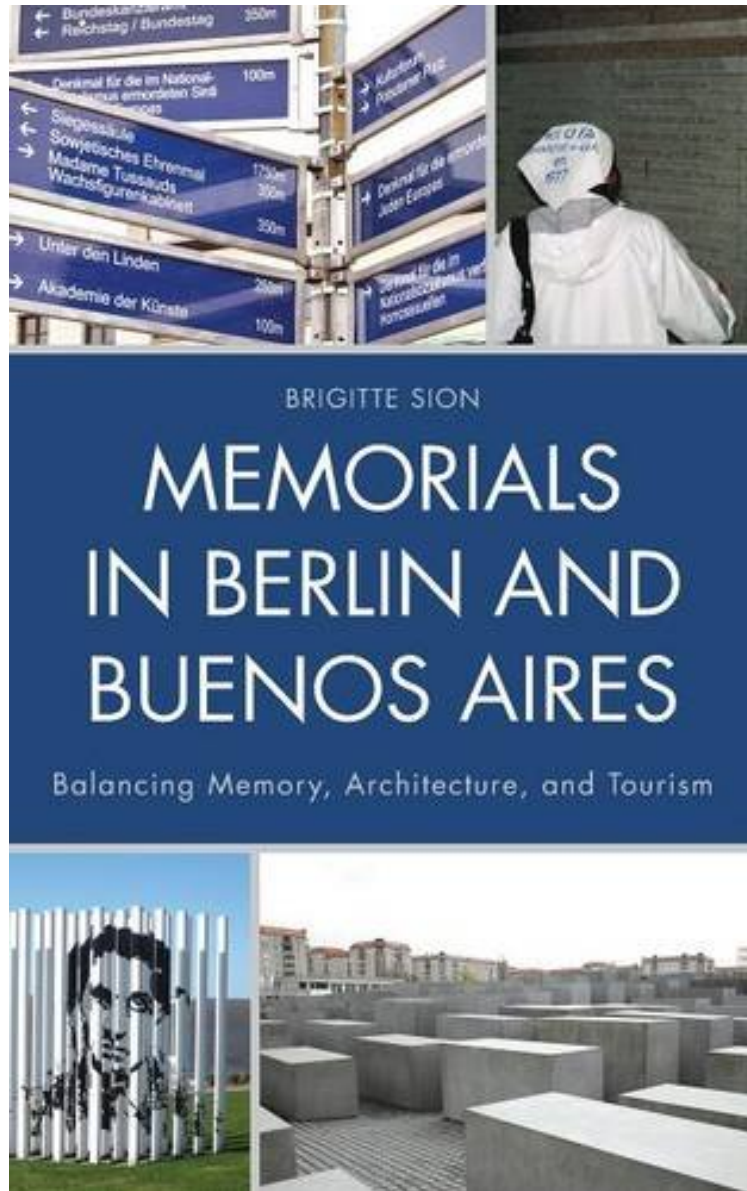


Memorials in Berlin and Buenos Aires: Balancing Memory, Architecture, and Tourism

Brigitte Sion

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Brigitte Sion : Memorials in Berlin and Buenos Aires: Balancing Memory, Architecture, and Tourism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Memorials in Berlin and

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Berlin, inaugurated in 2005, and the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism within the Memory Park (Parque de la Memoria) in Buenos Aires, partially unveiled in 2007, have been controversial from start to finish. While these sites differ in many respects, Germany and Argentina share a history of dictatorial regimes that murdered civilians on a massive scale. The Nazis implemented the genocide of millions of Jews and other minorities during World War II. In Argentina, the junta-led state repression was responsible for the disappearance and subsequent murder of thousands of civilians between 1976 and 1983. Decades later, new governments in Germany and Argentina acknowledged the responsibility of their respective states for these mass murders by memorializing the victims with a national monument in the capital city for the first time. This study of two memorials develops a model and method for analyzing the memorialization of recent tragedies that share several basic characteristics: the state creates a self-indicting national memorial to the victims of state-sponsored mass murder in the absence of their bodies. Analyzed as sites of conflicting performances and as performances themselves, these memorials illuminate the ways in which people engage with them, and how an architecture of absence triggers embodied memory through somatic experience. While death tourism and architourism are a key to their success in attracting visitors, they also pose a threat to their commemorative role. Besides assessing the success and failure of these memorials, Sion explores the ways in which these sites are paradigmatic and offers a model for analyzing a transnational circuit of commemorative practices.

Monuments address the past, but they also have a future, as Brigitte Sion demonstrates in her thoughtful analysis of two public memory sites that recall brutal acts of state-run mass terror. This detailed, thoroughly researched study raises key questions for considering the afterlife of memorials. Sion attends carefully to the uniqueness of each memorial, while also teasing out issues common to both, especially as public spaces dedicated to addressing a nation's own past crimes. (Jeffrey Shandler, Rutgers University) In the current surge of memory studies, this account of the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin and the Park of Memory in Buenos Aires stands out for its impeccable attention to detail, sophisticated argument, and incisive style. How do memorials to victims of state terrorism work; who are they for; what exactly do they do? The author not only poses these questions; she answers them. Before your next visit to a commemorative site, you'll be glad to have read this book. (Carol Gluck, Columbia University) Embodied memory in the absence of bodies: this is the starting point for Brigitte Sion's thorough and sensitive analysis of the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin and the Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires. Worlds apart, they find common ground in what has become an almost universal tool box of commemorative practices. Sion offers a brilliant analysis of those tools and their deployment in similar yet different situations. By considering not only the birth of monuments, but also their life ever after, Sion has made a major contribution to the burgeoning field of memory studies. (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, New York University) Brigitte Sion has written a smart, synthetic, and eminently readable multilayered analysis of both commemorative representation and reception. Grounded in a close study of the largely contrasting approaches to two major commemorative projects, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin and the Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires, Sion skillfully teases out the ways in which public art and architecture attempt to satisfy the tension between the absent bodies of victims and the embodied practices of visitors (xiii). Sion brings her multidisciplinary training and her multilingualism to parse the two cases' fitful commemorative processes. She also explores the ways in which different kinds of visitors respond to the sites. Memorials in Berlin and Buenos Aires provides adequate historical context, both about the countries themselves and in terms of the evolution of the memorial form. Sion then conceptualizes each memorial as a performance site in which form and meaning, and mourning and tourism are at play with those who are absent due to violence and those who are now present as visitors. Each chapter interweaves description and analysis of the two sites, which makes for a dynamic and fluid read. (The Public Historian) About the Author Brigitte Sion is a post-doctoral researcher affiliated with Columbia University and the MATRICE Research Institute in Paris. She has written extensively on the global politics of memory and commemorative practices, particularly in Germany, Argentina, Cambodia, Poland, and France.