such as in the petting zoo of 'stuffed animals,' which highlights the function of animals during wartime), the presentation of objects in fact invites only a curious, but affectively detached, gaze at the history of WWII.<sup>10</sup>

What may be needed is a widening of the lens along the lines of Libeskind's call for imbricating the history of the destruction of Dresden in the larger story of the 'destruction of Europe and European cities by the Nazis [...] One cannot separate the Shoah and the museums that deal with memories from the history of Germany and Dresden.'<sup>11</sup> This would allow us to more explicitly contextualize the Dresden bombings with respect to the larger Nazi assault on Europe and enable a much-needed discussion of the GDR's specific spin on the Dresden bombings and its vexed relationship to fascism—whose legacy was of no concern to the GDR, since it considered itself an anti-fascist state. If a critical tackling of the history of fascism is explicitly elided in the narrative of the exhibit and the minds of many local visitors, as it does not seem to pertain to them as former citizens of the GDR, then there is no pedagogical stepping stone that would allow viewers to draw analogies between the racialized ideologies of the past and the radical events of the present.

At stake is the question of how to interpret Libeskind's radical intervention into history through design on a curatorial level, that is, we need to ask whether this intervention can be translated (in all its critically radical intent and expression) into exhibition strategies and outreach workshops that challenge the violent, radically rightwing populist movement manifesting itself on Dresden's streets. Given the virulence of the movement, the urgent question for the MHM should be whether it desires to situate itself as an 'upstander' museum in Samantha Power's sense or whether it wants to remain a 'bystander museum', presenting controlled and variously limited interventions while largely refraining from taking positions on issues. A bystander stands by, often 'neutrally,' while an upstander museum would confront head-on the inconvenient issue of whether fascism is back in the form of new popular radical right-wing movements and send a cautionary message to all those who perpetrate violent hate crimes in the streets of Dresden. As it stands, the MHM has already taken steps in this latter direction by organizing an exhibit on *Rechtsextreme Gewalt in Deutschland 1990-2013* (Radical right-wing violence

in Germany 1990-2013) and a current photo exhibit on a right-wing terrorist group in Germany by the artist Regina Schmeken, entitled *Blutiger Boden. Die Tatorte des NSU* (Bloody soil. The scenes of National Socialist Underground crimes). However, it may be that the social and political issues that underlie the formation and continued popular support of Pegida in Dresden and the state of Saxony will take at least one generation to sort out. The time for summarily 'historizing' Pegida may thus not have arrived just yet. In a recent interview with the German weekly *Die Zeit*, the academic director of the MHM, Gorch Pieken, responded to the question of how he would 'historize' Pegida in the MHM by pointing to the gender politics of the right-wing movement, which is composed mostly of men who feel threatened by the proclaimed equality of the sexes and who conjure up the old racist image of the 'brown' male refugee sexually assaulting German women. Pieken also points to an unexpected speaker for Pegida, Turkish-born Akif Pirinçci, who represents the absurd position of a token ethnic voice against the 'Muslimization' of Europe.<sup>12</sup>

The promise of a more critically enlightened future that Libeskind's architectural resignification seemed to convey evaporates when a large segment of Dresden's socio-political body relapses into modalities of proto-fascist mentality and uncannily performs fascinating fascism in the very present—this time around as a populist Islamophobic movement whose founder Lutz Bachmann dresses up as Hitler on his Facebook page. This issue undoubtedly is more complex than any architectural resignification or exhibit at the MHM could plausibly address, yet, surely, it is desirable that the MHM integrate its commitment to a new inclusive vision of German society into its exhibits—especially, as they celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the German Armed Forces. The current return of a populist sentiment that explicitly draws on fascist rhetoric and scare tactics raises the question of whether GDR ideology has neglected adequately addressing the historical experience of fascism, given that it has construed fascism to be the exclusive problem of the Federal Republic. In this time of crisis around basic civic values of co-existence, it would seem that the MHM could contribute a great deal to confronting head on the present-day enactment of 'fascinating fascism' on German streets. As extreme right-wing violence gets acted out on the streets of Dresden's historic center, the mission of the MHM undergoes a process of transformation. Its object is no longer defined exclusively by a critical coming to terms with the history of German militarism, but instead the MHM must also face and process the complicated reinscription of this history—along with its still intact right-wing ideologies—into current events, right at its doorstep. As a public service institution that showcases the image of the Bundeswehr, it must address the troubling issue of the reactionary affect expressing itself outside its doors if it wants to stay true to its mission, which is to showcase and deconstruct the complex manifestations of Germany's militaristic culture as it pertains to the past but also to, and for, the (militant) present. If it is committed to the performance of its rupture with German military history not only on its façade, but as a public service institution, then it must step up to the current challenge of civic education through the critical teaching of history.

### **Siting Difficult History: From the Bunker Valentin to the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin**

The recent opening of the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin in Bremen-Farge on November 10, 2015 provides an instructive case study of a thoughtful engagement with the tainted history of the Bunker that invites visitors to participate in a walking exploration of the site guided by 25 carefully chosen theme-based info stations.<sup>13</sup> Bunker Valentin was the name of a Nazi secret submarine wharf that was to assemble and launch the newly designed submarine type XXI, which was to turn around the war and secure final victory for the Nazis. The Bunker constituted the signature project developed under the command of the German NS Navy (Kriegsmarine). Its construction began in May 1943 and had almost been completed by the time the RAF bombarded the Bunker in March 1945. Although not a single submarine was ever assembled at the Bunker Valentin before it was bombed in 1945, the site has been steeped in the history and mythology of the 'miracle weapons' that ostensibly were supposed to win WWII for the Nazis. This mythology lasted into the 1950s and contributed to the public's ongoing fascination with the site. Like other large-scale NS military installations, this site had been in use by the West German military (Bundeswehr), first as a training ground and subsequently as a storage

facility. It remains fenced off as a *Denkort*, even though the structure of the Bunker is starkly visible to passersby and remains an eyesore in the otherwise idyllic rural landscape at the banks of the Weser.

