

Design activism and the contested terrains of memorials

SueAnne Ware

RMIT University

sueanne.ware@rmit.edu.au

There is an incongruity between the inherent changeability of both landscapes and memories, and the conventional, formal strategies of commemoration that typify the constructed landscape memorial. This paper will examine two recent memorial projects which were temporary and ephemeral. One concerns the fate of illegal refugees travelling to Australia: The *SIEVX Memorial Project*. The other, *An Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims*, was designed by the author as part of the 2001 Melbourne Festival. The memorial work presented in this paper hopes to illicit discussion and renewal of ongoing debates. Beyond grappling with temporary or ephemeral memorials, or anti-memorials, the work presented here engages in a kind of design activism. The design work proposes physical catalysts for social change.

Key words: memorialisation, public art, ephemeral, landscape, design activism, open space design

The etymological roots of ‘monument’ and ‘memory’ are linked. Both evolve from words meaning *to remind* and *to be mindful*. Heidegger wrote, “Originally, *memory* means as much as devotion: a constant concentrated abiding with something -not just with something that has passed, but in the same way with what is present and with what may come (Heidegger 1993: 365).” Memory and remembering are dynamic, fluid processes. While commemorative practices and memorial forms clearly shift over time and this is widely researched, very few works speculate on the arts of forgetting as an essential part of these processes. Where remembering is seen as a positive act affirming the value of that which is remembered, forgetting is dismissed as a negation of that value. Where the memorial is an expression of this normative positive attitude, the anti-memorial explores, affirms and celebrates a wider, inclusive and essentially subversive range of states within the diverse operations of memory. This paper examines two recent anti-memorial projects in my design practice: *The SIEVX Memorial Project*, (Canberra, ACT 2002-ongoing) and *An Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims*, (Melbourne Festival, St. Kilda, VIC 2001). It discusses how designers and artists can reconsider the complex qualities of memory and remembrance practices, particularly as they relate to contemporary social and political movements and mores. Both projects question who is worthy of memorials, as well as the forms that contemporary memorials assume. These issues are framed by the contested notion of ‘forgetting’, its application to memorial making and its inevitable influence on what emerges as design activism.

There is an incongruity between the inherent changeability of landscapes and memories and conventional formal strategies of commemoration. If we think of memory not as an ideal record that can be pure or complete, but a periodic process of re-evaluation and reconstruction given changing contexts, do our ideas about designing memorials evolve? My research and design work tries to negotiate with these slippery qualities of memory and the forces which direct them as a way of generating memorial form. The design work presented here speculates on new programs for memorials which incorporate temporary and ephemeral processes. I have attempted to work with changeability as a generative and speculative condition, as well as simply an operative process. In doing this I was testing the assertion of James Young’s framework for anti-memorials: “Anti-memorials aim not to console but to provoke, not to remain fixed but to change, not to be everlasting but to disappear, not to be ignored by passersby but to demand interaction, not to remain pristine but to invite their own violation and not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to drop it at the public’s feet (Young 1997: 855).”

Memorial design is constantly imbued with expectations of specificity and local identity within a typically national context of concern. For example a national concern with terrorism or involvement in an overseas war has victims from specific communities who seek to express their grief in their own locale. My practice reflects upon this challenge and offers further speculation

into how design can utilise ephemeral qualities of landscape and memory in an innovative manner to deal with these scales of context. Further, it considers how anti-memorial design is a physical catalyst for social change and a form of design activism.

Harrison Fraker defines Design Activism as “problem seeking, it is proactive, it chooses an issue (or set of issues) and explores it (or them) from a critical, sometimes ideological perspective. It uses design to recognize latent potential and make it visible. It explores ‘absences’ in everyday life and gives them a ‘presence.’ It reveals new ways of seeing the world and challenges existing paradigms (Fraker 2005: 3).” The projects discussed here deliberately deal with the complex qualities of memory and remembrance practices in relation to contemporary social and political issues. In the process of their design and making they show that such investigations of apparently apolitical emotional memorialising are unavoidably political. Both projects query whom we select as worthy of memorials as well as the forms that contemporary memorials assume. It will conclude with a general discussion framing contested notions of forgetting and their further role in memorial making and design activism.

