

NOWHERE IN MEMORIAM

ANA VOJNOVIC

Simon Fraser University

Abstract

Disruptive shifts within the fabric of the Vancouver's urban environment evoke a feeling of 'futility of place' and are indicative of current socio-economic climate. At the same time, this feeling embodies a morbid similarity with my personal experience of the bombing of Belgrade, 1999, and feelings of being dislocated and dismembered. Both cities, so distinct and remote from one another, have been violated by power which brought about the displacement of local communities and livelihoods. This state of impermanence of certain urban spaces in Vancouver evokes an abiding sense of ungroundedness and a circular re-activation of historical memory, my present experience and the emotional connection between the two. I work with photography and poetry, as a personal and intimate narrative, to holistically reconstitute my lived experience across time and two cultures. The resulting work, my 'experiential reportage', becomes an ethereal emotional bridge to a remote part of myself and an emblematic, psychological portrait of the city's transitional state.

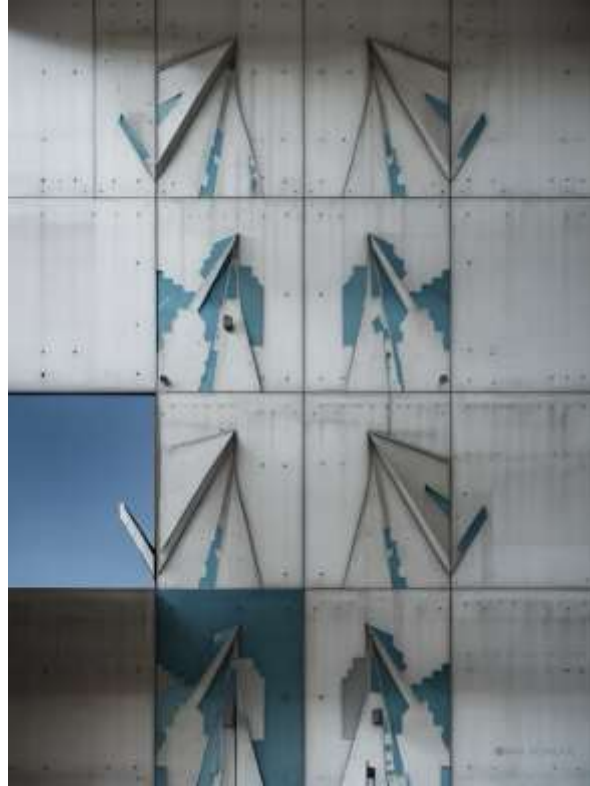
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The present contains nothing more than the past, and what is found in the effect was already in the cause. —Henri Bergson



In Memoriam: The Ambiguity of Relation, without-within (Vancouver, 2024)

Contemplating my artistic practice as an expansive self-exploration, I am prompted to think about how a deep immersion in subjectivity and sensibility directly generates possibilities for curriculum and diverse pedagogical approaches. In other words, to know what is germane and meaningful to me is to know who and how to be as an educator.



In Memoriam: Re-membering the Self (Vancouver, 2024)



In Memoriam: Walls are Not Walls (Vancouver, 2024)

The streets of Belgrade bathed in summer warmth – my forever remembered and secretly resented June of 1999. Streets dislocated, buildings dismembered, the strange assemblage of walls, fractured and juxtaposed planes, cold air and absence of light. A psyche in disarray. The sounds of the bombs still crisp and vibrating in the membrane of the city.

Growing up in Belgrade, Serbia, my childhood was shaped by the physical and ambient character of the city itself. I had an innate sense of being held and grounded by the energy of this locale, the architecture and its unique aesthetic atmosphere – all of which signify a deep collective memory and culture.

In 1999 my sense of place and my life as I lived it was suddenly and irrevocably shattered. All that I knew of my safe and settled connection to this urban place was violently rearranged and dismembered; the spaces and the feel of the city chaotically disarrayed.

Long after immigrating and acclimatizing to my life in Vancouver, there remains an abiding sense of ungroundedness. Witnessing the disruptive, rapid demolition and construction within the fabric of the urban environment reawakens vivid memories of the events in Belgrade, 1999.

These two cities so distinct and remote from one another, embody a strange and somewhat morbid similarity: both have been violated by power, one in the name of ‘peace’ and the other on the pretext of ‘modernization’.

Whereas Belgrade, a vibrant and peaceful city was bombed and demolished by NATO in the name of social and political stability, Vancouver is besieged by capitalistic land developers who, encouraged by city politicians, undertake a program of urban renewal which involves widespread demolition and disruption of existing communities.

The impermanence of certain urban spaces in Vancouver evokes a feeling of ‘futility of place’ and a loss of meaningful continuity with the past. The shock of demolition, the physical voids ripped into the edifice of the city and the irruption of swarming construction sites, indicate the displacement of persons, homes and livelihoods. Successive generations of ‘developers’, abetted by city planners, have absurdly obliterated the places where existing structures, environments and local communities have *actually developed*. The irony of the developers’ logic is that it demolishes and erases to create anew the promise of community and meaningful locales.

As a response to these conditions an artistic practice has organically emerged. Photography has allowed me to re-envision and re-member fragments, impressions and residual memories germane to my experience of life across two cultures.

I conceive of my work as experiential reportage, a purposeful meandering with the camera as a sensor that captures and collects the imagery of the urban environment. It is a disciplined, repeated engagement of looking and photographing that serves as a way of discovering parts of myself that are hidden; seeking out an experience of physical conditions with the intention to re-catalyze dormant memories and latent emotions.

My *reportage* is, in the strict etymological sense, to ‘make known and carry back’ (i.e. return to consciousness) what I have experienced, felt and still hold in my body’s memory. This process is a circular re-activation of historical memory, my present experience and the emotional connection between the two. The resulting images become an emblematic, psychological portrait of the total situation.

As I witness and photograph Vancouver, I actively re-imagine through an emotional lens my feeling of the city and its disappearing elements. There is a strange curiosity compelling me to capture these transitional states. I use my images and poetry to construct an ethereal emotional bridge across time to a remote part of myself, as I creatively explore my relationship to the urban environment.

nowhere

*mourning the loss
of thousand voices fading
flow within
thousand offerings
never to remain*

*mourning the loss
of time grasping
witnessing the remnants
mourning the loss
of un-known resonance my longing
breath at the doorway
of thousand returns
nowhere*



In Memoriam: Nowhere (Vancouver, 2024)

The nexus of architecture in transition, buildings in demolition and the disruption of atmospheres is a compelling and illusive subject. It is at once abstract, intuitively engaging, viscerally felt and aesthetically complex. As a personal and intimate narrative, my goal is to capture this transitional subject with a multiplicity of images. In contrast to post-war French street photography, where a “decisive moment” (Cartier-Bresson et al., 1952) occurs between the photographer, place and the subject resulting in a complex and iconic photograph, I am primarily guided by a sense of anxiety about the limitation of what the camera can record. My ‘indecisive moment’ is a visual inquiry that is sceptical of the singular image. I photograph a particular urban scene repeatedly, and as my attention modifies the framing, the light and the focus, salient details will advance or recede. The suite of images become a record of my augmented perception within a concentrated window of time. These photographs are the catalyst which re-activates dormant memories enabling me to holistically reconstitute my lived experience across time and two cultures.



In Memoriam: Topography of Healing (Vancouver, 2024)

References

Cartier-Bresson, H., Matisse, H., Tériade, E., & Lang, M. (1952). *The decisive moment: photography*. Simon and Schuster.