Undoubtedly, a paramount pedagogical mission at former military installations, such as the Bunker Valentin, ought to be: how to break the spell of visitors' ongoing fascination with Nazi advances in military science and technology. This involves reframing the stories of Nazi military aspirations and proposing historically-based, alternate narratives that challenge visitors' preconceived ideas. For instance, rather than reading the Bunker Valentin as an expression of unshattered military might, its architecture could be seen to represent a symbol of fantasmatically projected military ambitions. Architecturally, it combines the offensive/defensive function of bunkers; its imposing structure served to protect the assembly space for submarines and, in this way, responded to the continued threat of defeat, (since the Nazis had incurred a string of military defeats when construction on the Bunker began in May 1943). In rethinking site-specific WWII military history, the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin integrates the deconstruction of the myth of the submarine miracle weapon with the history of forced labor at the construction site, and shows how the concentration camp KZ Farge, POW camps and the *Arbeiterziehungslager* (literally: labor reeducation camp) run by the Gestapo provided a steady stream of workers (whose high mortality rates, it should be noted, plagued the construction project).<sup>14</sup> Deconstructing prevalent public myths of fascism thus involves enabling visitors to critically reflect upon the stories and expectations they bring to the site, and then revising their 'own' story of the site during their visit.

The designation of the former Bunker Valentin as a *Denkort*—a place to think but also to remember—provides an important conceptual intervention in the ongoing debate of how to designate large-scale NS installations: as sites of perpetration and slave labor often supplied through surrounding concentration camps, and as development sites for destructive military technology. The concept of *Denkort* marks the recent, generation-specific paradigm shift emerging from a reorientation of the pedagogical mission that has traditionally characterized *Gedenkstätten* as sites of remembrance—a term which has been used to refer to former concentration camps in the context of the Holocaust. With the passing of the survivor (and perpetrator) generation, the concept of *Denkort* seeks to contextualize Nazi sites of perpetration for present and future generations.<sup>15</sup> The very terminology of *Denkort* inscribes the site with the mission of critical thinking; and although fascism is not explicitly referenced, the walking tour, its displayed objects, photographs and physical traces of the forced labor construction site, could not provide a clearer image of the Nazi military aspirations and the human cost incurred to achieve this goal. The walking tour and exhibits in the Bunker also convey that POWs, slave laborers, concentration camp inmates and others forced to build the site, were essentially disposable objects once their potential for work had been exhausted. The curatorial mission at the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin explicitly resists the marketing move that has been deployed by one of its counterparts – the *Historisch-Technisches* Museum Peenemünde – in curating the history of Nazi science and technology.

Whereas the *Historisch-Technisches* Museum Peenemünde aims for an *Erlebnis* character of visitors' experience—that is, an adventure they are living through, a personal experience—the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin invites visitors to think, to reflect, while they explore the outside and inside space of the Bunker. Such an exploration may be akin to an *Erlebnis*, however, it is not marketed as such. It seems that the very import of the language of tourism, especially the unreflective use of marketing strategies that seem to enjoy popularity in museum settings, runs the risk of going counter to the pedagogical-educational mission at former large-scale NS installations. When the curator/ marketing executive of the *Historisch-Technisches* Museum Peenemünde state that the Museum must compete with other tourist attractions on the island of Usedom to remain economically viable and hence has to provide non-offensive packaging of the former site to a 'minority' of visitors who want to pay homage to the military technology and engineering ingenuity of the '*Wunderwaffen*' (miracle weapons), including the V2 *Vergeltungswaffe*, then the question arises whether this 'fascism light' approach does justice to a deep engagement with the tainted history at this site. It is not entirely clear whether it is the Museum's corporate approach to its site and its objects on display that has instantiated the

troubling turn to the tourist industry, or whether this turn was facilitated by the distanced look at fascism, which has grown out of the specificity of the GDR's reception of history in which fascism was only a historical problem for West Germany.

The architectural structure of the Bunker Valentin presents visitors with a less polished and markedly visceral experience of Nazi militarism and raises the question of how to contain the phenomenon of 'fascinating fascism' most effectively at this site. The key issue, I contend, is not just how the story of the Bunker Valentin is reframed, but how visitors' affect and emotions elicited by the space are addressed. My discussion of the architectural space of the Bunker Valentin challenges the prevailing curatorial wisdom that it is best to discourage any expression of visitors' affect and expunge it altogether from the process of understanding, in the hope that this would preempt any tendency towards a veneration of fascism or fascist engineering achievements.

Central to the critical reframing of former Nazi WWII military sites is the issue of how these sites mark and represent a clear rupture with their military history. Postulating such a distinct rupture enables visitors to displace, within their own thinking, the often unspoken premise of fascinating fascism. The question of dis/continuity of use is crucial: we must ask how the former military bunker was used in the post-war period by its subsequent owners. In 1958, the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces) appropriated the Bunker, and in the 1960s, started using it as a Bundesmarine (German Navy) storage site, especially for oil reserves.<sup>16</sup> The very fact that the Bunker Valentin had been in use by the Bundeswehr until the end of 2010 (with the unintended consequence that survivors of forced labor and their family members did not have access to the Bunker for commemorative purposes until a memorial was constructed close to the bunker in 1983) flies in the face of MHM's carefully choreographed message of a thoughtful rupture with German WWII military history.<sup>17</sup> The continued use of the Bunker Valentin by the German Armed forces represents a blind spot in the MHM's showcased commitment to the new humanitarian mission of the Bundeswehr and speaks to the challenge of accounting for difficult histories and memories at military sites that are still in use. In many ways, the Bundeswehr's desensitization to the human cost of Nazi warfare at the Bunker Valentin, and the subsequent need for commemoration at this site, can be considered a return of the '(Nazi) repressed' that highlights how ordinary Nazi military sites defy the neatly packaged musealization of German military history at the MHM and complicate the new post-unification narrative of the Bundeswehr's humanitarian mission.