The Pacific solution and The SIEVX Memorial

In September 2001 the Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Bill 2001 amended the *Migration Act 1958* to excise Christmas, Ashmore, Cartier and Cocos (Keeling) Islands from the Australian migration zone (DIMIA 2004). As a result, any unlawful non-citizen attempting to enter Australia via one of these islands is now prevented from making an application for a protection visa or refugee status unless the Minister for Immigration determines that it is in the public interest for such a person to do so (DIMIA, October 2004). Towed back out of Australian waters, the asylum seekers face deportation from Indonesia, a country which has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention. This is currently known in Australia as colloquially as ‘The Pacific Solution.’

These measures arose as a direct response to the controversial *Tampa* incident in August 2001 when 433 asylum seekers on route to Australia were rescued by a Norwegian freighter, the *Tampa*. These asylum seekers were refused entry to Australia, transferred to HMAS Manoora and (along with later arrivals) sent to the Pacific island of Nauru. The long-standing tradition of setting Australia’s national boundaries according to international law was abandoned in favour of a new *elastic band* approach to fencing our borders. This new and innovative policy approach involves the Australian government simultaneously shrinking or stretching our borders according to the principles of self-interest and greed (Ensor 2003).

Meanwhile in Darwin, Australian government negotiators were furiously stretching our elastic border to a point hundreds of kilometres off our northern coast in negotiations over a new maritime boundary with East Timor. Under the waters of the Timor Sea between Australia and the world’s newest nation lie vast reserves of oil and natural gas. There are tens of billions of dollars worth of oil and gas from an area of the Timor Sea that is currently subject to overlapping maritime boundary claims by the two countries (ibid).

The Memorial Process

In October 2001 a small fishing boat sank just inside of the excised area waters north of Australia, killing 353 people. Of the approximately 160 women, 170 children, and about 70 men; only 40 survived (Greenlees 2001). The passengers were refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan mainly women and children coming over to join their spouses already in Australia. The unidentified

19.5 meter long boat was named the SIEV X from the Australian naval term SIEV for Suspect Illegal Entry Vessel number 10 (SIEVX accessed 2006). Australian newspapers carried news of the event several days later, but in the midst of the national election campaign, the story vanished until the recent memorial event.

The SIEVX project was founded in 2002 by Steve Biddulph, a psychologist and parenting author, Rob Horsfeld, a uniting Church Minister, and Beth Gibbings, an artist and project manager. It was begun to draw attention to the greatest maritime tragedy in our region since the Second World War. A lack of media response and public concern surrounding this horrifying event prompted Biddulph and others to develop plans for a memorial to the victims. This was intended to recognise both personal and political issues that surrounded the event and to work positively toward a better understanding of problems that could avoid any similar future disasters. It was also an exploration of how we might be able to assist and share in the grief of the victims, something which memorials have always sought to do, but which becomes even more difficult when trying to reach across the divide of countries, cultures and even the dividing lines of the law. It is also something that becomes more urgent as we struggle to find ways to usefully assist in helping refugees of global crises currently involving the largest mass movements of people in human history.

A major focus of the memorial was to be the education of future generations. This was in part an acknowledgement that Australians had responsibility for such tragedies. Every secondary school in Australia received a letter inviting their participation in a collaborative effort to suggest design ideas for construction of a memorial place. As most Australians and every school child in the country, at some stage officially visits the national capital to learn about their country's identity, the location of the memorial was determined to be in Canberra. Over ten per cent of the country's schools responded to request a teaching kit, and of these about 200 actual entries were received.

After the exhibition was collated, the SIEVX Memorial team asked for my assistance in furthering the cause. We prepared a travelling exhibition of the collected works which travelled throughout major Australian cities in 2003 and 2004. It was through these exhibitions that the public became more aware of the SIEVX tragedy. The momentum to build a physical memorial increased and we finally selected the proposal of a year 11 Brisbane student, Mitchell Donaldson. It consisted of 353 poles which were to sweep through a gently undulating landscape, divide to form the abstract outline of a small boat, and then trail off into the water. The individual poles which represented lost children were three feet high and those for adults were five feet high.

