Signs of the Shoah: The Hollandsche Schouwburg as a site of memory

Duindam, D.A.

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Signs of the Shoah: The Hollandsche Schouwburg as a Site of Memory

investigates the postwar development of the Hollandsche Schouwburg, an in situ Shoah memorial museum in Amsterdam. During World War II, over forty-six thousand Jews were imprisoned in this former theater before being deported to the transit camps. In 1962, it became the first national Shoah memorial of the Netherlands and in 1993, a small exhibition was added. In the spring of 2016, the National Holocaust Museum opened, which consists of the Hollandsche Schouwburg and a new satellite space across the street.

This dissertation deals with the question how this site of painful heritage became an important memorial museum dedicated to the memory of the persecution of the Dutch Jews. It is argued that this former theater was not a site of oblivion before 1962 but rather a material reminder of the persecution of the Jews which at that time was not an articulated part of the hegemonic memory discourse of the war in the Netherlands. The memorial was gradually appropriated by important Jewish institutions through the installment of Yom HaShoah, an educational exhibition and a wall of names. These are analyzed not by focusing on material authenticity, but instead a case is made for latent indexicality: visitors actively produce narratives by searching for traces of the past. This entails an ongoing creative process of meaning-making that allows sites of memory to expand and proliferate beyond their borders. An important question therefore is how the Hollandsche Schouwburg affects its direct surroundings.
SIGNS OF THE SHOAH
THE HOLLANDSCHE SCHOUWBURG AS A SITE OF MEMORY

DAVID DUINDAM
Colofon

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Table of Contents

Prologue

Chapter 1: The Dynamics of Sites of Memory
1. Performing Memory and the Remediation of the Past 17
2. Remnants of the Past: Heritage and the Museum 25
3. The Spatial and Performative Character of Urban Memory 31

Chapter 2: The Construction of an In Situ Memorial Site: Framing Painful Heritage 39
1. National Framing and Silent Memories: The Persecution of the Jews as Part of Collective Suffering 42
2. Honoring the memory of victims: pride and national debt 49
3. Addressing Painful Heritage: Representation and Appropriation 61

Chapter 3: The Performance of Memory: The Making of a Memorial Museum 75
1. Place-Making and Spatial Narratives: Early Commemorations 77
2. A Public Memorial 84
3. Yom HaShoah as a Dutch-Jewish Commemoration 92
4. From Memorial to Memorial Museum 100
Chapter 4: The Fragmented Memorial Museum: Indexicality and Self-Inscription

1. The *In Situ* Memorial Museum: Mediation and Latent Indexicality 134
2. Conflicting Scripts, Routing and Self-Exhibition 142
3. Performing the Site: Walking and Self-Inscription 155

Chapter 5: The Proliferation of Spatial Memory: Borders, Façades and Dwellings

1. Proliferation and Demarcation of Sites of Memory 172
2. The Façade and the Passerby: Dissonance and Interaction 179
3. The House as Index, the House as Dwelling: Collaborative Memory Projects 188

Epilogue 199

Summary 213
Samenvatting 217
Previous publications and co-authorship 221
Acknowledgements 223
Bibliography 225