Sites such as the Bunker Valentin often tend to be overlooked as they are geographically located off the beaten track (i.e., in the far Northern outskirts of the city of Bremen) and considered at best a part of regional, rather than national history. The conflict between the competing needs of its continued use on the one hand and the commemoration of past abuse at the Bunker Valentin site on the other was highlighted in 1983, when the city of Bremen dedicated a modest memorial remembering the forced laborers who perished during the construction of the Bunker due to the grueling workload, abuse, and starvation. The memorial by the Bremen artist Friedrich Stein, entitled 'Annihilation by Labor',<sup>18</sup> features commemorative plaques and consists of a concrete, tilted column that is broken up at the edge by protruding bodies, arms and heads, which signify and honor the slave laborers on whose backs the Bunker was built. The memorial's building material, concrete, is meant to refer to the labor-intensive and back-breaking process of mixing concrete for the construction of the Bunker, a process that included concrete mixers which were described by some survivors as an all-destructive, never satiated Moloch.<sup>19</sup> Earlier this year, in May 2016, the site of the memorial was vandalized by right-wing extremists—a troubling trend that has also affected other *Gedenkstätten* in Germany, including concentration camp sites. Since the Bunker was a designated secret military site at the time the memorial was to be installed, it had to be placed outside the fenced-in grounds of the Bunker and was thus ironically exiled from the 'scene of the crime' (*Tatort*), i.e., the Bunker Valentin. The fact that European survivors of forced labor and their descendants could not commemorate their family members' experiences at the Bunker Valentin itself, clearly speaks to an opportunity missed by the Bundeswehr—that is, the opportunity to accommodate the commemorative needs of survivors. However, the newly opened circle tour of the Bunker Valentin corrects this exiling of the memorial from the grounds of the Bunker and shows that both are intrinsically connected in that the visitors' tour starts and ends at the memorial.



**Denkort as Tatort (scene of the crime)<sup>20</sup>**

In his book *Bunker Archeology*, Paul Virilio states that the Nazi bunkers constructed all over Europe constituted the military counter-part to the Nazi veneration of neo-classical architecture.<sup>21</sup> Virilio's observation underscores the necessity of Libeskind's architectural dismantling of the neo-classical core of the Military History Museum in Dresden and raises the question of the ideological after-life of the surviving bunker structures. While Virilio focuses primarily on the bunkers of the Atlantic Wall, which were to defend all European territories, his astute analysis of the geographical landscape of war and of the military-industrial nexus is pertinent to the present analysis of the Bunker Valentin as an unsightly military relic from another, seemingly far removed, era. Other Nazi bunkers, such as the one in Kiel (code-named 'Kilian'), were mostly destroyed by the Allied Forces in the immediate aftermath of WWII. However, Bunker Valentin escaped complete demolition, since the impact of the force of an explosion would have damaged the surrounding local infrastructure. Even before the Bunker Valentin could be toured, its stark, monolithic and foreboding structure was highly visible to visitors taking a stroll on the banks of the Weser. Rainer Habel, whose father was a submarine pilot, aptly captured the paradoxical situation of the bunker: Even though it was officially elided from city maps due to the fact that it was a military site belonging to the Bundeswehr, it was also very much in the face of people visiting the nature reserve along the Weser.<sup>22</sup> Visible, and yet deemed officially not to exist, the Bunker Valentin represents what Virilio called 'the last theatrical gesture in the endgame of Occidental military history' (46)—a stranded, colossal structure stripped of its original function and now constituting, at best, a kind of prop with an uncanny, out-of-place afterlife. Post-war Germans at first did not know what to do with it. As such, the bunker was subject to multiple suggestions for repurposing until, in the 1960s, it became a training ground for the new military forces of Western Germany (Bundeswehr).<sup>23</sup> Its continued use by the Bundeswehr, first as an active training site and then as a storage place, conferred to the site a military aura that seemed to foster the public's imagination and stirred up fantasies of Nazi engineering achievements.<sup>24</sup>

In an effort to combat the 'fascinating fascism' mythology that had begun to surround the bunker, many local historians and activists have been trying, since the 1980s, to debunk certain persistent myths of Nazi feats and to direct attention to the buried history of the larger Bunker site and its surrounding labor and concentration camps. It was especially disturbing to many that these myths were completely blind to the grueling working conditions and loss of life among European and Russian forced laborers who had constructed the Bunker. These critical interventions have informed the current reinvention and resignification of the former Bunker Valentin as a *Denkort* that bears witness to the negative foundational memory of Nazi domination over Europe from which today's idea of a united Europe emerged. The new information center housed in the newly designated Bunker Valentin provides histories and short biographies of the slave laborers from various countries including France, the Netherlands, Ireland, Poland and Russia. A slideshow projected onto the inside of the Bunker wall shows, in a loop, photographs of about 300 slave laborers and thus personalizes and commemorates their stories and lives, thereby adding faces to the more abstract memorial outside the Bunker. Christel Trouvé, the academic director of the *Denkort* Valentin, states that it was important to families of former forced laborers, who lived and died at the Bunker, to see their loved ones commemorated through photographs, so that they would have some tangible trace of their lives.

As the current walking tour invites visitors to explore the outside and inside of the Bunker on their own or equipped with an audio-guide, the question arises of how audiences relate to the architecture of the bunker, its complicated history and mythology. While the exhibition narrative laudably and carefully choreographs the tour by providing a historical contextualization of the building that includes data on the specific conditions of forced labor, survival rates, etc., at designated info stations (*Themeninseln*), the impact of the bunker space on visitors or the visitors' own reflections on how they feel being in this space has, at this point, not been considered in the exhibition design. When recently prompted in an interview to talk about the missing consideration of affect in relation to the bunker site, Christel Trouvé suggested that there is a constitutive barrier in current museum pedagogy that prevents taking into account the role of affect or emotions due to the fact that there is a stark concern that these

feelings could go in the 'wrong direction.' However, Trouvé remains open to the possibility of incorporating the question of affect into the exhibit design of the Bunker Valentin as it evolves and potentially sees an important place for it. Trouvé's initial hesitation about considering the question of affect at Nazi sites of perpetration, and specifically in pedagogically guided tours, strongly resonates with a dominant trend in museum pedagogy that may be specifically German. This pedagogical tangent aims to excise affect and emotions from the experience of visitors to historic sites of annihilation and extermination even as it invites visitors to these sites of memory and commemoration.