The Memorial Event

The memorial group again turned to the broader community to adorn the poles, inviting grieving family members, community and arts groups, schools at all levels from primary through to university, and church groups to decorate a pole. A diverse range of communities participated in the memorial making, as both an educative experience and a collective act of remorse. (Figure1)

In October of 2006 each pole travelled across the continent to a Weston Lake Park, Canberra. A Canberra site was selected because it is the official memorial landscape of Australia, all Australian school children travel there as a part of their civic studies, and because the actual site of the event was in accessible. Weston Park was selected because of its location next to Lake Burley Griffith and the newly declared memorial precinct for non war memorials. The National Capital Authority and the Australian Capital Territory government bodies both

have jurisdiction over this site. This meant negotiating a controversial memorial between a conservative government body at the national level and a liberal government body at the state level. The poles were to be erected on the fifth anniversary of the event and left in place for three weeks. The arrangement of the poles would include the shape of a boat to the exact dimensions of the SIEVX, allowing visitors to walk amongst them, experiencing the small, confined space which held so many people.



Figure 1

School group making memorial pole (left) and relative of victim making memorial poles (right)

Initially we petitioned the National Capital Authority (NCA) for a temporary memorial artwork to be installed for six weeks marking the five year anniversary of the sinking. The NCA's policy on memorials required that in order for a memorial to be commissioned there must be a minimum of ten years following the event it commemorates (NCA 2002). A controversial decision was made to hold a memorial event where the poles would be displayed and erected in a short, one-day ceremony. It is common for government policy and statutes like those of the National Capital Authority in Canberra, to insist that memorials only be erected years after the events they memorialise. This has several effects which are both intended and unintended. There is firstly an assumption that the longevity of any concern for issues surrounding the event or people involved is a measure of their importance and universal value. There is also an assumption that time will render historical remembrance more accurate, or perhaps, if inaccurate, less important for its facts than for an abstract or universalising ideal. Most importantly however it denies the public a means by which to grieve and explore the issues and emotions that are raised by tragic events at the very time such assistance is needed. It fails to recognise the central role that memorials can play in providing powerful and searching catalysts for shared examination of current and on-going issues.

The press coverage which followed the decision to hold a one-day ceremony ensured that the memorial event would be well attended and debated. It evolved into a form of public protest and grieving. On October 15, 2006 in Canberra's Weston Park almost 300 poles arrived and were lifted up by 600 volunteers, many of whom had travelled across the country to be there. Over 1400 others were in the audience, which included Sir William Deane and leaders of all the large religious denominations. They were addressed in a powerful speech by Chief Minister of the ACT, Jon Stanhope. Before and after the ceremony crowds wandered amongst the poles, which lay in situ on the ground, inspecting and touching their surfaces. During the ceremony, the poles were slowly erected for a brief moment of silence (Figures 2 & 3). It was by many accounts a deeply affecting experience of grief, remorse, and hope for the future.



Figure 2
SIEVX October 2006 Memorial Event.



Figure 3
SIEVX October 2006 Memorial Event.



Figure 4
2007 SIEVX Memorial in-ground installation.



Figure 5
2007 SIEVX Memorial In-Ground Installation.

In 2007 the poles were installed for a longer time period as a semi-permanent public art project. We gained a six week permit in spite of the NCA's guidelines. This is primarily because of two recent and notable exceptions to their 10 year rule: The Bali bombing Memorial and a recently commissioned Steve Irwin Memorial. We deliberately timed the installation of this work with the federal election. In the federal government shuffle and the subsequent downsizing of the NCA, the SIEV X memorial's permit has been extended slightly. We are currently applying for a 1 year permit (Figures 4 & 5).