Should the history of the Bunker Valentin be told primarily as that of a *Tatort* (literally: the location of the criminal deed) and thus in a sober, fact-based manner, or should it involve guidance in how to read Nazi architectural space in ways that include its affective dimension? And are both necessarily mutually exclusive? Before delving into these questions, it is helpful to remind ourselves that the planning and construction of the Bunker Valentin in May 1943, that is, in the middle of WWII, arose out of a massive military crisis that already had signs of defeat written all over it: the loss of Stalingrad in February 1943, the superior power of the British marine, etc. It was the military and ideological Nazi appeal to 'miracle' weapons that were to turn the course of history around, and in many ways, the Bunker Valentin embodies this – ultimately thwarted – hope. The tension between the bunker's defensive function (i.e., the thickness of its walls, the use of steel-reinforced concrete in the ceiling, that were to make it impervious to Allied airpower) and its offensive function as a war submarine assembly site and launching station (*Tauchbecken*) is clearly visible and legible on the remaining structure that visitors can tour. This tension, I suggest, could become a productive point of departure for thinking about the affective impact of the bunker space on visitors. It allows visitors to consider how their current experience of space in the Bunker is radically different from that of the forced laborers who worked on the construction site and yet, at the same time, might provide a glimpse of how the bunker's spatial dimensions were experienced by those working there. It is at this point that we might ask: How does the current *Denkort* Bunker Valentin enact a clear rupture with its past history? The issue of such a rupture is crucial since the renaming of the Bunker into a *Denkort* signifies that this very rupture (with the Nazi past) has already been performed and was subsequently inscribed into the bunker's new designation. Spatially, this rupture is signified through the addition of an information center at the entrance of the physical space of the Bunker Valentin and the construction of a hallway that allows visitors to take a peek into the destroyed part of the Bunker and to experience its sounds, smells and overall ambiance through an opening. As I will discuss later, I am particularly interested in how we can think about the rupture in relationship to the partially destroyed part of the Bunker Valentin, given that this part has been appropriated by nature through the natural forces of decay, plant growth, etc., but also an incursion of bats that have been given a space serving as bat sanctuary.

In his article, 'Der Bunker wird Denkort,' Marcus Meyer seeks to reground the public imagination which has spun its own narratives around the Bunker by using what he calls a 'forensic' approach.<sup>25</sup> This approach seeks to reconstruct the history of the 'scene of the crime' by deriving it from the material traces that remain and are mostly still visible at the site today. He offers detailed information on the WWII and post-war history of the Bunker, on the construction operations performed at this site, on the exploitative and abusive practices towards forced labor, etc. Meyer contrasts the forensic reconstruction of history with an affective or emotional approach to the Bunker, arguing that affect merely represents visitors' subjective feelings and expectations that clash with a strictly historical – and thus presumably objectively verifiable – interpretation of the site. Drawing on the work of Matthias Heyl, Meyer recommends that the bunker be viewed predominantly as a '*Tatort*' that secures the forensic traces of a crime.<sup>26</sup> In other words, Meyer wants visitors to experience the bunker by using an exclusively rational-forensic, and thus necessarily detached, approach to the crimes committed at this site. While I agree that the forensic approach constitutes an important part of the new *Denkort* concept of the Bunker Valentin, I would, however, like to challenge this reductive dismissal of affect as a merely subjective emotion that necessarily misguides visitors and leads them astray. Clearly, the question of affect and emotions at the Bunker Valentin site arises in a context that is quite different from that of concentration camp sites, since sites like Auschwitz, Dachau, etc., generate an implicit empathic demand for identification with the victims of Nazi atrocities.

Identification with Jewish victims of Nazi practices of annihilation is, in many ways, much easier for Germans having grown up with the centrality of Holocaust memorial culture, than the complicated affective work required of the later generations of post-war Germans facing their own Nazi history and familial complicity with the regime—Germans of the '68 generation or, for that matter, millennials and others born in the latter part of the twentieth century, that is, Germans who may have no living memory of familial ties to Nazi history which as such seems to lie beyond their immediate reach, or, for that matter, beyond anything that would render them accountable as a generation. In other words, there is an asymmetry of affective response when it comes to the issue of German generations being confronted with the crimes of Nazi perpetration.

The question of how to relate to inherited Nazi history and architecture, such as the Bunker Valentin's, from a generational perspective that fancies itself at a safe temporal distance to the Third Reich, I would argue, is fundamental. Such a relationship is surely complex, especially as the Bunker itself exerts certain responses from typical visitors. Its interior space, for one, produces an eerie sensation of the quasi-sublime in its visitors as they perceive the vast space of the bunker that leaves many of them in awe. As architecture and the architectural ambiance affects visitors, we can no longer speak of visitors' projections onto certain spaces but rather have to concede that visitors are in the grip of an affective language of bunker architecture to which they are subjected. They physically experience the vastness and immense height of this space as something out of this world, potentially facilitating an encounter with something quite like the sublime that dwarfs their own significance. The undestroyed part of the bunker offers visitors a walk-in opportunity that gives them a unique experience of Nazi military space (even under less than ideal lighting conditions)—ironically, though, one emptied to a large degree of objects that would tie the space back to practical-industrial and thus human-scale concerns.<sup>27</sup> We might say therefore that the sublime thus experienced is historically misleading were it not for survivors of forced labor at the bunker, such as Harry Callan, who have described their own experience of it as feeling 'like a little ant' while it was filled with Nazi industry: 'You're like a little ant...in the bunker. It's so huge. The thing is, if you start lecturing people they get annoyed. You've got to bring in that curiosity business...what's this place about. You've got to get them there and once they step inside...they're amazed at the size of the bunker. Then you can tell them things about it.'<sup>28</sup> The experience of being dwarfed by this vast space, what we might call a dwarfing effect, seems thus definitely at work at this site which elicits all kinds of emotions, depending on whose point of view we consider.

It should thus be important, from the point of view of museum pedagogy, that these emotions be addressed right then and there – or that a historical contextualization or narrative be provided that allows visitors to embed and ground their affect. To not do so runs the risk of leaving visitors alone while they are swept away in awe caused by the spatial or dwarfing effects of this (a-historically emptied) space that – especially in its emptiness – seems to confront them with a kind of 'Nazi sublime.' Undoubtedly, there is an ideological Nazi mission inscribed into this military space of production: if there was anyone who doubted that the Nazis could turn the war around and ultimately be victorious, entering and walking in this space might make them reconsider. In other words, the bunker spatially seduces visitors and all who walk through it, as it spatially suggests massive capability and military might. It is Nazi military propaganda embodied in concrete architecture. It may be this awe-inspiring effect on visitors' affect that scares museum pedagogues worrying about emotions taking a wrong turn. What if it were to perform some sort of military propaganda work, eliciting something akin to a belated conversion experience in visitors? As long as visitors are firmly grounded in a historical context that guides their responses in a proper (Nazi-critical) way, the dwarfing effect will safely remain unspecific —unless, it is picked up by the right wing and turned into a message about lost Nazi grandeur and aspirations.

Interestingly enough, in seeking to ban feelings altogether from the cognitive process of understanding and interpreting the Bunker, Meyer finds himself in a methodological quandary. After disavowing the productive role of feelings in the process of interpretation, he acknowledges that visitors repeatedly express feelings of 'incredulous amazement' ('ungläubiges Erstaunen') (37) at the vastness of the space and often request to see the 'miracle submarine' weapon that was never actually produced at this site—although, if the construction site had not been

bombarded by Allied forces, who thus prevented the Nazis from completing the building, it might only have been a matter of time until it was. In a nutshell, Meyer seeks to manage the dangers posed by the sublime dwarfing effect on visitors' affects by ignoring or denying altogether the existence of affective, emotional responses to the historical space, even as he concedes that visitors have such responses in spite of the provided historical narrative with its emphasis on functionality and rational processing. So what to do with the sublime excess that ignores this pedagogical denial or repression in the name of reason?

### **The curatorial quandary: “too much” or “too little”?**

Visitors respond to the space in ways that curators find potentially unnerving. On the one hand the site offers too much (affect, an emotional response to the 'Nazi sublime'), but on the other it offers too little: where visitors desire and expect to see the miracle weapon, there is none, and the exhibit only offers a construction plan for a submarine. And this staged emptiness is deliberate since, for one, the miracle weapon was never finished nor completely assembled here or elsewhere (thereby showing up this expectation as a- or anti-historical), and, for two, curators do not want to show weapons to visitors, because they want to avoid any opportunities for fascinating fascism to assert itself (by attaching itself to ideological, especially military, objects). However, it seems to me that these bookends of curatorial anxiety might actually imply a teachable moment that shows a way out of the methodological quandary: By 'not giving the audience what they want to see' (the miracle weapon), their expectations are thwarted, to be sure, but this very absence, I argue, could be replaced by something else, that is by a discussion of how Hitler's desire to make and re-make history was predicated on a proleptic concept of history.

Hannah Arendt notes that it was one of the characteristics of the Third Reich to prophesy history (i.e., the destruction of European Jewry) and then, later, have the prophecy fulfilled and enacted. Arendt states that history as understood by the Nazis thus worked as a self-fulfilling prophecy and it is precisely this kind of proleptic production of history—ultimately thwarted—that also applies to the secret submarine weapon. In his Sportpalast speech on February 18, 1943, Joseph Goebbels exhorted his audience to wish for total war as a reality to come – as a history only waiting to be made. If Nazis were rather fast and loose with history by turning rhetoric and fictions of the future into (aspirational) history through propaganda and select recourse to mythology, then maybe we could turn this around and re-read some of their creations. As such, the very code name of the Bunker Valentin is something of a mystery: curators assume that Valentin may have been named for a certain neighborhood in Bremen called 'Vege sack.' However, I would like to draw attention to how the very name signifies in the context of the assembly and launching site for the miracle weapon. Given the cynicism that accompanied military strategy in the Third Reich, the code name Valentin could refer to the 'gift of love,' or 'kiss of death,' in the form of the new submarine weapon which was in store for the Allies, especially the British. Interestingly enough, the name 'Valentin' has an equally sinister meaning in Goethe's *Faust II*. Valentin, Gretchen's soldier brother, vows revenge as he is killed by the devil, Mephisto, and curses Gretchen's falling for Faust. Described in the text as a courageous soldier, this rhetoric describing Valentin as the morally upright soldier/victim needing to be avenged could easily be analogized to Nazi Germany representing (and understanding) itself as 'victimized' by the Allies and therefore justified in engaging in a revenge attack.

In other words, the absence of the miracle weapon could be rendered productive and illustrate the complex and problematic linkages between fiction and history in the hands of its agents and actors instead of merely leaving it blank based on the assumption that fiction and the power of imagination have no place in the former space of the Bunker. In these early years of the twenty-first century, the genre of counter-factual history has become quite popular and it offers a place for the imagination to explore the kind of 'what if' scenarios that are played out in popular movies (e.g., Quentin Tarrantino's) and TV shows, such as the US show *The Man in the High Castle*, based on the work of Philip K. Dick, which assumes that the Nazis won the war. This pedagogical approach would give fantasy a forum within which to play and play out scenarios that defy history – or perhaps explore it more deeply? If thus the 'too little' might productively be replaced by a certain use – rather than thwarting – of desire and imagination/

fantasy, what to do about the ‘too much?’ As I implied above: Since (strong) feelings are elicited by the bunker space in any case, there is no point in repressing them. Wouldn't it be more productive to use these emotions? To work with them and channel them in ways not conducive to fascinating fascism? For example, feelings could be harnessed to work in a counter-point fashion by moving visitors through the intact space of the bunker towards its ruined section. In this way the myth of Nazi striving and (vain) glory (symbolized by the intact colossal space) shipwrecks on the ruined part of the bunker. This section is partially destroyed in such a way that part of its inside has been turned outside, where the elements and nature have taken their toll. It represents in many ways the counter-monument to the Nazi veneration of the ‘law of the ruins’ from which great cultures and civilizations emanate. Yet, in this case, the destruction of Nazi military might signals forever the end to any aspirations of Nazi dominance over Europe. Or this is what visitors confronting these terminal ruins might tell themselves.