The debate about the SIEVX memorial continues to bring to bare the nature of contemporary memorials and political polemics. In October 2007 in *The Canberra Times*, the Prime Minister John Howard's Government Territories Minister Jim Lloyd described the memorial as 'protest art' criticising the way it "trivialises existing memorials commemorating those who gave their lives for our country (Lloyd 2007)." Others responded positively to Lloyd's condemnation in the letters pages of the newspaper. Tom Ruut applauded Jim Lloyd's call for the demolition of the memorial and described it as a haphazard collection of poles that posed a "hazard to joggers (Ruut 2007)." Warren Feakes wrote that he was offended by the memorial because it shoved unwarranted political statements upon him in a public recreational space. He raged: "A Stanhope-run, bleeding heart capital territory is the only place such a ridiculous erection would be tolerated". Feakes wanted the supporters of the memorial to "swipe their credit cards and pay the rent for the space (Feakes 2007)." These responses tap into a perception generated by Keith Windshuttle and reproduced in *Quadrant Magazine* in January 2007 that the story of the sinking of the SIEV X is the kind of atrocity story that has "been critical to the success of the propaganda campaign that has infected the writing of history for the past thirty years". Windshuttle accuses the "tertiary-educated, middle-class Left" of promoting interest in the fate of SIEV X and of becoming 'morally unhinged' by their efforts to undermine the Howard government (Windshuttle 2007). Defenders of the memorial also surfaced in the public debate. Many charged Jim Lloyd with trivialising the value of life and the preventable deaths of 353 asylum-seekers. David Perking described how members of his family had served in two world wars. He had wept at only three memorials in his life. The first time was at the Belgium war cemetery where his uncle fell in 1917, then at Dachau and the third time at "the SIEV X memorial down by the lake (Perking 2007)."

The fervour of the public contestation highlights the accomplishments of this memorial. Complex political stakes and meanings are bound up with what a culture remembers and forgets. Content, sources, and experiences that are recalled, forgotten, or suppressed are always intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony. The discussion which the work raises is just as pertinent to the memorial as the physical interventions themselves. The discussion

and debate *is* the memorial. The influential life of a memorial project is also far more than any particular moment of its built expression or discussion raised about that arbitrary moment.

The anti-memorial to heroin overdose victims (2001)

My design practice to date has investigated the role of anti-memorials in the contemporary landscape. Anti-memorials, as the term suggests, begin to formalise impermanence and even celebrate their own transitory natures. James Young contends that they critique the illusion that the permanence of stone somehow guarantees the permanence of the idea it is memorialising (Young 1992). Further, memorials are often accepted uncritically as ‘historical’, that is, as the accurate record of knowledgeable hindsight. This assumption denies the role that memorials can play within developing understandings of current and on-going issues. *The Anti-memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims* specifically sought to challenge assumptions about memorials as a commemoration of people and events whose good intentions have been made clear by ‘history’. It also explicitly focused on a continuing, contemporary circumstance.

The Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims was a public installation that sought to humanise the three hundred and thirty-one overdose deaths in Melbourne in 2000 (Melbourne Festival 2001). The Memorial commemorated a group of people whose loss is not usually mourned in the public realm. In the normative sense, heroin users are seen as neither heroes nor victims. It was constructed in the inner city suburb of St. Kilda, in one of Victoria’s more politically contested landscapes, as part of the Melbourne Festival in October 2001. The Anti-Memorial consisted of three design insertions into the streetscape: a floral tribute, a stencilled landscape narrative and an embedded collection of memorial objects. Poppies, text and resin plaques formed a memorial along St. Kilda’s streets (Figure 6). The work was sited within three socially complex streetscapes in St. Kilda. Intravenous drug users, sex workers and social support services occupy the Grey Street corridor. The Fitzroy Street commercial end is frequented by a broad demographic of consumers of the strip shopping and dining precinct. Tourists, families and shoppers populate the Sunday craft market along the Lower Esplanade. The Anti-Memorial confronted each group, asking them to reconsider how they perceived intravenous drug users.



Figure 6

Poppies, stencilled narratives and resin plaques formed a memorial along St. Kilda’s streets.

The floral tribute consisted of red poppies, which were planted on median strips, in planter boxes and in other key sites as floral commemoratives and a recognisable Australian symbol of remembrance. While they also alluded to opium poppies, the use of these flowers provided another meaning and reading: that of the already memorialising Armistice Day red poppy. Adjacent to the poppy planters, red text was stencilled on the footpaths. The text included letters and stories about the overdose victims and their lives. The stories were gathered from

a series of interviews with current intravenous drug users, friends and families of victims, and community workers - all of whom have been deeply affected by overdoses. The embedded memorial collection consisted of a gathering of objects, photographs, text and images from an individual overdose victim's life. These objects were cast in thirty-five clear resin plaques and attached to the side of the poppy planters. The resin plaques were exposed, vulnerable and tactile. To discern the contents of the plaques, people had to crouch down and get very close. This was a deliberate attempt to encourage physical interaction with the memorial work. The physical proximity is in contrast to the traditional monument, represented as sacred and untouchable, often elevated out of reach on a pedestal and permitting only floral gestures to be placed underneath them (Figure 7).