Of course, the forced laborers, POWs and concentration camp inmates confined to this site of architectural Nazism, the ones who built the Bunker had no voice—and, for these survivors, to return alive to this site of military ambition and death-mongering already constitutes a victory. Needless to say, for them this space, which they were forced to construct, contains or elicits a very different interpretation and meaning—one that also collides with that of Nazi ideology. It seems crucial to me that the point of intervention into the still intact space (with its sublimity and ‘fascinating fascism’-allure) should be one of disruption, of rupturing the seemingly seamless transition from the Nazi bunker space to the Bundeswehr storage space to the current *Denkort* space. The partially destroyed part of the bunker performs this very rupture through the fact of its having been destroyed by the Allied Forces. In fact, this part can be read in its architectural ruination as a counter-monument to Nazi ambitions but also specifically to the Nazi ideology on the significance of noble ruins that are the cradle of empires to come. In this case, there is no new empire that rises from these ruins or that emanates from their veneration (even if curators are worried about precisely that effect). Instead, all that is present is the apocalyptic instantiation of the dialectic of destruction embodied by the military architecture of the bunker and its remains, its corpse.

If the work of critical thinking and curating calls on us to deconstruct and demystify those Nazi myths that surrounded the bunker's construction and that have threatened to persist throughout the post-war after-life of the site's later uses, then in many ways there is no better space than the destroyed part of the Bunker to help us achieve that goal. Its ruin imparts apocalyptic feelings to visitors who see how the rains have been dripping through the crater in the ceiling, where the steel trusses are bent to the ground from the force of impact. Everything in this space is marked by the force of Allied bombing and its still palpable force of destruction. In many ways, this destroyed part of the bunker embodies a counter-myth to any reactionary-revisionist rhetoric of Nazi resurrection. It is the unwitting counter-monument that shows how the force of destruction that the bunker and its submarine mission was to project and inflict onto the outside world was returned back onto itself.

### **Who is afraid of emotions?**

What are we afraid of when we are suspicious of having an affective approach to the Bunker? That visitors are drawn by awe at the colossal space towards a re-glorification of the engineering deeds of the Third Reich? That a certain reactionary affect seeking to validate past glory may take hold of us? Given the historical legacy of Nazi manipulation of emotions, the a-priori suspicion of any (potentially uncritical) emotions at sites of annihilation and perpetration makes sense, especially if these are embedded in a discourse of commemoration and remembrance. However, to postulate that logic and reasoning alone would lead us to (proper) insight and understanding is a pedagogical fallacy that many museum curators and educators have sought to correct. Rather, the experience of exhibition spaces or primary sites of perpetration is multi-sensory, and hence there ought to be a multi-sensory approach that includes affects or emotions produced by the exhibit and/or space.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to remind ourselves, that the specifically German ‘prohibition’ on emotions and affect in the name of reason has its own genealogy—i.e., it emerged as a post-WW II counter-response to the Nazi manipulation of emotions. This counter-response which has

shaped normative discourse in multiple disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, however, constitutes itself a post-traumatic response (and symptom) to the historical abuse of emotions. In fact, I contend that the continuing enforcement of the banning of affect in the name of a seemingly objective, emotionally detached gaze has operated on a false premise that has equated non-emotionality with resistance to the lure of fascinating fascism and that has taken the rigidity with which it is enforced as a yard stick for measuring anti-fascist commitment. The methodological effects of this pedagogical-ideological demotion and resultant displacement of affect (because affect does not vanish when banished – it moves elsewhere) have stifled debates on how processes of cognition and understanding draw both on reason and emotional-bodily affect. As a result, the very categories of perpetrators, victims or bystanders were often deemed to be too emotionally charged and were hence replaced with seemingly value-neutral terms such as ‘actors.’ While some of the tenacity in evacuating affect may be culture-specific, a reassessment of its viability has been overdue for a long time.

Critical thinking must be able to accommodate an affective response, that is, the very claims of the Bunker Valentin as *Denkort* ought to be inclusive of an affective experience. Visitors have to be able to experience embodied space by using (and not denying) their bodies and reacting to it with their emotions. After all, this is a space that is being walked through, that is experienced with all the senses in terms of its height, vastness, darkness, and even its traces of megalomania—it is not just a visual but also a haptic space, and hence the haptic experience that is so important to getting to know the bunker should not and indeed cannot be eclipsed. In fact, I would argue that the very task of demystifying the story of the Bunker and its after-effects crucially requires addressing and exploring the issue of affect – from its relationship to the phenomenon of fascinating fascism with its potential to bring about a reactionary turn to the production of an empathetic gaze. It is, after all, the Bunker Valentin in its historical complexity as Nazi military installation that visitors come to see and not some abstract stand-in stripped of all visceral traces.

Obviously, museum pedagogues cannot prescribe to visitors how they ought to feel when encountering the bunker. And yet, it is important to provide historical contextualization and guidance that allow visitors to channel these feelings, once they are unleashed. Emotions and affect – these words carry a lot of philosophical baggage and can have various meanings in different discourses. For our purposes, emotions and feelings are a subset of affect which as such involves bodily responses. It would seem that curators seeking to bar affect from a museum site experience call upon an old dualistic model according to which mind and body are radically separate. Affect, involving the body, would as such be instantly suspect when it comes to performing mental labor since affect can intrude on the mind (move it) and thus disturb its intellectual clarity. This model may be simplistic and dated but it does explain why some curators fear the emergence of affect in a site like the Bunker’s. It would seem that affective responses open visitors up to residual Nazi myths or messages; affect is what the Nazis used to whip their subjects into frenzy; affect thus inserts chaos and violence into reason. And yet, it would be naïve to assume that twenty-first century visitors would automatically slip into what I called ‘reactionary affect’ above. Rather, I argue that their experience of affect is much more complicated and shaped by their own familial and national histories. Are visitors descendants of former forced laborers or inmates at the Neuengamme concentration camp? Are they emotionally detached locals from the region who simply drop by to take a look at what the Bunker looks like on the inside? Are they global tourists interested in WWII history or maybe dark (or grief) tourists?