This project struggled to engage and shift the meaning of conventional symbols and iconic landscape gestures in a more subtle direction. I attempted to subvert prevailing sentiment associated with red poppies, wanting to investigate how transferable a nationalistic and patriotic symbol, the poppy, could be. I also deliberately sited the work well within iconic landscapes of St. Kilda which include Luna Park, Acland Street, and the Town Hall. This was intended as a gesture of incrimination. If the official and unofficial symbolic hearts of St. Kilda and its community were littered with this memorial, shouldn't the people who inhabit them acknowledge victims who suffered and died there?

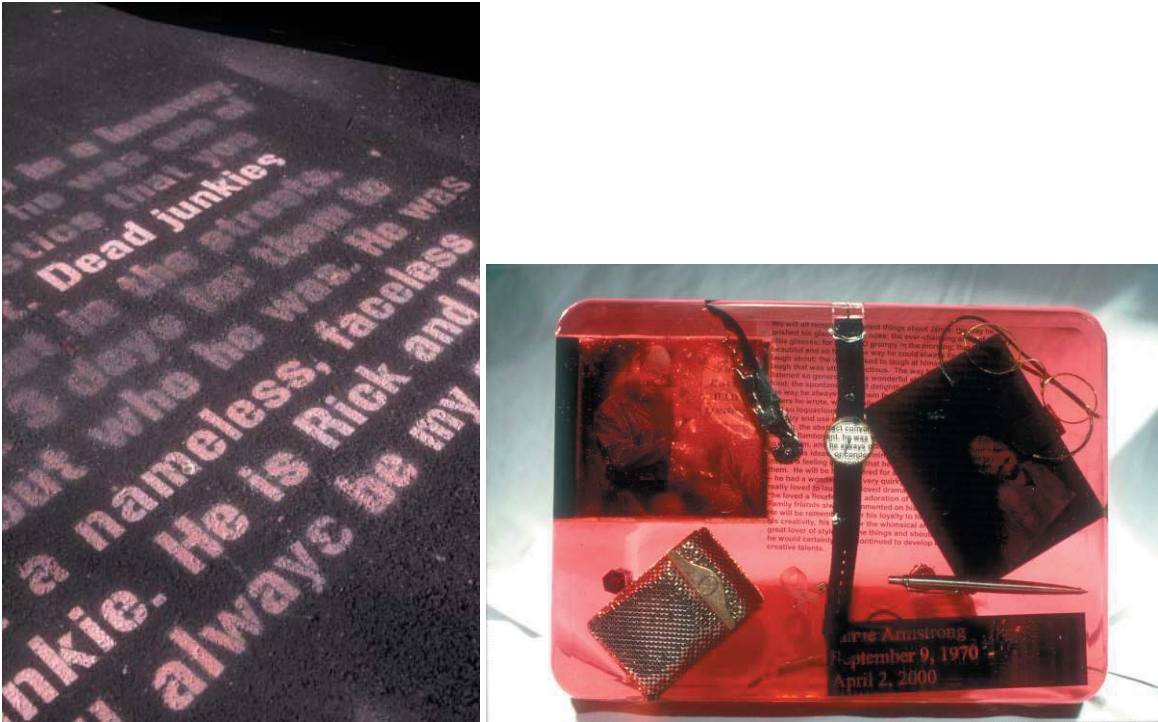


Figure 7
Anti-Memorial Assemblage – stencilled text and resin plaque.

The location of the work in the everyday public realm of the streetscapes was also then a deliberate attempt to confront and challenge a largely apathetic public. The familiar objects collected and displayed as treasured mementos from an overdose victim's life reflected an interweaving of sentiment and personalization with common, mundane possessions. While the decoration or design of memorials with such objects is common in private memorialising it is less accepted in the public realm. In both a metaphorical and a literal sense, *The Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims* forces us to see and reflect upon the everyday in another, more exposed, direct and significant way. This project sought to present another side of the depersonalised 'category' of intravenous drug users. While it is true that many users are not on

the streets and lead apparently 'normal' lives, it asks that the general public to reject the more popular understanding of 'junkies' as human refuse, and to consider them more benevolently. It is not that in personalising the deaths the memorial sought to illicit sympathetic grief from strangers or question the adequacy of grieving by family and friends. It wanted to warn all exposed to it that the ability to dismiss individuals by dismissing a group, or an ability dismiss a group through dismissive examination of some individuals, are equally dangerous ways to avoid consideration of a shared problem and our shared humanity: and this capacity for empathy is the very thing which memorials purport to remind us of. Memorials awaken, exercise and expand our unfathomed capacities to remember, and excite our need to share what we learn. They are not correctives to faulty memory, but encouragements to active generosity.

Unforeseen reactions

One of the unexpected outcomes of *The Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims* was the way that members of the public interacted with the sites. A modicum of vandalism had been anticipated and was pre-empted by provisional back-up. Twice as many poppy plants were ordered, replacement plaques constructed, and the work was regularly patrolled, especially on Grey Street. Interestingly, only two pots of the three thousand poppy plants had to be replaced and this was on Fitzroy Street where a drunken patron unintentionally stumbled into them. On the other hand, there was an expectation that in some instances, the work would be ignored. As Robert Musil writes, "There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument. They are no doubt erected to be seen, indeed, to attract attention. But at the same time, they are impregnated with something that repels attention (Musil 1987: 71)." During the three-week period of the installation, people left notes, cards, flowers, and wrote messages in chalk on the footpaths adjacent to the work. Quite often people would not walk on the red words, bestowing a respect similar to that shown to grave sites. People caressed the plaques and one woman knelt down, kissed her hand, and lovingly placed it on a photograph in a plaque. (See Figure 8)



Figure 8
Unforeseen reactions.

Due to the close personal proximity with which I was connected to the project – having interviewed many friends and family members of the victims depicted in the work – it was deeply affecting to witness others, with whom I was not familiar, viscerally connect with the work. I had rationalised that because the work was recognisable as a temporary installation and because it was unavoidable, sited within everyday landscapes on the footpaths, it would at least prove readily engaging. I further hoped that rather than creating self-contained sites of memory, detached from our daily lives, this memorial would force both visitors and local citizens to look within themselves for memory, to evaluate their own actions and motives for memory

within these spaces. The level of engagement and emotional reaction was, however, much more profound than anticipated.

I received numerous emails and letters from a range of sources both encouraging and scathing. In particular, of the traders on Fitzroy Street, the pharmacies who supply needles to drug users for minimal cost protested vehemently before and during installation of the work. They felt attention was being brought to bear on St. Kilda's reputation as a drug haven, something they were working hard to change. As a deliberate reaction, I chose to site the memorials directly adjacent to the pharmacies. Interestingly, at the conclusion of the project, one of the pharmacist owners asked if he could keep the flowers and a resin plaque.

Another derisive review came from an anonymous drug user who commented as the work was being installed: "I don't need this as a reminder... look at my arms, mate... less money on art and more on rehab."¹ This latter comment proved to be extremely confrontational and posed a myriad of questions regarding the validity of the exercise. While there is a tremendous realm of literature and discussion on the justification of art and design for the purposes of social consciousness-raising and educative, constructive purposes, I remain challenged by the thought that public art funding might compromise the improvement of vital medical services.

I raise these points again as it emerges constantly as a key critique of the type of work I engage in. Jochen Speilmann dramatically widens the functions of the public monument. He includes, "Identification, representation, anticipation, interpretation and information. And the phase of preliminary discussions, the creative process and process of receptions are integral components of the monument itself (Speilmann 2002: 67)." The effectiveness of anti-memorials in particular lies in challenging the idea that the officially sanctioned object or sanctified ceremony located in a particular place and at a particular time alone have value or power.