It is a pedagogical fiction or wishful thinking that there is something like an emotion-free zone. The precariousness of affect at primary sites of Nazi terror cannot be managed by stipulating the binary: To feel or not to feel, especially in a complex space like the two parts of the bunker, which respectively elicit very different kinds of affective responses. The key is to embed the reactions created in visitors into a narrative that accounts for the specific history of the bunker and its multiple linkages: the body in space; an embodied walking-through the cavernous vastness; the visual-haptic exposure to the colossal architecture and varied geography that asks to be experienced as space; and so on.

In other words, to bring the question of affect and emotion into the discussion of visits to large-scale NS installations and museums of military history does not need to automatically

translate into an affirmation of Nazi ideology or of neo-Nazi or radical right-wing values. In fact, rather than assuming such an a priori correlation, demographic questionnaires should be used to assess visitors' responses. Moreover, an ideologically uncircumscribed consideration of various visitors' responses might reveal that some visitors' affective relation to such sites may be able to take on a critical function, both in terms of the historicity of the site that is being visited and its specific historical claims to affect and emotion. Rather than condemning affect outright as a dangerous ideological tool—an opinion that seems to be especially prevalent in German memorial and museum culture managing Nazi artifacts—curators need to explore affect by risking its expression, by studying its imbrication with the objects it responds to and by testing its ability to be informed by new facts, thus exploring its productive potential for a critical approach to inherited fascism. It is important to ask whether affect should not be given a place in our curatorial approaches to compromised but even monstrous historical sites and artifacts rather than to dismiss and displace affect out of memorial culture altogether—for fear (which itself is rather an irrational type of affect) that its very invocation might reinstantiate taboo claims and sentiments relating to German National Socialist history.

More thought needs to be given to the environments in which military history museums or the remaining bunker structures are housed and how their very locations contribute to or erase the message they are trying to convey today.<sup>30</sup> The polished, aesthetically pleasing neo-classical façade of the MHM fits all too neatly into the new gentrified, post-Wall image of Dresden, that has sought to reclaim its pre-WWII image as Florence on the Elbe river. Even Libeskind's deconstructivist intervention into this structure at first sight segues seamlessly into the existing historical building and disrupts most effectively only for those visitors who know how to read it. In fact, the full impact and massive scale of its disruptive effect can only be experienced from above – from the aerial perspective and not from the street view - where the intricate lattice work of the wedge (especially when lit) blends beautifully with the neo-classical façade. As the center of the city has turned into a stage for the largest emerging right-wing movement in German history with its revisionist take on Dresden's history that singles out German victimhood at the hands of the Allies and as its members have extended the narrative of that victimhood to encompass fears of current immigrants from the Middle East, the self-imposed limitations of museum pedagogy at the MHM become painfully obvious. The MHM seems to have literally lost the battle over the status of the legacy of German militarism in the streets. While museums cannot necessarily solve societal issues, they undoubtedly can help alleviate social tensions by illuminating the complexity of their causes. The question is: At what point will the MHM step up to the challenge?

To take on this challenge and allow for a deep, productive engagement with Third Reich history and its continuing legacy (and lure) of fascism, I argue, we need both, architecturally speaking – subtle, sophisticated sites such as the MHM and 'raw' originary sites like the *Denkort* Bunker Valentin. While the MHM requires a certain intellectual level of sophistication to decode its disruptive message, it is the sheer visceral impact of the surviving bunker structure, its monumental unsightliness, indeed, the plain in-your-face ugliness of the former Bunker Valentin that hits visitors with history in the form of disruption because it does not integrate into the seemingly peaceful landscape, instead standing out like a brutal marring scar inflicted on the banks of the Weser. Its very defiant, haunting structure is a reminder of what landscapes of war looked like. This is a place that should and ought to haunt in the sense that it resonates with violent history, the traces of which have been covered over by nature – though in this case nature has not promoted the process of healing. Rather, it has contributed to a kind of historical amnesia swaddling the various structures of the Bunker site—which, literally, had to be unearthed so that they could be marked again as part of the *Geschichtsllehrpfad* (historical trail) project. The *Denkort* Valentin has laudably made a concerted effort to draw the visitors' gaze to the forced laborers and concentration camp inmates who constructed the bunker, thus redirecting affect to focus on the human cost of war. However, what still seems to be missing from both the sanitized choreographing of German military history at the MHM and the newly designed *Denkort* Valentin is a head-on confrontation with the history and continuing legacy of fascinating fascism – not as a discourse that politely tip-toes around the issue of past perpetration and shirks away from engagement with urgent issues of the resurgence of right-wing nationalism, but as one that actively mobilizes in its exhibition narratives the very history

of how affect was abused, manipulated and that contrasts this abuse with the very possibilities of how today's affective work can help visitors to reformulate or recast 'reactionary affect' into, e.g., 'empathic' affect and thus the basis for non-reactionary forms of processing affect intellectually. It is the potential of these new forms of affective and post-affective (intellectual, rational) engagement emerging from historical sites of Nazi terror that may be able to take on the pernicious after-life of the fascist legacy as it currently manifests itself on German streets.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Macdonald, S. (2009), *Difficult Heritage. Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, London, Routledge.
- <sup>2</sup> See Historisch-Technisches Museum Peenemünde (ed.) (2016) *NS-Grossanlagen und Tourismus. Chancen und Grenzen der Vermarktung von Orten des Nationalsozialismus*. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag.
- <sup>3</sup> The exact source of the code name "Valentin" is not known but it is possible that the name may have been inspired by the local district of Vegesack. An adjacent submarine bunker in Kiel was aptly named "Kielian."
- <sup>4</sup> I am borrowing the phrase "fascinating fascism" from Susan Sontag, who coined it for her influential essay by that title first published February 6, 1975, in the *New York Review of Books*.
- <sup>5</sup> Witcomb, A., (2013) "Understanding the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 28:3, 255 – 271.
- <sup>6</sup> Arendes, C., "Erinnerung benötigt Ruinen. NS-Grossanlagen zwischen politisch-gesellschaftlichem Erinnerungsauftrag und touristischer Nutzung" in Historisch-Technisches Museum Peenemünde (ed.) (2016) *NS-Grossanlagen und Tourismus. Chancen und Grenzen der Vermarktung von Orten des Nationalsozialismus*. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 64.
- <sup>7</sup> See Pieken, G. "Contents and Space: New Concept and New Building of the *Militärhistorisches Museum* of the Bundeswehr," *Museum and Society*, November 2012, (10) 3, 163-173.
- <sup>8</sup> Already in 2010 the State of Saxony commissioned a study on right-wing extremism in Dresden that found deep-seated right-wing extremism in the city. Universität Bielefeld, "Rechtsextreme Strukturen, Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit und bürgerschaftliches Engagement gegen Rechtsextremismus in der Landeshauptstadt Dresden," December 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> Libeskind Lecture, "Memory, Spirit and the Future," TEDxViadellaConciliazione, May 2, 2013.
- <sup>10</sup> On interactivity in the museum setting see Witcomb A., "Interactivity: Thinking Beyond," in Macdonald S., (ed.) *Companion to Museum Studies*, 2006, Blackwell, Chichester, Wiley, 353-361.
- <sup>11</sup> Dresden's Military History Museum / Studio Libeskind October 14, 2011 <http://www.archdaily.com/172407/dresden%25e2%2580%2599s-military-history-museum-daniel-libeskind>
- <sup>12</sup> Zeit Online, "Pegida? Ab ins Museum! September 15, 2016. <http://www.zeit.de/2016/39/pegida-kuratoren-dresden-gedankenspiel-ausstellung>
- <sup>13</sup> See the website of the Denkort Bunker Valentin <http://www.Denkort-bunker-valentin.de/startseite.html>.