Comparisons

Both projects were largely successful as catalysts for testing ideas about Anti-Memorials. They encouraged multiple readings of contemporary political and social issues, prompted different levels of physical interactivity, and emphasised the informal and the local as opposed to the formal and the national or even the universal ideal. They both shifted the subject of memorials from heroic figures, to victims, to ordinary citizens, and finally to those whom society ostracises. Both memorials differ from a traditional monument in that they are not sanctioned by civic authority but are purposely disturbing and provocative. *The Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims* honoured people not often acknowledged by society as worthy of commemoration, people at the core of a contemporary debate about drug use, youth homelessness and prostitution. The SIEVX Memorial honoured Afghan and Iraqi refugees who since the 'war on terror' have been vilified by the media and the federal government.

Both memorials were public events: the Heroin Anti-memorial was part of a temporary arts festival and the SIEVX Memorial was widely advertised as a memorial event on the fifth anniversary of the victims' deaths. The temporal nature of the work was bound to the event, and event culture requires that one must make the time to travel, see the work and in doing so, become a part of the event. These memorials challenged traditional pre-conceptions of memorial objects as permanent, in that the event itself dictated their eventual disappearance. The works offered a brief moment of commemoration, while fundamentally questioning the nature of such remembrance, what is remembered and why. Both memorials were deeply connected with their landscapes, as are many traditional memorials, but seldom in a way that forces people to confront a social problem that affects their own specific locality.

They both utilised the public realm as a site for revealing greater human agendas. The two memorial projects were also frameworks for the voices of others. The SIEVX Memorial event invited a range of communities to participate and grieve in the loss of 353 women and children. Ultimately it evolved into a protest of the last federal government's attitude towards refugees. The Heroin Anti-memorial revealed personal narratives and the intimate lives of intravenous drug users. It was also a form of protest in the discussions it raises regarding the provision of safe injecting facilities which would prevent deaths. The St. Kilda council was considering the installation of such a facility for the duration of the Melbourne Festival itself. The physical memorials in both cases became vehicles for political protests and debate.

The existing narrative of St. Kilda's fabric weaves a diversity of stories; the tourist, the urbanite, the junkie, the resident, and more. *The Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims* literally placed the addicts' stories and personal narratives in each other's perceived territory. The project narrative shifts from being about place to being about the people who occupy place. The work juxtaposed the existing setting and stories of St. Kilda with other layers of its history. Iconic landscapes within St. Kilda were specifically chosen as sites for the work, constituting a part of my design strategy. (See Figure 9) In some ways, this was intended to validate the lives of those affected by intravenous drug use and to acknowledge their literal place as part of the St. Kilda community. In other ways, it was designed to examine the existing narrative of the public realm and angle it to inform the memorial's complexity. The siting of the *SIEVX Memorial* was particular to Canberra. The actual site where the ship sank is not accessible so a symbolic site was selected. Weston Park was significant because the NCA has just commissioned a series of civilian memorials to take place along Lake Burley Griffin and Kings Park. These memorials are for those ordinary citizens who have lost their lives while making Australia a better place. They include the National Emergency Service Workers Memorial and the National Police Memorial. The *SIEVX Memorial* was to be situated within this newly formed commemorative walk and mourns the loss of potential citizens. In addition, in the extended view beyond the park, stands Parliament House. The poles variously framed, ignored and at one strategic point directly marched towards it as a literal gesture of incrimination. (See Figure 9) This was subtle but effective.



Figure 9
The Anti-memorial at Luna Park and the SIEVX Memorial juxtaposed to Parliament House.

Conclusions

While they may honour the dead, memorials are ultimately for the living. All too often it is said that memorials are about teaching a sort of lesson, so that society will not forget the past and repeat its mistakes. To judge by the proliferation of memorials to date, these lessons have either been decidedly ineffectual, unclear or simply irrelevant to new problems. More accurately such an approach is itself flawed, as the lessons can never fully articulate and solve specific problems just as history cannot comprehensively articulate a single truth.

The act of remembering implies a transformation of memories. Memorials need a certain flexibility to allow for this transformation. Memorial design must allow for this transformation then too and, ultimately, should allow us to forget. Temporary, ephemeral memorials or anti-memorials accept that forgetting is integral to memorial design.

James Young writes that public memory is constructed and that understanding events depends on this construction. He suggests that memory must undergo continual renewal in order for the subject of remembrance to stay vivid in our collective consciousness (Young 2000). The memory work presented in this paper hopes to illicit discussion and renewal of ongoing debates. Beyond grappling with temporary or ephemeral memorials or anti-memorials as negotiated built works, the projects explicitly engage in political activism as an unavoidable part of the search to understand and appreciate the forces which direct, constrain and control our memory and habits of remembering. In this way the design outcomes become physical catalysts for social change.

The life-worlds of those affected by these tragedies and the everyday context of the public realm are the settings for these attempts to bring about change. The resolve of the work to comment on issues within contemporary society is vital to its effectiveness and argues that all memorialising as living, meaningful ritual must do this to be effective. The projects offer us a way of reconsidering our values and re-thinking our relationship to the world. The work also speculates on methods of active engagement with communities throughout a project's duration. The public realm becomes a democratic space that embodies certain types of social and cultural responsibilities. The role of contestation and cultural conflict over 'shared national values and ideals' critically frames the design of these contemporary memorials. However, these memorials also do something which is not often considered in many national and official memorials. They simply allow us to forget. They accept the frailty of human memory and human kindness and let us move on.

Works cited

- Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Fact Sheet 71 - New Measures to Strengthen Border Control (produced by DIMIA 8 August 2002, updated by DIMIA 11 March 2004).
- DIMIA. Fact Sheet 76 off-shore Processing Arrangements (revised by DIMIA 29 September 2004, updated by DIMIA 7 October 2004).
- Ensor, J. 2003. Australia: land of sweeping plains and flexible borders needing protection *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 27 November.
- Feaks, W. 2007. Letters to the Editor, *The Canberra Times*. 18 October.
- Fraker, H. 2005. Welcome to DA, *Frameworks*. 1 (Spring) 2005, California, College of Environmental Design Berkeley.

- Greenlees, D. 2001. I have lost everything, *The Australian*. 23 October.
- Heidegger, M. 1993. *Basic Writings*. Translated by Krell, D.F., San Francisco, Harper Collins.
- Huyssen, A. 1994. Monument and memory in a Postmodern age, in *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, edited by James E. Young, New York: The Jewish Museum Press.
- Lloyd, J. 2007. Letters to the Editor, *The Canberra Times*. 15 October.
- Perking, D. 2007. Letters to the Editor, *The Canberra Times*, 18 October.
- Melbourne Festival Events Public Programme. October 11-November 3, 2001.
- Musil, R. 1987. *Monuments - Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*. Translated by Peter Wortsman. Colorado: Eridano Press.
- The National Capital Authority August 2002. *Guidelines for Commemorative Works in the National Capital*. Canberra: NCA.
- Ruut, T. 2007. Letters to the Editor, *The Canberra Times*, 18 October.
- The SIEVX Memorial Project Website (2001) <http://www.SIEVXmemorial.com/about.html> (viewed 18 Dec. 06).
- Speilmann, J. 1995. The process is as important as the result, Berlin 1995, as quoted by Jeremy Melvin in Monument: Antimonument – Royal Academy Forum, *The Architectural Review*. 2(12) October 2002.
- Windshuttle, K. 2007. Interview, *Quadrant Magazine* 51(2 January).
- Young, J. E. 1992. The counter-monument: memory against itself in Germany today, *Critical Inquiry*. 18, Winter.
- Young, J. E. 1993. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press.
- Young, J. E. ed. 1994. *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*. Munich: Prestel-Verlag.
- Young, James E. 2000. *At Memory's Edge: After –Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. London: Yale University Press.

SueAnne Ware is an Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and is the Higher Degrees Research Coordinator in the School of Architecture and Design at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. She has published widely with regard to concepts engaging in anti-memorials. She was co-organiser of the 2001 Memorials to the Stolen Generation Competition in conjunction with the Museum of Victoria. Her design work entitled, *An Anti-Memorial to Heroin Overdose Victims* was won a national design award from the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. Her project the Road-as-Shrine memorial was featured in Victoria's State of Design, exhibition 2004 and also received a Merit Award from the Victorian chapter of AILA. Previous work includes, *A Moment in Death: A Memorial to Victims of Gang Violence* and received a national merit award for research from the American Society of Landscape Architects. It is also featured in *Landscape Narratives* by Jamie Purinton and Matthew Pottleiger.