- <sup>14</sup> For a history of the concentration and POW camps see Buggeln, M. (2010) *Der U-Boot-Bunker "Valentin" Marinerüstung, Zwangsarbeit und Erinnerung*, Bremen: Edition Temmen, 78-164.
- <sup>15</sup> Trouvé C, Meyer M, Wetzel M, Gedenkstätten-Konzeption für den Denkort U-Boot-Bunker Valentin, September 2010 [http://www.lzpb-bremen.de/detail.php?gsid=bremen197\\_c.2052\\_de](http://www.lzpb-bremen.de/detail.php?gsid=bremen197_c.2052_de) Regarding the question of difficult heritage, see also Macdonald S., "Is 'Difficult Heritage' Still 'Difficult'? Why Public Acknowledgment of Past Perpetration May No Longer Be So Unsettling to Collective Identities," *Museum International*, 2016, No. 265-268, 6-22.
- <sup>16</sup> Buggeln, M. (2010) argues that the military significance of the oil storage facilities at Bremen-Farge was considerable especially when these were connected in the mid-1960s to the NATO pipeline, 183.
- <sup>17</sup> According to Rainer Habel, access to selected areas of the Bunker was arranged after the memorial was constructed in 1983. At first, only survivor organizations commemorated the history of the construction site and its crimes. It was not until the early 1990s that the Bundeswehr became involved in educational tours of the Bunker.
- <sup>18</sup> It needs to be pointed out that – unlike at Nazi death camps – the annihilation of workers or POWs was not the stated goal of the Nazi bureaucracy at the Bunker Valentin. It was rather the outcome of harsh working conditions, starvation, abuse and neglect. In the post-war era, some companies that had been involved in the construction used the fact that there was no systematic 'annihilation' of workers analogous to Auschwitz in their defense. The term 'annihilation' in relationship to the memorial thus describes the experience of workers as easily disposable objects that would be left to die, once they could no longer carry out their assigned duties. See also Buggeln, M. (2012) *Das System der KZ-Aussenlager: Krieg, Sklavenarbeit und Massengewalt*, Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Archive der sozialen Demokratie.
- <sup>19</sup> Portefaix, R., (1995) "'Vernichtung durch Arbeit' – Das Aussenkommando Bremen-Farge" in Gemmeke-Stenzel B., Jahr B. (ed) *Hortensien in Farge Überleben im Bunker "Valentin,"* 21-114.
- <sup>20</sup> *Tatort* means scene of the crime' in German and also refers to a German TV series of the 1980s.
- <sup>21</sup> Virilio, P., *Bunker Archeology*, New York NY, Princeton Architectural Press, 2008, ebrary, accessed 22 November 2015.
- <sup>22</sup> Habel R. W. (2001) "'Blumen für Farge' Erinnerungswege zum Bremer U-Boot-Bunker", in Silke Wenk (ed) *Erinnerungsorte aus Beton Bunker in Städten und Landschaften*, 167-179, Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag.
- <sup>23</sup> Historians have well documented the history of these plans and the surrounding military areas that included a huge underground fuel depot as well as a labor reeducation camp, a concentration camp and other POW camps. The concentration camp "KZ Farge" operated from October 1943-April 1945 to fulfill the demand for labor needed to construct the Bunker Valentin.
- <sup>24</sup> See the Spiegel online discussion of the Bunker Valentin, "Hitlers Superbunker," March 27, 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/hitlers-superbunker-grossenwahn-in-stahlbeton-a-947519.html>
- <sup>25</sup> Meyer, M. (2015) "Der Bunker wird Denkort. Zur Konzeption des Denkortes Bunker Valentin in Bremen" in Becker, M., Bock, D., Illig, H. (eds.) *Orte und Akteure im System der NS-Zwangs-lager*, 25-42, Berlin: Metropol Verlag. An updated and abbreviated version of this

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- <sup>26</sup> Heyl, M. "Forensische Bildung" am historischen Tat- und Bildungsort. Ein Plädoyer gegen das Erspüren von Geschichte, Geissler, C., Overwien, B. (eds.), *Elemente einer zeitgemässen politischen Bildung. Festschrift für Prof. Hanns-Fred Rathenow zum 65. Geburtstag*, Münster 2010, 189-202.
- <sup>27</sup> Part of the intact space of the Bunker is still being used as a storage facility today for budgetary reasons.
- <sup>28</sup> Interview of Bastian Spille with survivor Harry Callan. Published in Bachelorarbeit, Der Bunker "Valentin" als europäischer Erinnerungsort, Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, August 19, 2010.
- <sup>29</sup> Watson, S. (2015) "Emotions in the History Museum" in Witcomb, A., Message K., *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, First Edition, West Sussex, John Wiley & Sons.
- <sup>30</sup> See the excellent volume by Watson, S. (2007) *Museums and Their Communities*, London, Routledge.

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